

Ordinary Heroes Extraordinary Company

Application for the
Spirit in Work Award 2007



Centre for Excellence in Leadership UK

INTERNATIONAL SPIRIT AT WORK AWARD APPLICATION

1) Basic Data

- a) Name of Organization: **Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL)**
- b) Date of founding: October 2003
- c) Number of employees: 48 full time, 6 part-time plus 150 associates
- d) Nature and scope of business:

CEL is a national leadership agency with a remit to foster and support leadership improvement, reform and transformation throughout the learning and skills sector. This is the Further Education system funded by the UK Government comprising of 600,000 staff, 7 million learners, 400 colleges and 2000 workplace training organizations. CEL has an annual budget of £15million. CEL is publicly funded by the Secretary of State for Education.

- e) Location: 10 Greycoat Place, London, SW1P 1SB, UK
 - f) Website address: www.centreforexcellence.org.uk
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2. Contact Information

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3. A Brief Description of Your Organization

3a) What are the vision and mission; philosophy and core values of your organization?

The vision and mission of CEL are focused on the leaders we serve AND the students who learn within our 400 educational colleges and 2000 providers. Please see Appendix 1 attached.

Our underpinning philosophy of leadership is one of servant leadership which is a collective and relational activity that, to be truly effective in the 21st Century goes beyond the model of the lone, charismatic, egoic hero. It has moral purpose at its core and encourages a distributed, student centred, empowering style that enables and allows everyone to develop to their fullest potential.

The CEL Board have made a clear strategic statement to all staff that "growth is for service not for profits". Our model of leadership includes the intellectual, physical, social, emotional and spiritual dimensions. We have a strong commitment to diversity – a core strand of our mission – and we are developing a sustainability policy and practices to respond to environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability.

Staff are committed to future generations and to co-creating a better world for all through our contribution to educational leaders in the learning and skills sector of the UK.

3b) How does your organization define “Spirituality”. How do you talk about the “vertical” and “horizontal” dimensions of spirituality?

Spirituality is defined in a very broad, pluralistic manner within CEL. It incorporates both the horizontal and vertical dimensions. As a public sector organisation funded within the UK by the Secretary of State for Education we focus and articulate primarily on the horizontal dimension and through this encourage, allow and enable vertical discussions, explorations and discourse to emerge naturally and organically.

This is not down to fear or lack of commitment but as a relatively new organisation of only four years we are still gaining credibility and the UK public sector does not have a strong tradition of accepting and supporting overt spirituality in the workplace. It is part of our intention to change this and we recognise that we can be most effective as we become firmly established as a high performing, outstanding organisation on traditional terms. We believe that more spiritual overt practices will be more influential if they can be evidenced and related to high performance. The recent internal research project on Organisational Effectiveness and Well Being at Work commissioned in November 2006 is our first attempt to evidence the link between spirituality, well being and high performance.

We encompass a wide range of individual definitions and approaches to spirituality including the religious and faith traditions. We have no one definition, indeed this would not fit with our pluralist and inclusive values and paradigm. Rather than define spirituality our path is to encourage and allow everyone to explore, clarify, articulate and understand their own spiritual way of being within CEL and within their whole life and work. For us the workplace is a place where spiritual expression, flow and consciousness are as vital as every other aspect of life, simultaneously we respect that the desire and capability to engage is the choice of each individual. CEL is staffed with highly creative, articulate, autonomous individuals with a strong desire to continually learn and improve and to practice self reflective skills. Conversations about soul needs, personal fulfilment and spiritual aspirations abound in the organisation. There is no desire by the Chief Executive or senior team to control, monitor or even understand such exchanges. The intention and aspiration is that spirit will flow and manifest easily into the spaces arising to allow it in, and from those spaces – what will be, will be.

The CEL Communities Faith Toolkit developed for clients and freely available to all staff provides a multiplicity of religious and spiritual approaches and belief systems making it clear we have no particular religious or spiritual affiliation. The Chief Executive, a member of the Board and several staff members are very open about their own spirituality and very aware of the vertical dimension and the centrality of this within their lives. This allows a very open and easy discourse of the vertical as and when it arises – which it does often.

The range of spiritual approaches and practices favoured and practiced by staff include what might be defined as “new age”, green spirituality as well as orthodox faith traditions. We also have open self-defined agnostics and atheists. All are respected and acknowledged.

