



ABC Benchmarking Partnership

in association with the

Improvement Service

Benchmarking Training

Introduction

For

Trainers and Participants

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The training may be delivered to public sector organisations, as described in the materials, by employees of those organisations who are also registered with the Scottish 'Benchmarking for Improvement' Community of Practice.

Welcome to the ABC Benchmarking Training

This brief Introduction outlines the training materials and explains how they should be used to achieve the best outcomes for learners.

The training resources contain the following documents:

1. This Introduction (pdf)
2. Pre-course Reading (pdf – hyperlinked extracts from Participants’ Pack)
3. Participants’ Resource Pack (Pdf – hyperlinked)
4. Customisable Templates (MS Word – fully customisable)
5. Trainers’ Resource Pack (pdf - hyperlinked)
6. Pre-course Assessment Form (pdf)
7. Presentation Slides (MS PowerPoint)
8. Presentation Handouts - 3 slides per page (pdf)

Materials have been hyperlinked where appropriate to provide ease of movement within documents and to facilitate easy access to external sources of information.

Course Purpose:

The course is intended to provide participants with a better understanding of benchmarking through guided reading and on-line research, discussion and practical experience. The course was initially designed to provide short and accessible training for busy managers. It therefore combines pre-course reading and research with a scheduled half-day interactive facilitated session. The half-day session can be extended to suit group and organisational needs by allowing more time for discussion and shared learning if required.

Pre-Course reading material is available for anyone to access. This material will be a useful source of general information about benchmarking. It will be most valuable, however, when used as part of the full training as this provides opportunity for discussion of issues as well as practical skills development.

The course has been designed to be run by public sector in-house trainers, or others employed in the same organisation who are familiar with benchmarking and are competent to deliver training. It can be facilitated or supported by the course developers if preferred or where in-house capacity is limited. Contact details are provided at the end of this Introduction.

Participants should go away from the course feeling confident and motivated, with a valuable reference source for the future and access to knowledge and additional support for their first benchmarking project.

Post-course support, if required, is available through the ABC Steering Group or through the course developers by arrangement.

We hope that you will find the materials useful and we value all feedback, whether positive or negative.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, participants should:

- Be familiar with various definitions of benchmarking and understand its meaning for local government and other public sector organisations.
- Understand the reasons for benchmarking, its benefits and costs and its role in informing improvement activity.
- Understand the merits of different approaches used for benchmarking and be able to match approach(es) to organisational needs.
- Understand the importance of planning benchmarking activity and setting realistic expectations which take account of available resources.
- Be aware of the usefulness and limitations of data comparison and its role in benchmarking.
- Understand the stages and processes that benchmarking activities typically involve and be able to apply these in practice.
- Be familiar with a range of existing guides, networks and resources to help with benchmarking.

How the Course is Organised

The learning outcomes are achieved in three stages. These are:

1. Pre-course reading and resource investigation (open resource available on-line through the Improvement Service Website, or tailored to needs and provided by trainers).
2. Participative facilitated learning (provided by in-house trainers or the course developers by arrangement).
3. Post-course development with support (provided by ABC Benchmarking Partnership or the course developers by arrangement.)

1. Pre-course Reading:

To ensure that the facilitated part of the course can be delivered in a half-day session, and to bring all participants to a similar level of knowledge about core concepts before attending the facilitated element, pre-course reading material is provided. Participants are encouraged to read through this material regardless of perceived prior knowledge. The reading material is supplemented by guided on-line research that will provide valuable links to additional resources for future use.

Participants will be asked to complete a pre-course assessment questionnaire prior to the course. This may be used by the trainers to focus individual pre-course reading, and to ensure that the facilitated session takes account of particular group needs. Facilitated discussion at the start of the half-day course will help to consolidate pre-course learning and create a shared understanding of core issues prior to moving on to practical exercises.

2. Facilitated Training (half-day or longer as required)

The facilitated part of the course presents additional concepts that are not included in pre-course reading. These concepts benefit from group discussion and therefore a little more time is devoted to them in the facilitated session.

