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Talent Retention scheme

One of the worst aspects of a recession is the human cost: the many people that lose their jobs.

All too often there is also a big cost to the economy: research from previous downturns shows that many companies cut too many jobs and then struggle to fill the gaps when the upturn comes.

Here at the RDA we are hoping to break this cycle with a new Talent Retention matching service that aims to keep highly skilled individuals both in work and in the South West.

Launched late last year [2009], the scheme is being trialled regionally in advanced engineering, a key sector in the South West due to our important aerospace, defence, medical, automotive and marine segments.

Industry figures from the Midlands show that 70 per cent of individuals leaving the aerospace industry through redundancy during the last recession not only left their employer, but left the sector.

The new scheme aims to help both individuals that are out of work or are at risk of redundancy as well as businesses. For the latter, it can be used to help with both recruitment or managing a redundancy programme.

The RDA is funding the scheme - modelled on one used in the East Midlands after the 9/11 terrorist attacks - to the tune of £1.7 million between now and 2012, and intends to roll it out next in the creative/digital media industry, another of our region's key sectors.

Because it is fully funded, there is no cost to either individuals or businesses. The scheme is being run on our behalf by the West of England Aerospace Forum, the membership trade association, and EEF, the manufacturers' organisation.

There will be three principal areas of activity. First, we will help identify new opportunities for individuals within the sector, for example, in areas such as business start up, teaching and research. Second, we will provide career management, redeployment and signposting services for individuals at risk of redundancy. Third, both individuals and businesses will have access to a sector specific rapid match web-based recruitment system.

If the pilot projects in advanced engineering and creative industries are successful, then we will consider adding other sectors in future.

It is early days but the results so far have been encouraging. We began accepting vacancies in late November and so far we have had up to 115 positions to advertise across the region at any one time, a number we expect to increase steadily in the months to come. We are helping two companies manage redundancy programmes, one in Plymouth and one in the Bristol area, and are likely to help a couple of others

in the coming weeks. We have also begun to work with individuals offering specific one to one career counselling, including CV writing and brushing up on interview skills. And from later this month we plan to hold roadshows across the region to let more businesses know about this free new service.

If you would like to know more, please go to www.talentsouthwest.org.uk or email: enquiries@skillsretention.co.uk or call: 01275 878231.