A structured discourse on the horizontal dimension is through a deeply considered values clarification process. A corporate values review took place in 2006 over a nine month period resulting in a refreshed values statement. The “new” values for CEL are attached at Appendix 1. They were debated, articulated and agreed upon through a collaborative process with an external facilitator through a range of staff focus groups, forums, questionnaires, away days and formal meetings. This collective approach models our core value of partnership and collaboration.

As part of our values debate CEL is highly explicit about diversity in all of its aspects including gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, disability and faith. For those who have difficulty with the vertical dimension and are resistant to bringing their personal spirituality or faith into the workplace, faith, spirituality and religion are placed within the context of diversity – in particular the UK Religious Discrimination Act. CEL has specific projects and staff support for each strand of diversity including religion and faith.

As our offices are based in London – a multi cultural, highly diverse city, we attract people of many different faiths and of no faith.

Inevitably, amidst the values debate, vertical dimension questions emerged or were already strong for a range of staff.

The vertical dimension is encouraged through individual coaching (all staff are entitled to a personal development coach), a voluntary programme of exploring the Enneagram and the Dignity at Work training days. In particular, the Chief Executive talks openly about the significance of the vertical dimension in her life and gives time to any member of staff approaching her on this aspect of themselves. Over the past

four years many staff have engaged to a greater or lesser degree with the Chief Executive on the vertical dimension and of course they do amongst themselves. This is respected as private unless voluntarily offered by the individual. The vertical dimension is also openly expressed by staff who offer sessions to other staff on yoga, meditation and massage.

One member of staff wears the hijab and requests for prayer time, observance of faith disciplines e.g. Ramadhan, Christmas are respected and facilitated.

On staff away days the vertical dimension is encouraged through providing accommodation in beautiful surroundings and with spa facilities and sufficient space for staff to nurture themselves as they choose. Powerful and profound soul/spiritual experience and discourse does take place and is shared as appropriate.

For this application we have attempted to define what might describe the collective definition of spirituality in CEL. It might look something like this:

“connection with and experience of a higher power, others, and/or nature enabling inner peace, strength, harmony, love, meaning, wisdom, joy and right action.”

The key is that we model our value of being “diverse” in that we truly celebrate and respect our differences while seeing through to the unity and harmony of what, at our deepest core, binds us together in meaningful and common purpose of our vision, mission and values within our organisational life.

3c) How do you handle concerns about diversity of religions and what boundaries do you set around employees trying to convert each other, or in any way making others uncomfortable? To what degree do employees have a choice about participating in spirituality in the workplace activities? To what degree are employees able to express their own spirituality? Is there any form of spirituality that is excluded from the organization?

Diversity awareness training is mandatory for all staff and includes space to explore all facets of diversity. As part of this training, all staff have an understanding of the context and implications of the UK Religious Discrimination Act and are aware that disrespecting other faiths and attempting to “correct” inappropriately are not acceptable within the organisation. Yet the emphasis – in line with our values – is always to hold this discourse in a respectful manner to enable people, with trained facilitators, to work through their prejudices and biases. The diversity training is explicitly designed to do this and is supported by the CEL “Dignity at Work” policy.

Staff cannot choose to opt out of the diversity training, yet in every other aspect of their own personal faith or spirituality they are totally free to engage or not, as long as the organisational values are lived and respected.

In our open plan office all kinds of spiritual symbols are evidenced, the hijab is worn as is crucifix jewellery and a Buddhist Tara sits on a desk – this is fine. Other staff who openly express their atheism or agnosticism, this is also fine. The values and culture of CEL encourage open and free expression of who you truly are as a person of faith or no faith. It is accepted that spirituality is manifested outside of traditional religion, through nature, environmental concerns, service to others, etc. To date, we have had no formal complaints or serious concerns in the faith/spirituality arena although everyone has access to the company’s complaint and grievance procedures. This may be helped by the profound discussions that take place on the Dignity at Work days and the fact that CEL is highly diverse with staff from over ten countries, and a wide range of ethnicities. Many staff have worked overseas and travelled widely to different countries and cultures; collectively we speak over fifteen languages.

Clear guidelines are set for acceptable and desirable behaviour in CEL. To give a flavour of how CEL has been proactive in attempting to foresee and prevent disharmony – see the extract from CEL’s Dignity at Work policy below.

