



Ireland

ICT Skills Conversion Programme

ICT Skills Conversion Programme (Joint programme name: Springboard+)

Description

Timespan

From March 2012 - present

Stage

FULLY OPERATIONAL

Focus area



MATCHING SKILLS FOR TODAY'S JOB MARKET

Foundations

Policy area



HIGHER EDUCATION

Aimed at building the supply of high-level ICT graduates.

Policy goal

Up-skilling and re-skilling graduates. Explicitly addresses the current shortage of skills in the ICT sector.

Mismatch

EXPLICITLY DESIGNED TO ADDRESS SKILL MISMATCH

Directly targets the specific shortages identified in the market.

Aim of policy instrument



ADDRESS SKILL SHORTAGES



OTHER

Up-skilling and re-skilling of graduates.

Legal basis

MINISTERIAL ORDER

Administrative level

NATIONAL

Main responsible body

Department for Education and Skills/Higher Education Authority (HEA)

Stakeholders



GOVERNMENT (CENTRAL & REGIONAL)



TRAINING PROVIDERS (PUBLIC/PRIVATE)

The stakeholders involved in the 'Action plan for jobs' initiatives are: Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Forfar); the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; the Department of the Taoiseach; the Science Foundation Ireland; Enterprise Ireland; IDA Ireland; the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and the Irish Payment Services Organisation (IPSO). The ICT Skills Conversion Programme is a short/medium term measure of the Higher Education Authority (HEA), within the ICT Action Plan, to develop a sustainable domestic supply of high quality ICT graduates. It offers an intensive NFQ level 8 higher diploma ICT skills conversion programme by higher education providers in partnership with industry. The Action Plan has a target of doubling the output of high quality computing graduates from undergraduate programmes between 2012 and 2018, with the HEA, who's role is also to report output figures on the programme's progress.

Funding

Funding source is Higher Education Authority and Department of Education and Skills. They funded approximately €4m in two funding years (2012 and 2013), about 800 places each year. The 6,471 places now on offer represent an investment of €27,438,000 from the National Training Fund, with co-funding from the European Union under the European Social Fund, as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, inclusion and Learning 2014-2020. Since 2011, over €134m has been allocated to Springboard+ providing for over 35,000 places.

Intended beneficiaries

Upskilling and reskilling NQF Level 8 jobseekers/undergraduates with cognate/numerical skills and underlying aptitude for programming.

Processes

Use of labour market intelligence



INFORM DECISIONS ON COURSE FUNDING/PROVISION



INFORM CAREER-MAKING DECISIONS OF STUDENTS



INFORM JOB-SEARCH DECISIONS OF UNEMPLOYED

Graduates who do not have an existing background in ICT are offered to partake in the free course, which has a strong emphasis on the practical elements of the sector. The course teaches the fundamentals (either over a 1 year full-time programme, or a 2 year part-time), and then students have the opportunity to apply these skills to a 12 week industrial placement. The policy goal is achieved through ensuring access to valuable work experience, as well as skills training in a sector that has been identified as being in need.

Financial schemes

Services are free, and income support can still be retained while on the course. Although participation in the programme does not create any entitlement to receive an income support payment from the Department of Social Protection (DSP), the DSP agreed that unemployed people who had been in receipt of income support for at least three of the six months preceding entry to a course are still eligible to retain their income support as part of a bespoke version of the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) scheme. The approval of the Department of Social Protection to this arrangement was critical to facilitating participation of unemployed

graduates in the conversion programmes.

Frequency of updates

Every three years the instrument is assessed based on the success of graduates. If areas of improvement are noted, the model is then adapted. In 2017, the model was also updated to become more flexible and inclusive.

Development

Following the evaluation of phase 1, phase 2 in 2013 was agreed, but adapted using feedback from participants, providers and industry partners on provider tendering and application management systems, course application process, structure of the programme, information and marketing of courses, and arrangements for income and other supports for participants. Input was also given from the Expert, i.e. Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland. This informed a number of changes, specifically: increased emphasis on the provision and quality of work placement opportunities, a requirement for stronger industry supports, and a revision of the skills areas targeted to include software development and data analytics. Then, as part of Springboard+ 2017, homemakers were allowed to apply for the first time, and more part-time ICT conversion courses were offered to encourage flexibility and prevent dropouts (which was identified as the biggest problem in 2014s evaluation).

