

Evaluation of Further Education Development Directorate

What our client wanted

In response to Scottish Ministers' concerns about improving the performance of colleges, the Scottish Further Education Funding Council [now the Scottish Funding Council] created the Further Education Development Directorate (FEDD) in 2002. This was an innovative model based on using teams of experienced senior staff from Scottish colleges as 'internal consultants' on a project-by-project basis. Their work included strategy and planning, financial turnaround, curriculum and estates strategy. After 12 and 24 months' operation, the Funding Council wanted to evaluate and draw learning from FEDD.

What Frontline did

Our evaluation approach took account of the cultural issues in further education and the sensitivities of dealing with the colleges that FEDD had been asked to assist. Interviews with the client colleges, FEDD staff, the Funding Council and other stakeholders identified a range of current and future benefits.

Our team identified where improved FEDD processes and team skills would enhance its effectiveness. We also highlighted the potential value of FEDD project experience as a senior staff development tool for future college principals. These findings were presented to the executive of the Funding Council.

What difference we made

Our evaluation report was welcomed by the Scottish Funding Council and its recommendations for FEDD staff skills development were implemented. FEDD funding was extended and it continues to deliver performance improvement benefits in Scottish FE colleges.

What our client said

"We were looking for a different approach to the usual 'evaluation by consultants'. We thought Frontline's proposed approach would give us not only all the necessary facts and figures, but an exploration of the processes of engagement between colleges receiving support and those offering support. We were not disappointed, and found Frontline's approach very effective. We got added value through their proposals for a new consultancy model for the FEDD team's work, as well as giving us a robust, objective evaluation of the FEDD."

Anne Grindley, Deputy Director, Strategic Development, Scottish Funding Council