“CEL is determined to create a harmonious working and learning environment for all its employees and will not accept any form of behaviour that contradicts this principle.

CEL accepts that, as a consequence of the Dignity at Work Principle, the dignified treatment of all will involve:

- *Eliminating discriminatory practices and guaranteeing equal treatment and opportunity irrespective of gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, race, colour, religious conviction, disability, membership or non-membership of a trade union.*

- *Not accepting behaviour that undermines an employee's self esteem, confidence or mental health."*

CEL does not tolerate behavior that constitutes discrimination, victimisation, bullying or harassment in any form, and all staff undergo mandatory training and education in the principles of Equality, Diversity and Dignity at Work.

Employees are free to express themselves as they choose, and no form of spirituality is excluded from the organisation so long as behaviour does not discriminate against or harass others. The full Dignity at Work policy is available on request.

4. Core Application

4a) Description of policies, programs or practices

Since its establishment in October 2003, 25,000 leaders, managers and practitioners have engaged with CEL's programmes and services from across the UK. We also work with educational leaders in ten different countries including a major programme with Iraq colleges.

CEL has a wide range of thirty two programmes, interventions and services which include:

1. Leadership programmes for individuals
2. A bespoke organisational consultancy service
3. Coaching, mentoring and careers services
4. National succession, talent management, sustainability and diversity strategies and services
5. Policy seminars and thought documents
6. National conferences (eight per year)
7. Original research into FE leadership practices and theory
8. Toolkits and e-learning programmes

Details are available on CEL's website or a portfolio can be submitted on request.

The Chief Executive of CEL had worked explicitly with spirituality in the workplace since 1989 and encourages all staff to explore their own spiritual journeys and paths - without coercion of any kind.

Since joining CEL in April 2004, she has proactively encouraged and enabled a range of policies, initiatives and approaches for both staff and customers that implicitly and (where appropriate) explicitly promote and enable spirituality to flourish within CEL. She is proactively and consciously supported in this by a Board member and many staff members who are equally committed and open about their own spirituality/religious paths and proactively enable spirituality in the workplace.

She was the case study for a PhD dissertation on spiritual leadership completed in 2002 and has had several articles in this arena published. She made her interest in spirituality in the workplace explicit when interviewed for the Chief executive post of CEL.

While her commitment is important many initiatives are supported and initiated by the senior team AND by individuals at every level of the organisation as they step into their own leadership, passion and desire to make a difference and to add value to customers and/or colleagues in the spiritual dimension.

There is much happening within CEL so for this application, the relevant information has been ordered into the following sections for ease of understanding for judges. The key initiator and implementer is indicated for each project while acknowledging that each project always involves team effort and commitment:

4.1 Internal work with staff and culture

- i) Values and policies
- ii) Staff support and development
- iii) Encouraging and enabling vertical spiritual discourse and exploration
- iv) Reflection and self awareness

4.2 External work with customers and stakeholders

- i) Overall approach to programmes
- ii) Explicit spiritual programmes, research, partnerships and joint projects

4.1 Internal work with staff and culture

i) Values and policies

A deep commitment to exploring, articulating and living our values is central to the behaviour of CEL's staff community and to the underpinning of our policies and procedures. We have the full range of policies expected of a nationally funded government agency. For this application we focus on our Quality Improvement and Dignity at Work policies as examples of how, at our best, we encourage working together in both the horizontal and vertical dimensions.

a) **Quality Improvement policy**

This is our most recently developed policy and it attempts to express an inspired and creative approach to ensuring quality improvement and quality assurance across CEL. The CEL policy expresses our desire to *"preserve energy and innovation while building systems that will satisfy increased scrutiny by our funders."* It has a section entitled **"Quality Spirit and Aspirations – Approach Based on Values"** which expresses the view that *"quality is energy"* rather than a procedure and that what we undertake needs to be infused with a spirit or essence of quality. It talks about our aspiration to build on our *"joy in achieving excellence"* and how we want everyone who engages in our quality procedures and with the CEL portfolio to feel *"inspired, stretched, supported, challenged, affirmed, intrigued and eager for more."* Within this "spirit and energy" of excellence the policy provides high robust, rigorous processes integrating the hard and soft features of organisational life. A copy is available on request.

b) **Dignity at Work**

This is an important policy as described in section 3c and is available on request.

ii) Staff support and development

In a recent benchmarking exercise by an external agency we discovered that CEL funds the average staff development of each member of staff at £3,700 per head compared to £500 in the UK University Business Schools evidencing a massively higher percentage than our equivalent bodies within the public sector.

