

# Report on Skill Swap pilot

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## **1.0 Summary**

*“Successful cities are places of innovation, circulation and exchange.”*

The Richness of Cities, Demos 1999

Skills Swap is a scheme designed to share skills and learning through the creation and use of alternative money or ‘training pounds’. During 1999 – 2000 the South London Training and Enterprise Council (SOLOTEC) piloted Skills Swap in collaboration with the New Economics Foundation through: the Centre for Environmental Initiatives and the Foundation for Human Development. This report is an evaluation of the pilot scheme.

## **2.0 Introduction**

Skills Swap originates from the same cradle of community currencies as Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETS) and Time Money schemes. These alternative currencies provide a way of trading skills and time by bypassing the usual obstacles of lack of money and suitable courses.

More importantly though, they value people’s individual skills and are tailored to their particular needs. Skills Swap takes this model specifically into the training field with the aim of addressing social exclusion, economic regeneration and maximising the market for training.

The aim of Skill Swap is to match individual’s training needs with spare training capacity. The system is organised through an accounting system, which records training and work experience placements using the currency of training credits.

Skill Swap operates through a broker who works with individuals to identify skills they have or want to develop. The broker supports and matches ‘wants’ and ‘offers’.

The scheme runs on credits, which are earned by offering training and can then be spent on learning or accessing other people’s skills. Credits can also be used to access work experience in the wider community.

For example, A wants to learn how to fix her car and knows how to cook, B wants to learn how to surf the net and knows how to fix cars and C wants to learn how to cook and knows how to surf the net. The broker links B up with A, who teaches her how to fix her car; B earns X amount of training pounds and uses these to buy C’s help to teach him how to surf the net.

This local ‘currency’, fully developed, would allow businesses, employed and unemployed people to trade training and work experience on the basis of time as well as conventional money.

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the success of the Skill Swap pilot. In addition we want to share the Skill Swap experience with those who are interested in innovative ways of re-connecting people, skills and the local economy.

## **2.0 Background to the Skill Swap pilot**

Between September 1998 and March 2000 a pioneering scheme named '**Train Times**' was designed and developed by the South London Training and Enterprise Council (SOLOTEC) in partnership with the New Economics Foundation (NEF). The scheme was supported through the TEC Discretionary Fund.

NEF had experience of developing alternative currency schemes and an interest in approaches to measuring and growing of social capital. SOLOTEC was keen to explore ways of making local learning and training initiatives, like the New Deal more effective in reaching their target group.

The scheme was designed in order to tackle barriers to economic regeneration and social inclusion that existed within the current training market. In particular the fact that:

- Many individuals, particularly those on low income are excluded from mainstream training.
- The greatest obstacle to achieving full time employment is current experience and exposure to the work place.
- The greatest barrier to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) fully engaging in training is cost and the need to cover a job when they send someone on training.
- Large organisations frequently under-utilise their training resources, for example by not filling places on training courses.

The Train Times scheme has five components. These are:

1. Skill Swap - a series of Skill Swap exchanges will enable individual members to swap basic know how using training credits.
2. Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) - eligible members are able to open an account using training credits.
3. Maximisation of training - members are able to pay for learning or training services like trainers or room hire with a mixture of training credits and cash. This includes spare places on internal company training courses and should mean that smaller companies can organise their own training more easily.
4. Temps - small and medium enterprises are able to hire accredited Train Times temps – to cover for staff away learning. Temps can be paid in full or in part with training credits
5. Work experience - members are able to purchase work experience placements in return for training credits.

It was envisaged that the scheme would work as follows:

A feasibility study was commissioned in September 1998 to test whether such a currency would be feasible across the six South London boroughs covered by SOLOTEC (Bromley, Croydon, Sutton, Lewisham, Greenwich and Bexley). The study was carried out by NEF and found that:

- For the scheme to work, everyone who participates should have *both* spare resources and unmet needs in order for them to be able to earn and spend.
- There is a demand for inexpensive and informal learning that is currently not met as well a considerable amount of learning already going on in the area.
- A training currency could succeed where conventional money has failed to connect supply and demand because:
  - It is able to supply a measure of informal learning not currently supplied.
  - It can provide considerable opportunities for networking – among the socially excluded and existing businesses.
  - It can put power in the hands of people who don't currently have it.