Barriers

No stated barriers

Success factors

The commitment to funding and collaboration of various stakeholders (Government, education and training providers and businesses) has led to the success of the instrument. The output of computer graduates in Ireland had increased by 25% in 2013 over the last two years, and a doubling of graduate output was predicted to be achieved by 2015 - three years ahead of the Action Plan target of 2018.

Monitoring

The rate of employment following the course, dropout rate, pass/fail rate, employer/participant feedback. Evaluations are carried out by the governing bodies involved.

Innovativeness **VERY INNOVATIVE**

By combining with the part-time scheme Springboard to form Springboard+, the overall scheme has been made more accessible for learners. Under this initiative, sectors with identified skills needs are targeted, and courses are provided in ICT,

manufacturing, entrepreneurship, hospitality and financial services.

Sustainability

Evidence of effectiveness

The instrument has a high impact, as it links with other industry-led programmes. Offering 768 places countrywide per year. The benefits have exceeded expectations, which has resulted in the instrument (under Springboard+) being continued. When the initiative was first introduced in 2011, unemployment was at 15%. Unemployment has now dropped to 6.8% and over 200,000 more people are at work than in 2012. High level of withdrawal from programmes (for various reasons such as finding employment, experiencing financial difficulty, personal, etc) has proven costly, based on the cost of funding for each trainee, as well as the loss of opportunity for the individual. Measures to address and improve this have been outlined in the evaluation report, such as extra guidance for students and the consideration of additional financial support.

Engagement of stakeholders

The HEA carries out evaluations to promote engagement and improvement, whilst also measuring the instruments progress. These evaluations include: detailed online reporting by ICT skills and Springboard course providers on academic and employment-related outcomes for participants; surveys of graduates and continuing students; focus-group meetings and interviews with employers and course providers; and data scans of the Live Register status of graduates and of continuing students by the Department of Social Protection.

Transferability **EASILY TRANSFERABLE**

There is nothing specifically unique to Ireland in the development of the programme. The programme has recognised a key skill demand (for ICT specialists) and then marshalled training providers to equip people with the skills that industry requires.

Sustainability

The initiative will continue as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 and the joint Government-Industry ICT Action Plan 2014-2018, so is expected to continue.

Momentum

Momentum

Description

Timespan

2013-2014

Stage

NO LONGER OPERATIONAL

Funding for the instrument has ceased, after a full and comprehensive evaluation.

Focus area



MATCHING SKILLS FOR TODAY'S JOB MARKET

Foundations

Policy area



ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET POLICIES

Links policies towards the people furthest from the labour market to areas with skills shortages.

Policy goal

Improving employability of the long-term unemployed. Momentum consists of a number of projects aimed at improving the employability of individuals who are long-term unemployed. Participants receive training in areas with recognised skill shortages, where existing vacancies have been identified. The projects include an element of on-the job training in the form of work experience modules, as well as development of the skills required to obtain and retain employment. Momentum will also include projects specifically aimed at individuals aged under 25 who are long-term unemployed.

Mismatch

EXPLICITLY DESIGNED TO ADDRESS SKILL MISMATCH

The training offered is designed by providers to meet the established labour market needs of the time, and places a premium on helping participants who are furthest from the labour

premium on helping participants who are furthest from the labour market. The support offered to address skills mismatch is: expert career guidance for participants, job preparation skills training, work placements where participants are in close contact with their employer (SMEs are targeted), and support on sustainable employment.

Aim of policy instrument



UPSKILL AND MATCH SKILLS OF UNEMPLOYED

Legal basis

MINISTERIAL ORDER

Administrative level

NATIONAL

Main responsible body

SOLAS, the agency responsible for Further Education and Training, which is the responsibility of the Department for Education and Skills.

Stakeholders



TRAINING PROVIDERS (PUBLIC/PRIVATE)

Momentum was administered by SOLAS on behalf of the Department of Education & Skills, who funded it through the Labour Market Education & Training Fund (LMETF). Access to Momentum courses was through the Department of Social Protection Intreo Centres, Employment Services offices or Local Employment Services offices only.

Funding

The total investment for the Momentum project is €20,000,000, of which the EU's European Social Fund contributed €10,000,000 from the Operational Programme "Human Capital Investment" for the 2007 to 2013 programming period.