Our high level of investment in staff includes individual, team and whole community events and approaches. This includes access to a coach for personal as well as professional development. All staff are offered two two-day corporate away days and two one-day strategic forum per year in addition to numerous internal events and funding of external activities relevant to their personal career development plan. Every member of staff undergoes an annual Achievement Review which is highly developmental and rewards performance. Every member of staff can achieve an annual cost of living and bonus payment of up to 6% each year. This is unique within the sector we work in as annual average increases are 2 – 3%.

In the annual staff away days the planning team led by Lynn Baldwin the HR manager, include three key dimensions; enhancing team effectiveness and spirit, nourishing creativity and the soul and facilitating the "stepping into leadership" of junior staff. Lynn is given full authority to enable this to happen. On each occasion the experience and feedback from staff away days are outstanding across all three dimensions.

Wonderful venues are used which have massages, spas and fitness facilities and are in beautiful grounds to allow nourishing, walking and reflective space.

The Chief Executive takes a direct interest in staff development and proactively intervenes to encourage and enable the vertical or transpersonal dimension in staff development.

She has introduced facilitators for staff away days, values clarification and strategic forums who have high levels of spiritual awareness and integration of professional competence and their own spirituality. This enables staff teams and individuals to explore both the horizontal and vertical dimensions as facilitators have the capacity and understanding to allow people to travel wherever they can and choose to.

She shares her love of the Enneagram by providing an external facilitator to provide open, voluntary workshops and individual coaching for staff to engage in if they choose. To date, nearly 30 staff have engaged and explored their Enneagram type in the workshops or individually and more are keen to attend. An interesting discourse pervades CEL of staff seeing and understanding more clearly their own and other people's world views and personalities, enabling them to work more consciously and effectively together. Jeanette Blakemore, the Enneagram facilitator is also able to work at the transpersonal level and has facilitated extraordinary shifts in staff awareness and consciousness. This includes administrators sharing

a meal together “mindfully”, huge breakthroughs for individuals recognising their “soul needs”, staff understanding and acknowledging the more negative aspects of their personalities; others entering a whole new dimension of self-reflection. When asked in a survey about the impact of their open coaching and Enneagram coaching several staff commented on how they felt their performance had improved that they felt less anxious and could understand others more effectively.

iii) Encouraging and enabling vertical spiritual discourse and exploration

The Chief Executive openly shares her own experiences of being a “Corporate Mystic” and formally requested that the staff away days are designed to encourage reflection and a sense of awe and wonder and soul nourishment for staff.

With open “permission” from the Chief Executive there is a freedom within CEL to fully be who you are, and to find out what that might be. A range of staff actively engage in their own faith traditions, Amina wears the Hijab, Conrad is a committed Christian, the Chief Executive is multi-faith, Deborah and Rohan are yoga teachers, Helen is an avowed humanist, Emma does not identify with “spiritual” but is one of the kindest people in the office and so on. All kinds of discourse take place and all is accepted and freely expressed in a respectful manner.

At the opening of each strategic senior management team meeting the team “connects” by sharing personal thoughts, experiences, their place of being etc. The most delicious sharings have taken place from experiencing death, being in nature to fulfilling childhood dreams. The business element of the meeting follows on from this space. Helen Pettifor, the Executive Director of Portfolio suggested this was done and the whole team agreed.

CEL recognises the value of storytelling and produces many case studies/stories of customer experience and success. It also encourages staff to share their stories. For two staff away days a “Brief History of” and the “Ever Renewing Story” of CEL were produced and shared collectively. Leaders from the sector are treated as wise elders and sit on Advisory Groups to share their learning experiences and wisdom with us to assist us in our improvements and our services.

Staff share their own stories and passions with others as part of staff development events. They also share their creativity and provide workshops in knitting, salsa dancing, hand massage, poetry and what else nourishes and inspires them.

Social events abound and we have held staff and national conferences in football stadiums, the Oval Cricket ground, country mansions, fabulous five star hotels, intriguing sustainable venues, character hotels and a river boat on the River Thames. We have a reputation for unusual, creative and inspiring events for staff and customers – all of which can facilitate the vertical if the person is ready and open.

iv) Reflection and self-awareness

CEL considers the need for critical self-reflection and awareness as central to all its programmes for customers and its staff development. Indeed one of CEL’s values is “*We are reflective practitioners continually improving our professionalism and seeking feedback*”.