The benefits of such a scheme would be:

- Providing more options for people on benefits, which could improve their self-confidence, networking, work placement possibilities and opportunities.
- Adding value to Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) and New Deal activities carried out by SOLOTEC.
- Providing incentives for people to complete courses, and providing a central information resource about learning and learning assets in the area.
- Encouraging more learning to take place locally, and helping existing learning budgets to stretch further.

The study concluded that:

- Train Times is workable, but it would be hard to launch a pilot without intending to continue the project afterwards – because of the implicit promise in any training earnings that they can be spent.
- SOLOTEC could respond to the challenge of Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) by becoming a major local learning provider, backing the value of training credits and recouping some of their cash outlay.

SOLOTEC's role within the Train Times scheme was to act as broker and manage exchanges between individuals, trainers, SMEs and large organisations, matching their various needs and spare resources.

An initial workshop involving small and medium enterprises found broad support for the scheme. Participants identified spare capacity as well as opportunities as follows:

<b>Spare capacity</b>	<b>Benefit of Train Times scheme</b>
IT capacity (computers not used etc)	Access to larger market place and new business opportunities
Training courses running at less than full capacity	Access to resources from other providers that are currently difficult to access
Staff time + skills	Ability to offer greater variety of courses for young people
Office equipment	Potential to share supply chains
Space	Shared knowledge

### **3.0 Developing Train Times and the Skill Swap pilot**

The original Train Times concept had to be amended when changes in the arrangements for learning and skills delivery in the UK were announced in early summer 1999, to come into effect from April 2001. This meant that SOLOTEC could no longer guarantee longer-term continuity, could not staff a bank function and had to concentrate on mainstream delivery during the transition period. Consequently SOLOTEC shifted its role from central broker to project manager. The redesigned scheme took the three elements: trainers, small and medium enterprises and individuals and incorporated them into the Skill Swap pilot. NEF continued as delivery agent.

It was agreed that Skill Swap would work in partnership with existing community based training organisations: the Foundation for Human Development (FHD) in the London Borough of Lambeth and The Centre for Environmental Initiatives (CEI) in the London Borough of Sutton, as well as directly with individuals and local small and medium enterprises.

#### **3.1 Objectives of the scheme**

Train Times sought to address four key objectives:

- 1. Tackle disaffection and disengagement through building the skills base of participants.*
- 2. Carry forward lifelong learning and workforce development to help businesses compete and succeed through tailoring training to suit the trainees' needs for skills and the time they have available.*
- 3. Prepare locally for the development and implications of Individual Learning Accounts.*
- 4. Investigate legal and fiscal issues, including VAT, Income Tax, Corporation tax and benefit implications.*

Following the decision to pilot Skill Swap, as opposed to the complete Train Times scheme, it was agreed that:

- The Skill Swap pilot phase would be expanded from three to six months and run between September 1999 and March 2000.
- Skill Swap would be operated through two satellite centres.
- The scheme would be simplified to reflect SOLOTEC's changed circumstances and priorities.

The target outputs were revised as follows:

<b>Train Times - targets</b>	<b>Skill Swap pilot - targets</b>
50 Trainees to be involved	100 Trainees to be involved

10 Small and medium enterprises involved	5 Small and medium enterprises involved
3 Major Organisations	0 Major Organisations

<b>3.2 Timetable and milestones</b>	
<b>October</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning meetings with Skill Swap centres</li> <li>• Project design agreed</li> <li>• Systems in place</li> </ul>
<b>November</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broker in place</li> <li>• Bi-weekly sessions scheduled</li> <li>• 40 trainees recruited (20 at each centre)</li> <li>• 2 SME's involved (1 at each centre)</li> </ul>
<b>January</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 more trainees recruited (10 at each centre)</li> <li>• 2 SMEs involved (1 at each centre)</li> <li>• Monitoring visit completed</li> </ul>
<b>February</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40 more trainees recruited (20 at each centre)</li> <li>• 2 SMEs involved (1 at each centre)</li> <li>• Monitoring visit completed</li> <li>• Evaluation completed &amp; final report due</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Design and preparation

#### *Recruitment of satellite centres*

The Foundation for Human Development (FHD) in the London Borough of Lambeth is an accredited training centre delivering the training element of the government's New Deal for Young People. Trainees research, write and produce a range of community newspapers which are distributed across South London. Training involves all participants learning new skills and then passing them on to others. Skill Swap, as an approach, was already very much part of the FHD's way of delivering training and they were interested in the potential of the scheme to grow the cascade mentoring aspect of their work.