Intended beneficiaries

The programme funds the provision of free education and training projects to allow 6,500 long-term unemployed (who are unemployed for 12 months or more) to gain skills and to access work opportunities in identified growing sectors.

Processes

Use of labour market intelligence



INFORM JOB-SEARCH DECISIONS OF UNEMPLOYED

Occupational theme clusters were identified in response to LMSI trends at the time. These clusters were: 1. ICT, Digital Media, Gaming, and Telecommunications; 2. Transport, Distribution and Logistics, Sales and Marketing; 3. Health Care, Social Services, Manufacturing, Natural Resource Energy Conservation, Food Production and Processing; and 4. Under 25's Individual Needs, Placement, Progression and Employment. In targeting these specific areas, the policy goal was achieved through clear, explicit focus on its target goals and cohort.

Financial schemes

The training offers outcome-based payments to employers. Only when verified by data, would the following be paid for under the programme: recruitment, training, placements, support and outcomes. This promotes success, and ties expenditure to successful outcomes in order to provide 'value for money' through investment. For Participants on Momentum projects, they will continue to receive: their weekly Social Welfare payment from the Department of Social Protection, this includes payment for any Qualified Adults and Child Dependants (subject to meeting all existing relevant qualification criteria), any payment of Rent Supplement or Mortgage Interest Supplement they were entitled to before starting on the Momentum initiative. However, participants will not receive any additional payment while participating on the Momentum project.

Frequency of updates

Not known

Development

Due to the flexible design of the approach, it was the providers who adapted rather than the instrument itself. For example, the model underestimated the level of in-programme support and post-programme support required by participants, but it was the providers who demonstrated resourcefulness in adapting to this challenge, rather than the instrument. However, the robust data generated at each stage of implementation allowed for any issues to be flagged, which could then inform the providers' actions.

Barriers

One barrier is the high drop-out rate of participants. From the 6,574

starters, 5,894 were present in the 3rd week of the programme, and only 3,500 completed the programme. However, this was accounted for in part through recruiting more people in the initial stages of the instrument.

Success factors The verified premium placed on results promoted success and tied expenditure to outcomes. Similarly, the positive engagement between employers and training providers during the training allowed for greater success, and resulted in the participants gaining skills, experience and confidence.

Monitoring In the Final Evaluation report, the instrument's success was measured by the number of participants who had signed off the Live Register at the end of the programme (50%). The progress during the programme was measured by comparing the number of starters, against the number of finishers, then within the finishers the number who had entered full-time employment, part-time employment, or further education. Full-time employment was achieved by 24% of finishers and a further 6% achieved part-time employment. Progression to further education was achieved by 8% of the finishers. These indicators were also broken down between the four theme clusters. Indicators are measured 2 months beyond each programme, to ensure validity of success.

Innovativeness **VERY INNOVATIVE**

Combines various approaches to reach those furthest from the labour market. Additionally, it deployed a 'delivery-outcome' based system to fund training based on meeting key performance indicators. It was the first time such a system had been tried in Ireland and it proved successful, as this approach motivated training providers to ensure they offered relevant course content and delivered quality placements to participants.

Sustainability

Evidence of effectiveness A total of 3,532 long-term unemployed people had completed a Momentum training course by December 2014. Almost 40% of this group went on to secure a full or part-time jobs, or go on to further education. The end result meant that 52% of participants that started the programme (6,500) were 'signed off' the unemployment register by the end of the project period. The final evaluation report suggests that the outcomes from the initiative compare well with comparable programmes in other countries. As expected, final cohort wages were above the Eurostat low-wage calculation, and 40% of the 3,500 participants achieved positive

outcomes. The Momentum programme successfully met its objectives, which were to distribute training and employment opportunities across the country. The programme's interventions reached all age groups, including young people, while catering for individuals with different levels of education and experiences of unemployment. The Programme had a total sanctioned capacity for a target of 6,500 participants, but only 3,500 completed training. So only half of the cohort would benefit, with the drop out rate costing Momentum.

Engagement of stakeholders

The instrument was designed on the assumption that the positive engagement between employers, training providers and stakeholders was crucial for success. Stakeholders were involved in different stages of the instrument's implementation, for example: SOLAS (Ireland's Further Education and Training Authority) partook in the pre-qualification process with various other contractors, and criteria provided by DSP were used as a guidelines for participant eligibility.