A range of 360° diagnostic tools are used including GELI, Myers Briggs, the Enneagram, the CEL Leadership Qualities Framework, Facet 5 and the Hogan Derailer. We talk about Emotional Intelligence as a key component of leadership effectiveness and several of us are highly conversant with spiritual intelligence.

Overall this eclectic and diverse approach encourages a huge appetite and choice for staff, most of whom are keen and willing to engage. Every member of staff will have engaged in their own structured self awareness at some point in their employment.

Please see Appendix 2 for staff testimonials.

Internal research project – high performance and spirituality

As so much is happening in CEL it was considered time to explore spirituality within CEL in a more structured fashion.

To this end a ground breaking research project was commissioned entitled “A Study on Organisational Effectiveness and Well Being at Work.” Its brief is to study the connection between high performance, well-being and a spiritual orientation within the workplace. As part of the study, CEL has endorsed an innovative

questionnaire, the first of its kind, attempting to assess an organisation's spirituality through a series of individual, team and organisational measures. The results of this project will be published and disseminated in July 2007. Details are available on request.

4.2 External work with customers and stakeholders

i) Overall approach to programmes and services

This section attempts to give our core philosophies and a profound flavour or "taste" of our programmes and practices.

All programmes and services are highly personalised and are designed to meet the customer from where they are at, both accepting where they are in their own developmental journey and working in partnership to co-create and generate creative solutions and improvement.

Explicit spiritual language is not used unless considered relevant to the context and development work. What is explicit is that CEL facilitates building self-esteem, confidence, critical reflection, self awareness, emotional intelligence and authentic integrity in leaders at all levels in organisations. All of which we hold as key spiritual and ethical qualities manifesting on the horizontal dimension. We encourage leaders to articulate their own values and moral purpose and provide opportunities to go as far as they can and want to on the horizontal dimension.

In essence we focus on the horizontal within the work context. Facilitators and coaches are aware of occasions when individuals experience vertical dimensions on our programmes but these are private and confidential unless the individual chooses to share.

ii) Explicit spiritual support, programmes, research and partnerships

a) *Spirited leadership*

The "Spirited Leadership" introductory workshop shared the design of a nine day pilot programme to model the desired state of being and becomingness of the leader". Experiential exercises, including visualisation, meditation and silence were offered to develop the key skills of storytelling, deep inquiry and presence. The workshop was marketed as a new initiative in advanced leadership development to discourse on new perceptions of leadership purpose, potency and presence in the sector.

It was led by facilitators of Surrey University experienced in learning and leadership procedures based on humanistic and transpersonal approaches. Feedback from the programme is included in section 4b.

b) *Faith Communities Toolkit for Leaders*

In 2005 CEL produced and launched in the East London Mosque a supportive toolkit to assist sector leaders to understand different faith traditions and belief systems. It has been highly popular with over one thousand copies requested in the first three months of publication. It is in continuous usage and workshops have been introduced for future debate on issues of religious controversy and confusion since the 7th July bomb attacks in London. The toolkit was strongly supported and endorsed by faith groups and by Bill Rammell, the Minister for Further and Higher Education as well as a wide range of well known national interfaith leaders.

Initiation Lynne Sedgmore, Chief Executive, implementation Deborah Persaud

c) *Dedicated projects on faith and spirituality*

- **Leading a Faith Community: Leadership Challenges in FE**

Following the 7th July bomb attacks CEL commissioned a research project into how college leaders can develop a better understanding and improve their responses to the expectations held by their Muslim community in relation to the education of their children. The findings of this project will be published in July 2007.

Initiation and implementation – researcher Margaret Collinson

- **Leadership Formation As a Spiritual Discipline**

A research project was commissioned in February 2007 to analyse the key elements of the spiritual formation of monastics to explore how such elements might be integrated into CEL's leadership pedagogy and programmes to extend the scope of spirituality and affect what we offer into the future. This project will report in March 2008.

Initiation and implementation – tutor Simon Western

- **Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion (JMSR)**

CEL is sponsoring two workshops delivered with JMSR and has facilitated the attendance of interested employees, customers and partners. The first led by Judi Neal on Edgwalking was held in February 2007 and was a huge success. It enabled a whole new discourse on spirituality amongst those who attended.