The Centre for Environmental Initiatives (CEI) is a registered charity based in the London Borough of Sutton. The CEI seeks to find solutions to environmental problems in the broadest possible sense and in ways in which local people can really get involved. The CEI approached Skill Swap as an opportunity for pulling together the diverse skills of the community in order to improve individual and community well being.

Visits were arranged to the organisations which were to take part. There was an informal presentation to the management of the centres so that they could see whether Skill Swap would fit in with their plans and aspirations for their own work.

Fortunately this was the case as both centres had fertile ground in which to develop the pilot: FHD already had large numbers of trainees coming to the centre each day, while CEI was involved with their Local Exchange Trading Scheme (LETS).

### *Systems design*

The scheme was designed by David Williams of LIFT Limited. The basis of the design was on LETS lines but it had the added element of a broker – someone who would bring together individuals' skill offers and skill needs.

Training given or received was on the basis of six training credits for one hour.

There then followed sessions in promoting the scheme, designing the relevant materials and speaking with the people who were going to be responsible for the day-to-day management of the project.

Following some initial concern about running a computer based system, a paper-based system was invented. This enabled the broker to have immediate access to the level of trading of any individual without having to have access to a computer.

Also a method of offering and looking for training partners was pioneered at the FHD office. A wall-mounted system was invented to allow people to put up cards indicating their personal skills while another section carried cards posted by people seeking help.

Where a member came across a card either showing the skill they were looking to learn or saw the card of someone they could help' they filled in their own contact details on the card and moved it to the central 'dealing' section. Here people could check to see if they had made a contact and if they had they would follow the contact instructions to find out when the person would be available and how to contact them.

### **3.4 What happened**

#### *Foundation for Human Development (FHD)*

A part time broker was appointed to set up systems, provide inductions for new members, manage accounts and most importantly facilitate links between individual members. Each trainee was given an account as part of their induction as well as a skills audit which explored skills they had to offer as well as what they wanted to learn. Skill Swap was focused on three key areas of training: publishing and design; business skills (including marketing and sales), and computer skills.

The emphasis of the approach was on developing a transferable skills bank within the New Deal training programme which would enable trainees to 'buy' appropriate support whenever they needed. This meant that the broker had to work closely with trainers and vice versa in order to identify areas where trainees might most benefit from this kind of additional support.

To facilitate this, specific Skill Swap sessions were set up on a weekly basis when trainees were encouraged to actively integrate Skill Swap into their training schedule. This was done with the ultimate aim of integrating Skill Swap right across the weekly training schedule.

One of the largest swaps happened between the FHD crèche and a local school who owned the crèche building. Teachers from the school 'bought' training from the FHD with training credits they earned by leasing the crèche space to the FHD with training credits.

### *Centre for Environmental Initiatives (CEI)*

As with the FHD, a broker was appointed to set up the systems and run the pilot. They began by mailing out details to members of the Local Exchange Trading Scheme (LETS) and local voluntary sector groups. 920 mailings were sent out in total with a freepost reply.

The mailing offered the opportunity to participate in a half-day session which would identify what skills people had to share and what they wanted to learn. Tailor-made skill audits were also offered to groups. The local Rotary club was targeted as a way of involving local businesses.

The mailing had a 10% response rate. Groups as diverse as the Prince's Trust, HomeStart, the Scouts and Guides associations, SOLONET local radio, Sutton People with Disabilities Group and Sutton Housing Association expressed an interest in joining Skill Swap.

The CEI were keen to link people up both on an individual and group basis as their emphasis was on identifying unrecognised skills across the *whole* community. To do this, they appointed a secondary broker to work specifically with minority ethnic groups within the area and refugees in particular.

By December, Skill Swap sessions were going ahead with voluntary groups and individuals. For example, one member gave training on Access databases and spent her credits on learning organic pest control.

In January, the CEI sent out a follow up mailing to all those who had expressed an initial interest in the scheme but had not yet got in touch. The purpose of this mailing was to recruit new members by giving details of offers and wants and by demonstrating the ways in which Skill Swap was benefiting members. In total 3,000 fliers went out.

