

One million pound project to tackle language skills gap

CILT, the National Centre for Languages has won a bid to run a million pound programme to encourage teenagers to learn languages to help them compete more successfully in an increasingly globalised job market. The Languages Employer Engagement project will see employers working with schools in England to demonstrate the relevance of languages and intercultural skills to business.

The new programme comes in response to feedback from high-profile business organisations that shows that without language skills UK risk falling behind in the international job market.

A recent survey by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) showed that the importance of languages to UK firms is set to grow as companies operate in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. Seventy two per cent of UK international trade is with non-English speaking countries – but it is estimated that only one in ten British workers can speak a foreign language.

The announcement of the project which aims to tackle a decline in language take-up at GCSE, follows news that the study of language at University is at an all time low.

CILT's Chief Executive Kathryn Board said 'In the current economic climate, being able to speak more than one language will give school leavers a competitive advantage in the job market over monolingual English speakers, as well as the chance to take advantage of job opportunities in the EU and elsewhere in the world.

'We're delighted to be leading the new Employer Engagement programme which we hope will demonstrate to young people that language skills open doors in the business world and that languages are a smart choice both at GCSE and beyond.'

The two-year programme, funded by the government's Department for Schools, Children and Families (DCSF), will build on the success of CILT's Business Language Champions scheme, which has seen 150 businesses supporting languages in schools since 2004. Business Language Champions have come from a wide range of industries including engineering, retail, transport, sports, media and the charity sector.

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

1. **CILT, the National Centre for Languages**

CILT, the National Centre for Languages seeks to promote a greater national capability in languages, supporting and developing multilingualism and intercultural competence in all sectors of society. CILT manages major initiatives in support of languages. It works closely with partner organisations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and supports language networks throughout the UK. It is a key partner in the implementation of national languages strategies and plays a significant role in languages initiatives at European level.

www.cilt.org.uk

2. **Languages Employer Engagement Project**

The Languages Employer Engagement Project is a new £1million two-year programme funded by the government's Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The project aims to develop UK11-16 year olds' language and intercultural skills. It will engage a wide range of employers to work with schools to increase take up at GCSE and to motivate young people in their language learning.

CILT, the National Centre for Languages will be leading the project along with Regional Languages Networks, Business in the Community, the Institute for Education Business Excellence (formerly National Education Business Partnership Network), Links into Languages, and Edcoms. The programme also has the support of the French Embassy, Spanish Embassy and the Goethe Institut, as well as GoSkills, the leading sector skills agency in the new Diploma in Languages and International Communication.

www.cilt.org.uk/employment/blc

3. **Business Language Champions**

The Business Language Champions project began as a highly successful pilot scheme in 2004. Since then it has become a national programme, and has supported over 150 partnerships between schools and business from sectors including engineering, manufacturing, retail, leisure & hotels, arts & culture, sports, professional services, finance, technology, media, aerospace & defence, transport, charity, government and telecommunications.

www.cilt.org.uk/employment/blc