The second workshop with Ian Mitchell on Corporate Spirituality is planned for October 2007.

4b) What has been the effect of policies, programs, or practices on stakeholders?

CEL is proactive in seeking feedback from customers, evidencing impact and illustrating how our interventions make a difference. Every programme has an evaluation process, all of which evidence positive feedback including comments such as:

“All participants had gained something from the programme and had begun to implement learning at both a personal and professional level.

Impact is occurring at largely a personal, managerial and collaborative level but over time, noticeable positive impacts have occurred beyond these levels.”

“...significant impact...certainly achieved the objectives of enabling us [the senior managers] to reflect upon our current practice, to identify the ways in which we worked individually and as teams and for therefore to work much better as a team and I think most of us felt that our individual skills improved as a result of that process of reflection, analysis and debate and to work with the consultants we work with”

“CEL has done a lot for the FE sector overall: professionalisation of training programmes; E&D agenda – providers more reflective of community ethnic mix. Must do more but has made a good start.”

We have produced over twenty case studies endorsed by clients which provide narratives of how they feel CEL has supported and equipped them in implementing their leadership and organisational performance.

We could include thousands of quotes but this one highlights growth in self-awareness:

“The signposting day was one of the most exhilarating things I have done in terms of assessment. It went through my strengths and weaknesses, about how we perceive ourselves, and I found it remarkably accurate. I learnt a lot about myself.”

Our 2006/07 portfolio is full of direct quotes from named satisfied customers. Samples include:

“it's been exhilarating and has given me a new outlook on my future. I now know that I'm capable of doing more and have set my sights higher. I've also promoted the course to colleagues.”

*“When I went back to work after my first day on the course, my colleagues were amazed at how I knew about what was going on in FE because I am such a little person in the college.
The course has made me tall.”*

“I left feeling very invigorated and enthused.”

“I gained an immense amount from the programme and was able to maintain my learning, reflection and development back at work. Thanks again for the support and guidance.”

In March 2007, CEL published the results of an independent review of “**CEL’s Impact in the FE Sector**”. In addition to the outstanding output measures of CEL the report described the strong impact that CEL interventions have had on individuals, organisations, learners, the wider environment and the Further Education sector as a whole. The review gathered evidence from interviews with senior sector leaders, participants in CEL programmes, CEL’s own programme evaluations and key findings and stakeholders. Seventeen colleges engaged, four hundred and forty four responses to an e-survey and twenty stakeholders.

Key findings include:

- There is convincing evidence that CEL is having a strong and positive impact on the Further Education sector
- CEL has been a catalyst for change
- CEL has raised the debate about leadership, management, governance and diversity issues within the FE sector
- CEL has had a direct effect on individuals and on institutions
- There is evidence that these impacts will in turn have a beneficial effect on learners
- CEL’s reflective and learning approach provides a model to the rest of the sector
- CEL has gained a high reputation within the sector
- CEL’s programmes are recognised as being relevant to the sector
- Research is a key area, providing an intelligence-led approach to programme design

The summary concludes by saying:

“We can say with a high degree of certainty that CEL, in its first years of operation, has justified its creation and lived up to the expectations within the sector. It has raised awareness of key management and leadership issues in the sector and provided at least partial solutions.”

In addition to this impact report CEL has commissioned a study on how CEL’s interventions have helped colleges improve their inspection results. It will be published in August 2007 and the first draft states that there is a high correlation.

In all CEL is leading the way in describing its impact at a meta level in addition to individual programmes – all of which have their own evaluations.

For this application we thought it valuable to add specific feedback given on the spirited leadership pilot programme for which a report was produced and co-created with participants. The report evidences the following response from participants:

“The time has flown-being in the unfolding moment – wonderful!”

“Feels exciting, pushing the boundaries of leadership”

“Affirming and energising”

“To lead a course of this nature in this sector is a brave choice.”

We frequently receive positive comments, letters and e-mails from funders and stakeholders. Two powerful recent ones include a personal endorsement from the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair for the 2006/07 CEL Annual Review and a complementary letter from the Minister for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education (see Appendix 2 for their comments).

Staff continually state how they feel that the culture and ethos of CEL liberates and supports them.

From every perspective CEL is perceived to be having a powerful and profound impact. It is also evidencing this impact in a rigorous and robust manner.