Examples of skills logged and exchanged include furniture restoration, computer literacy for beginners, computer assembly, tiling, electrical repairs, wall paper hanging, painting and decorating, general DIY, basic car maintenance, dress making, cake making, basic letter writing, writing letters of complaint, intermediate French and Advanced German.

Skills Swappers at the CEI were also able to make use of in-house training opportunities, which included solar panel installation and training in the community orchard.

The CEI is in the process of registering as an ILA training provider so that they can also offer Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) to their Skill Swap members.

By developing Skill Swap as a two-stage process in which an initial skills survey leads to a wider link ups across the community, the CEI sought to join up and

mobilise the under-used talents and skills of *both* individuals and groups for the benefit of the whole community.

### ***Joining up the two satellite centres***

The FHD and the CEI met in early December 1999 to share their experiences so far and explore the possibility of joining the two satellites up. Discussion centred around identifying funding to enable the pilot to continue on a joint basis after March and identifying a third satellite that would enable adequate coverage across the six South London boroughs covered by SOLOTEC.

Publicity for Skill Swap was gained through local press coverage, the BBC TimeBank campaign as well as articles in *Voluntary Voice*, *Third Sector*, *New Start* and *Green Futures*. The FHD promoted Skills Swap through their community newspapers in Peckham, Southwark and Lambeth.

### *Levels of trading*

	<b>Centre for Environmental Initiatives</b>	<b>Foundation for Human Development</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Individual Membership</b>	65 people	25 people	81
<b>Small and medium enterprises involved</b>	MERU (Medical Engineering Resource Centre) SOLONET Local Radio Sutton Housing Association Carers Centre Hallmeads Day Centre	NatWest Bank (Employee secondment) Local School Various local businesses provided 400 computers	8+
<b>Hours training given</b>	60+	40+	100+
<b>Hours training received</b>	60+	40+	100+
<b>Total value of Training credits</b>	120 hours	120 hours	240 hours

### *Evaluation*

The Skill Swap pilots were evaluated by NEF, the brokers at each centre and by members themselves through focus groups and individual questionnaires both during and after the pilot phase. During the course of the pilots monitoring visits were also made by SOLOTEC.

### *Exit Strategy*

Skill Swap was designed to explore and draw in additional funding sources during the life of the pilot. In this way future funding strategies were developed as an integral part of the pilot's development.

## **4.0 Impact of pilot**

### **4.1 What didn't work**

#### *Time*

The six-month time limit certainly put pressure on the development of Skill Swap and meant that it was often hard to recruit members (especially businesses) when the pilot was due to come to an end in a few months.

*"I feel that the approach we have taken to Skill Swap – developing membership out of the community – has meant that it has taken longer to get things going. Ideally we would have started after Christmas and run it for a period of at least six months, preferably a year...the longer we can promote Skill Swap, the more chance local groups will feel confident taking part."* **Trevor Lancefield, CEI**

Individual brokers also felt that they had insufficient time to in which to develop the scheme:

*"I feel that the pilot has been a bit bitty and I have been frustrated that I could not dedicate more time to it. The days when I have been able to spend several hours in one go have been more productive, It could easily be a full time job and would, I think have progressed further if this had been the case."* **Ruth Woolridge, CEI Broker**

At the FHD, there was the additional pressure of fitting Skill Swap in around a busy training schedule.

#### *Possible solutions*

- Promote sustainability by integrating Skill Swap into already existing scheme.
- Think about whether a full or part time worker is more feasible.

#### *Self-perception and incentives to join*

*"Initially students were reluctant to join the scheme for a variety of reason, these include: lack of confidence, feeling that their skills were not good enough to offer, modesty, a desire to focus on their training course and not be distracted. In fact they all have hidden talents, which was discovered after discussion with them. Once students have joined they begin to develop an interest and become more willing participants."* **Carol Campbell, FHD Broker**

Members felt that there should be incentives to get more people to join as Skill Swap would benefit from a broader range of skills on offer:

*"It [Skill Swap] needs to be expanded so that there are a wider range of skills available – we need more people with practical skills."* **Phil Williams, CEI member**

*"We need more members so that the range of skills available is greater."* **Debbie Carlton, CEI member**

*"We need incentives for skill swappers who build up a lot of training credits to get them to spend."* **J. Owusu, FHD member**

### *Possible solutions*

- Build confidence by exploring what new/potential members **can do**.
- Offer incentives to potential members – these could be training credits or gifts in kind donated from local businesses/suppliers.