The majority of the facilitated training uses practical exercises to develop understanding and experience of the various activities involved in benchmarking. The

pilots for the course found that the experiential element of the course was extremely valuable, regardless of perceived prior knowledge of benchmarking.

3. Post-Course Development

Post-course support is available to first-time benchmarkers from the ABC Steering Group if required. This is likely to be particularly helpful if course participants 'get stuck' or need assistance when they start their first project. Contact details for all ABC Steering Group Members are provided in the References and Resources section towards the end of the Participants' Resource Pack. Additional assistance can be obtained from course developers by arrangement. Key ABC and Course Developer contact details are provided at the end of this Introduction.

Materials for Trainers

The following materials are provided for trainers:

- Pre-Course Assessment Form
- The Trainers' Resource Pack
- PowerPoint Slides
- Slides as Handouts

Pre-course Assessment Form: This is provided within the Trainers Resource Pack and additionally as a separate pdf file to facilitate emailing. The completed form must be returned manually. Telephone contact between the trainer and participants is encouraged at this early stage to ensure that instructions are clear and participants understand their role and the potential benefits of the learning.

Trainers' Resource Pack: This takes trainers through the programme step-by-step. The materials have been designed to allow both professional trainers and non-trainer 'benchmarking experts' to deliver the course in-house.

Experienced trainers will be able to adapt the materials easily to suit the needs of particular audiences. Others have been provided with prompts and reminders to help them through the facilitation process. Trainers are expected to familiarise themselves with materials in both the Trainers' and the Participants' Resource Packs.

PowerPoint Slides: Trainers may wish to adapt these to suit, but care should be taken to ensure that the integrity of the course is not compromised. As has been noted, the course has been designed to allow delivery of the facilitated module in half a day. This programme can easily be extended to allow trainers the opportunity to permit extended discussion on issues, or extend the time allowed for the practical exercises.

Handouts: Slides as handouts have been provided in pdf format. Other handouts can be printed as required from the relevant pages of the Trainers' or Participants' Packs.

Continuous Improvement: Trainers are encouraged to review the training using feedback from participants and their own notes taken during the delivery. Feedback from participants should be gathered using their organisation's internal evaluation form. Trainers can use the pages provided at the end of the Trainers' Pack to record their own notes as the course progresses.

Feedback on any aspect of the training, whether positive or negative, is welcomed by ABC and Course developers as this will help to ensure that training is continuously improved and developed to meet changing needs. Comments should be directed to the ABC or course developer contacts noted below or submitted via the Community of Practice that has been set up.

Materials for Participants

The following materials have been provided for Participants:

- Pre-Course Assessment form
- Pre-course reading material
- Participants' Resource Pack
- Customisable Templates

Pre-course Assessment Form: This will be provided by the trainer delivering the course. The completed form should be returned manually. The form is intended to make the trainer aware of individual differences in knowledge and experience so that the course can be focused to meet group needs.

The trainer should ensure that instructions are clear and participants understand their role and the potential learning objectives and benefits.

Pre-Course Reading: This is available on the Improvement Service Web site or direct from trainers delivering the course. It provides core background knowledge that will be developed as the course progresses. Reading may be directed to reflect needs identified in the pre-course assessment

Participants' Resource Pack: This provides a complete set of relevant materials for participants to retain as a reference source following the course. It includes all the pre-course reading as well as material presented and discussed in the half-day session. It includes copies of slides and handouts as well as the standard versions of all templates. It also includes a section that provides links to additional resources, and contact names for the ABC Steering Group and course developers.

Customisable Templates: All templates used, or referred to, in the training are provided in a separate file so that participants can adapt them to suit their specific needs rather than have to develop them from scratch. The 'Templates' section also includes a template for recording progress in the form of case studies. This is useful both to assist organisational memory and future learning, and to inform learning across different organisations.

We hope you enjoy the course and we look forward to hearing from you.

Key Contacts:

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