To give a more detailed analysis of staff impact on their professional, personal and spiritual growth six extracts of testimonials from CEL staff are included as an Appendix 2 to this section.

4c) What has been the effect of policies, programs, or practices on nominee's business success?

It is repeatedly commented on by Board members, staff, customers and government officials that the culture and ambiance of CEL is highly creative, entrepreneurial and has "something different" from other public sector organisations. When visiting the office visitors frequently comment on how positive, warm and purposeful CEL "feels". CEL's stakeholders and customers have very strong confidence in CEL and there is a clear consensus that CEL is "for us and of us". When explained this means that customers find CEL to be truly of service to them, always respectful, deeply passionate, highly professional, with high quality and quick to admit to our own mistakes and to take full responsibility for moving relationships and products back to the full satisfaction of customers. Over four years we have only received four formal complaints – all of which were resolved to the customers "delight". We encourage feedback at every stage of our work and take full responsibility and appropriate action for our part. Even if on close consideration we have evidenced that the customer may have responded/behaved inappropriately we will take full responsibility if it can lead to mutual resolution. Sincere, unreserved apologies will be made at senior levels and by the Chief Executive where this assists progress. Simultaneously we would offer our perspective on the situation to assist the learning, self awareness and understanding of clients.

In addition to this CEL has over performed annually on every aspect of its business targets. The government set targets of 75% customer satisfaction, 1,500 participants and a breakeven budget for the first three years. By March 2006 CEL had achieved 94% customer satisfaction, 20,000 participants and annual surpluses for 2 years of over £1m. Last years (2006-7) performance achieved 97% customer satisfaction, 12,000 participants and £1.4m surplus.

Staff morale is very high and staff retention is good at 93%. In its four years of trading CEL has produced massive income growth of 200% over that period while maintaining customer satisfaction at such high levels. Cash flow is extremely healthy, fixed costs are low and the annual surpluses of over £1m are re-invested into the development of new products and services.

Currently CEL's core funding provided by the UK Government is only 50% of the total revenue, it was 100% in 2003/04. Overall CEL's funding profile is very strong with major diversification into new contracts and areas of work.

For 2006/07 CEL recruited 12,225 participants against a target of 8,349. This compares to 10,381 participants for the same period last financial year 2005-06, representing an 18% increase on last years recruitment figures. CEL has overachieved its business plan target by 46%.

In order to understand and evidence if there is a direct relationship between the conscious spiritual support, attitudes and approach within CEL the Chief Executive commissioned a research team to explore and evidence this hypothesis. The project, as detailed in section 4a "A Study on Organisational Effectiveness and Well Being" will report in June 2007. the project has involved a range of forums, staff discussions, focus groups, interviews and questionnaires to explore how staff bring their spirituality to work, if they experience "flow" and what they believe contributes to the continual high performance of CEL.

The unique aspect of this research is that two simultaneous inquiries are taking place by two research teams:

- a) Does spirituality/well being influence CEL's performance and if so, how?
- b) Is CEL a high performing organisation against traditional performance benchmarks?
- c) Is there a correlation between spirituality and organisational performance

Inevitably this inquiry is generating a significant structured discourse on well being and spirituality within CEL it will enable us to evidence more explicitly the relationship between our values, culture and performance.

Staff have numerous opportunities to feed in their interests, ideas and concerns through staff forums, away days, achievement review and regular team meetings. This feedback is treated with the greatest respect and the general feedback is:

"[My Manager] has really aided in my personal and professional development...Thank you for all your assistance and support of my development over the course of this last year. I have learned so much."

"[My Manager's] passion and knowledge about CEL has been an inspiration and a push for me to grow and achieve."

“The coaching offered by CEL has been beneficial to me personally.”

“I was listened to, my analysis...was accepted and valued, as were my ideas for the future...I found the approach taken to be positive and supportive.”

“For me, CEL has provided a safe and stimulating arena in which I have the trust to be myself and grow myself.”

At this stage in our understanding for this application we can only express our experience and view that most staff in CEL, including the Board believe that the open authentic, caring and professional culture of CEL contributes strongly to our high performance. The Chief Executive is convinced that attention to both vertical and horizontal dimensions of spirituality is key to our success and is keen to evidence it through the research project.

Another measure of success within CEL is the high level of participation in staff appraisals (100%), social events (75%), staff away days (84%) and the increasing number of social events being spontaneously organised and attended by staff.