### *Administration*

Filling in application forms was a barrier to people joining the scheme:

*“Cut the administration!” **Michael Taylor, FHD member***

### *-Possible solutions*

- Make system as simple as possible; members should be able to administer and fix it themselves.
- Get the broker rather than members to do all the form filling.

### *Attracting groups and small business*

*“I am a bit disappointed with the groups that we have tried to contact. I’ve spent a lot of time contacting them but it’s been hard to set up meetings. Consequently we have not recruited as many groups as I would have liked. Next time I would approach the groups differently by just turning up on spec. That way I would be more likely to get to talk to more than one member of the group and bypass the gatekeeper.” **Ruth Woolridge, CEI broker.***

*“Now that the scheme is more successfully established I feel that we can go back to the groups and show them successful examples of how Skill Swap works and may be able to show the benefits more clearly.”*

**Ruth Woolridge, CEI broker**

### *Possible solution*

- Give practical examples of how Skill Swap will benefit groups and small businesses.

## **4.2 What did work**

### *Benefits for members*

- *Improved confidence and communication skills*

Skill Swap helped build members confidence by getting them to ‘train’ others in the areas/skills they were strongest in. This confidence building process acts as a

springboard and gets them thinking about the kinds of skills they want to learn. They can then use the training credits they have earned to 'buy' what the kinds of skills they want to learn.

*"When we first asked people if they would be able to share their skills many people felt that they did not know enough to 'teach' anyone anything. Once they had a go though they found it much easier and more enjoyable than they expected."* **Ruth Woolridge, CEI Broker**

*"It has helped student's own learning and memory retention, knowing that they may be called upon by other student's to impart knowledge."* **Carol Campbell, FHD Broker**

*"It has given me confidence in something I didn't think I could do and would probably have never tried otherwise."* **Debbie Carlont, CEI member**

*"Skill Swap has benefited me enormously – confidence in interacting with trainees has been invaluable."* **J. Owusu, FHD member**

*"Knowing that I can help someone learn something new has benefited me."* **Michelle Oyedele, FHD member**

*"It has allowed me to teach people in the areas that I'm strongest in."* **K. Anim-Achdo, FHD member**

*"Skill Swap has brought a greater communication between individuals as well as increased skills and abilities."* **J. Owusu, FHD member**

- *Immediate access to learning and skills pool*

Skill Swap enabled members to access the skills they needed in bite-sized bits. But it also put them into contact with other people: Skill Swap puts learning in the context of people and place. This means that members approach new skills not as abstract pieces of knowledge but as living tools which have real uses in their lives.

*"I could ask and get quick advice which means I could solve the problem immediately."* **Gary McFarlane, FHD member**

*"I've learnt a lot about computers, I've made some new friends and I now know how to change the washers in my tap!"* **Phil Williams, CEI member**

*"The fact that I could help somebody and receive help myself convinced me to join."* **Michelle Oyedele, FHD member**

*"We've all become multi-skilled, multi talented people who otherwise might not have learnt anything new."* **Debbie Carlton, CEI member**

- *Minimal cash costs*

Whilst Skill Swap costs real money to run, it has few cash costs for members and it certainly costs less in money terms than formal training.

*“There are lots of skills I would like to learn but cannot afford to go on courses, so Skill Swap is ideal for me.”* **Phil Williams, CEI member**

*“I have learnt new skills without paying a fortune.”* **Selina Weekes, FHD member**

*“I’ve learnt things without spending money.”* **Melanie Manning, FHD member**

- *Wider benefits - Bringing people together and building community*

*“I’m learning new skills, meeting new people and getting a real sense of community again. Skill Swap is bringing people together... I would like to see the scheme expand but at a manageable rate so that the sense of community that is developing is not lost.”* **Catherine Henry, CEI member**

*“Students are finding new friends – Skill Swap helps bring people together in a work environment.”* **Carol Cambell, FHD Broker**

## **Conclusion**

*“What is great is that [participants] feel more confident ...having passed on their skills...they are more inspired to think about what they would like to learn. Becoming trainers themselves means that they are more likely to become trainees.”*  
**Ruth Woolridge, CEI Broker**

## **Progress towards original Train Times objectives**

### *Objective 1*

*Tackle disaffection and disengagement through building the skills base of participants.*

By developing members ability to teach as well as to learn Skill Swap builds the skills base of individual members, as conventional training schemes do. What is different about Skill Swap is that it builds on the skills and abilities that members already have by measuring and rewarding them.