New staff entering CEL consistently comment on the freedom, the valuing and the support they receive which is given so easily, freely and naturally. Most staff talk openly about how their confidence, self esteem and productivity have all risen considerably since they joined CEL.

A national measure of our success in diversity has come through being placed forty seventh in the Stonewall best one hundred companies index in 2006. This is a UK index of the countries best gay friendly employers.

4d) How has the organization been a model or inspiration for others companies in your industry or outside of it?

CEL has established itself as a champion, with leading edge practice in diversity and in being at the leading edge of leadership development – which includes the spiritual and faith dimension of leadership. This has been assisted by the terrorist bomb attached of July 7th in London and the growing imperative to understand the nature of religious conflict and discord within the UK. It is still an unusual, and perhaps, courageous thing to be explicit about the spiritual dimension of leadership within the public sector leadership arena. There are fifteen public sector leadership centres within England and no other centre has developed explicit work on leadership and faith or the spiritual dimension of leadership.

CEL has been a model for others in:

- a) Producing the first national Faith Toolkit for leaders
- b) Sponsoring a national review on “Making Space for Faith” – in the learning and skills sector
- c) Piloting the “Spirited Leadership” programme
- d) Launching the Faith Toolkit in the East London Mosque at Ministerial level
- e) Investing an average of £3,700 per member of staff annually
- f) Introducing an annual achievement bonus scheme closely aligned to values and diversity as well as performance
- g) Holding events in creative, inspirational and unusual venues
- h) Researching and benchmarking itself on both traditional HR performance criteria and the spiritual dimension
- i) Having endorsement from the Prime Minister in its 2006/07 Annual Review
- j) Introducing an innovative staff questionnaire on Spirituality and Well Being

In addition the Chief Executive has a very high profile within the arena of spirituality at work and the spiritual dimension of leadership. She has given national keynotes and facilitated workshops and “conversations” for Surrey University, the Ethelberg Centre, NEAFE, the United Nations and Findhorn. She chairs the UK Interfaith Seminary and has published four articles sharing her experiences and views on spirituality. Her spirituality interests are included in her “usual” biography.

CEL has established itself as the national agency willing to champion faith and spirituality as a vital part of the FE education curriculum and a key aspect of the work of college leaders in strong partnership with National Ecumenical Agency of Further Education (NEAFE).

CEL's partnership with NEAFE is establishing CEL as a key source of knowledge, support and advice to Ministers, particularly to Bill Rammell, Minister of FE and HE who is also the Government's minister for multi faith matters. He holds CEL in very high regard evidenced by his public comments and personal launch of our publications and attendance at our national events.

CEL launched the Faith Toolkit at NEAFE's national conference entitled "Leadership in a Pluralist Society" CEL's Chief Executive launched the toolkit with Bill Rammell, the Minister of Further and Higher Education and gave a keynote on "Helping Sector Leaders" this keynote was published in the Journal of Chaplaincy in Education Spring 2006.

CEL has supported, sponsored and advised NEAFE on the initiation and implementation of a national inquiry into the opportunity for spiritual and moral development in FE entitled "Making Space for Faith".

The results of the inquiry will be launched by the Minister of Education and published under both the CEL and NEAFE logos on 16th July 2007.

The inquiry asks CEL to carry out three key tasks:

- 1 The CEL's Faith Communities Toolkit for colleges should be developed further and disseminated more widely
- 2 Leadership and Equality and Diversity programmes for governors and principals and staff could include more specific attention to the contribution of values, beliefs and faith as a dimension of achieving excellence
- 3 CEL should continue to take the lead for the sector in modelling ways in which the dimensions of "*spirited leadership*" and "*the spirit at work movement*" can be appropriately adopted by the sector.

5. Stakeholder References

Name and contact details of referees

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Relationship to CEL

Trustee of CEL
Chair of NEAFE
Key partner with CEL

Lead independent researcher on CEL's internal study:
"A Study on Organisational Effectiveness and Well Being at Work"

6. Sources of additional information on the applicant

CEL's website address is <http://www.centreforexcellence.org.uk/>

Attached to this document are:

Appendix 1 Vision, Mission, Aims and Values

Appendix 2 Staff testimonials, Staff Feedback on Enneagram Workshops and Coaching and testimonials from Prime Minister Tony Blair and Bill Rammell, Minister for Further and Higher Education.