This grows members’ confidence and provides a basis for them to explore new areas and skills. Often these may be things that they thought they would never be able to accomplish, but with the support of the broker and equipped with a newfound confidence they are able to make a start.

Importantly Skill Swap enables members to make this start in a small way: they can taste as many new skills as they want without having to commit to a full time training course. Because members learn from peers, people like themselves who are often less intimidating than professional teachers or trainers, it breaks down some of the barriers to learning.

Along the way and through the ‘give and take’, which is at the heart of Skill Swap members also pick up the ‘softer’ interpersonal skills, which are often as important as qualifications when getting and keeping a job.

But most importantly the ‘give and take’ makes members feel as if they have something of value which is needed by others. In this way Skill Swap taps into the

vast underused people-based assets that are currently wasted in our local communities and local economies.

#### *Objective 2*

*Carry forward lifelong learning and workforce development to help businesses compete and succeed through tailoring training to suit the trainees' needs for skills and the time they have available.*

Skill Swap is life long *in action*. It enables people of all ages and abilities to learn new skills and develop their full potential. And through the agency of the broker Skill Swap is able to tailor training to the specific needs of members.

Both centres have succeeded in involving local businesses to a limited extent. To attract more businesses the Train Times scheme would need to be developed more comprehensively in order to deliver more business-orientated benefits.

The pilot Skill Swap schemes have established a new learning network and culture that are focused on individuals needs but also react to the resources available in the community. By linking local people they build up new models and practices of community based exchange accessing extra resources from spare rooms to spare time.

This not only maximises the use of otherwise wasted resources but also integrates and joins up the community, everyone from individuals to businesses and educational establishment. Skill Swap could be developed more fully as 'community banks' which develop community capacity through the brokerage of spare resources, skill and time.

By encouraging these new linkages Skill Swap also has the potential to innovative local partnerships and solutions and through them develop a shared vision and trust.

#### *Objective 3*

*Prepare locally for the development and implications of Individual Learning Accounts.*

The Skill Swap pilot was designed at the same time as Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) were being piloted. A considerable amount of work was put into looking at links between the two new schemes as they seemed an ideal complement to one another but over time this aspect of the project grew less significant. This was because the rules relating to ILAs significantly tightened. However the FHD and the CEI were able to register as training providers and were able to channel eligible individuals to apply for an ILA.

By adding the more flexible, informal Skill Swap dimension ILAs become more friendly to full time workers and people with additional commitments or needs such as carers and parents. In this way Skill Swap could act as a stepping-stone in getting people to open an ILA.

#### *Objective 4*

*The feasibility study also set out to investigate legal and fiscal issues, including VAT, Income Tax, Corporation Tax and benefit implications.*

As part of NEF's broader work on complementary currencies, tax exemption for time credits (which includes training credits) were secured from the Treasury in August 1999:

"According to the Inland Revenue there appear to be no tax implications for time credits. The arrangements do not give rise to anything convertible into money and bearing this in mind...the activities can be regarded as being outside the tax net."

This has now been confirmed by the Home Office.

Additional issues regarding benefits are still being explored.

### **Meeting target outputs**

<b>Targets</b>	<b>Actual</b>
100 Trainees to be involved	81
5 Small and medium enterprises involved	8
0 Major Organisations	0

## 5.0 Conclusions

Our conclusions from this report are as follows:

- 1 Skill Swap is able to attract people successfully to swapping skills, in a range of different sectors from schools to New Deal trainees.
- 2 Seed funding to pioneer innovative local learning exchanges would enable more of people's wasted assets to be linked up through a 'community banking' approach: *"With the aid of a little funding we've had the opportunity to try something different and develop it closely with local needs and aspirations."*  
**Trevor Lancefield, CEI.**
- 3 Brokers are key to exploring members skills and building confidence:  
*"Because I have spent time getting to know people when I ring them up I have built up a rapport and they are more receptive to being asked if they will help us out. As more people have become involved the number of skills has increased and as more people meet up, more friendships are being forged and this has led to people making swaps without needing a broker."*  
**Ruth Woolridge, CEI Broker**
- 4 Skill Swap is able to boost self-esteem and self-belief, and anecdotally at least, seems to help people learn.
- 5 The link between learning and teaching others seems to be attractive to potential members. Transferring skills as opposed to exchanging them (i.e. showing someone how to fix a car as opposed to fixing it for them) is more effective in growing confidence and skills.
- 6 Measuring and rewarding people for their efforts is an effective way of motivating them.
- 7 Skill Swap seems to encourage a different attitude to skills – as a practical link to other people.
- 8 Skill Swap can provide a taster for new skills without people having to commit to a whole training course.
- 9 Skill Swap is considerably more cost-effective than some other forms of training – but does still require money to run, and probably needs a manager to run it.
- 10 The six-month time limit was a problem, especially when there is an implicit promise earning credits that they can be spent.
- 11 The short pilot was not comprehensive enough to start attracting SMEs in the numbers needed.
- 12 Further pilots need to be carried out in a broader way to provide a broader pool of skills, and to encourage people to spend their credits.

## 6.0 Recommendations

As a result of the conclusions above, we make the following recommendations:

- 1 Skill Swap should be given a full-scale trial, over a wider area and over a longer period – but keeping the variety of different audiences the two centres were able to attract.
- 2 The trial should either link to existing schemes or employ full- or part-time Skill Swap managers to run each centre. This would also reduce the reliance on unpopular forms.
- 3 More design thinking has to be put into providing opportunities for members to spend their credits – either by broadening the pool of skills or by linking up with local businesses to provide incentives out of their surplus stock and services.
- 4 More use should be made of the practical examples gained during this pilot of how groups and SMEs could benefit by taking part.
- 5 There may be benefits in linking to community banks as well as training centres.
- 6 The government should be encouraged to use Skill Swap as one way of measuring and growing knowledge economy, which could play an important part in the transformation of further education and life long learning.

## 7.0 What happens next

- **Continuing Skill Swap through the CEI and the FHD**

Although the pilot scheme ended in March 2000, both Skill Swap centres have developed a strategy for continuing *their* own version of Skill Swap.

*“By developing virtual training centres in which a variety of local groups could contribute skills/training Skill Swap could well provide better links between the community and established education centres.”* **Trevor Lancefield, CEI.**

*“Through Skill Swap we have been able to develop our Cascade Mentoring Scheme and apply it across our training programme.”* **Ruth Phillips, FHD.**

- **Sharing the lessons of the pilot**

Along with the pilot centres NEF is keen to share the Skill Swap approach. We are disseminating the report through the UK Time Bank Network as well as through our networks more generally.

- **New two year pilots in Leicester and Rutland**

Urban and rural Skill Swaps will be piloted for two years, in Leicester and Rutland starting in 2001.

- **How to find out more**

Contact Sarah Burns or Karen Smith at the New Economics Foundation, Cinnamon House, 6-8 Cole Street, London, SE1 4YH.

Tel: 020 7089 2800

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## 8.0 Appendices

### 8.1 Financial Report

	NEF	Skill Swap centres	Total
<b>Profiled expenditure</b>	£14 000	£5 000 (FHD) £5 000 (CEI) Total = £10 000	£24 000
<b>Actual expenditure</b>	£13 745	£5 000 (FHD) £5 000 (CEI) Total = £10 000	£23 745
<b>Profiled match funding</b>	£13 500	£9 400 (FHD) £4 518 (CEI) Total = £13 918	£27 418
<b>Actual match funding</b>	£13 500	£11 440 (FHD) £4 302 (CEI) Total = £15 742	£29 242

### 8.2 What is the New Economics Foundation ?

The New Economics Foundation (NEF) works to construct a new economy centered on people and the environment. Founded in 1986 it is now one of the UK's most creative and effective independent think tanks, combining research, policy, training and practical action.

More information: [www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org)

### 8.3 Who are the Skill Swap team?

Perry Walker, Centre for Participation Co-ordinator, NEF

David Boyle, Senior NEF Associate, journalist and author of *Funny Money: In Search of Alternative Cash* ([www.funny-money.co.uk](http://www.funny-money.co.uk))

Sarah Burns, Time Banking Programme Co-ordinator.

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Marcela Delpino, Project Manager, SOLOTEC

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