Transferability

EASILY TRANSFERABLE

The outcome-based approach to funding training providers is similar to the Work Programme in the UK and Job Services Australia. So there is potential for this type of approach to be transferred elsewhere.

Sustainability

The instrument is no longer operational.

Momentum II

Momentum II (M2)

Description

Timespan

2015-2017

Stage

NO LONGER OPERATIONAL

The second part of the Momentum programme concluded in

December 2016.

Focus area



MATCHING SKILLS FOR TODAY'S JOB MARKET



MATCHING SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

Foundations

Policy area



ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET POLICIES

Links eligible jobseekers to training that is tailored to local job vacancies and the needs of local employers.

Policy goal

Improving employability of the long-term unemployed, as well as first time unemployed people following the economic crash, and skills shortages. Momentum consists of a number of projects aimed at improving the employability of individuals who are long-term unemployed. Participants receive training in growing sectors of the economy. It provides long-term unemployed people with access to a range of education and training projects, work placement/support and relevant industry and NFQ accreditation.

Mismatch

EXPLICITLY DESIGNED TO ADDRESS SKILL MISMATCH

Skills mismatch is directly tackled using a delivery-outcomes-based funding model. This was designed to provide a system of clear incentives to providers through financial premiums, which were granted based on the success of skills development. The providers were focused on the need to teach skills training relevant to the local economy, which was paired with a working placement and access to higher level qualifications (NVQ levels 4-6).

Aim of policy instrument



UPSKILL AND MATCH SKILLS OF UNEMPLOYED

Legal basis MINISTERIAL ORDER

Administrative level NATIONAL

Main responsible body SOLAS, the agency responsible for Further Education and Training, which is the responsibility of the Department for Education and Skills.

Stakeholders  **TRAINING PROVIDERS (PUBLIC/PRIVATE)**

Momentum was administered by SOLAS on behalf of the Department of Education & Skills.

Funding The total investment for M2 is €20,000,000.

Intended beneficiaries The programme funds the provision of free education and training projects to allow 6,500 long-term unemployed (who are unemployed for 12 months or more) to gain skills and to access work opportunities in identified growing sectors. M2 was also adapted to better benefit young people and young people NEET. Rather than having a separate strand as in M1, M2 offered an extra four weeks of work placement for young people on the same programme as the adult jobseekers, to account for any gaps in existing work experience.

Processes

Use of labour market intelligence  **INFORM JOB-SEARCH DECISIONS OF UNEMPLOYED**

Evidence was drawn from sectoral employment data to indicate areas where there was most growth.

Financial The training (offered by training providers, with employer input on the

schemes

training-room content) offers outcome based payments to employers. Almost a third of the per-participant payment was attached to the achievement of an employment outcome; this was an increase of 10% on Momentum 1. Payment for each training provider/employer varies. However, it is estimated by the payment claim by the Training Provider, which included numbers of participants at each stage (such as post-induction participant numbers, week 11 participant numbers). Therefore, a third of the total payment offered depended on the number of participants successfully making it to the 'employment outcome stage', which was assessed 2 months after the programmes completion. This promotes success, and ties expenditure to successful outcomes in order to provide 'value for money' through investment. For Participants on Momentum projects, they will continue to receive: their weekly Social Welfare payment from the Department of Social Protection, this includes payment for any Qualified Adults and Child Dependants (subject to meeting all existing relevant qualification criteria) any payment of Rent Supplement or Mortgage Interest Supplement they were entitled to before starting on the Momentum initiative. However, participants will not receive any additional payment while participating on the Momentum project. The main incentive is for participants to gain skills that will increase their wages long term through employment and skills acquisition.

Frequency of updates

No longer operational. Based on the lessons learnt from M1, M2 was updated to have an increased work placement focus (which was ensured through a contractual requirement) to make sure that participants gained and had evidence of on-the-job skills.

Development

From M1 and the evaluations that followed, the following adjustments and improvements were made to M2: 1) Strengthened relationship with the Department of Social Protection: DSP positively engaged with SOLAS on the structure of, and recruitment to the projects. This level of commitment was important in overcoming recruitment challenges that were present in M1; 2) Additional Induction Module: An additional Induction element was added to all Momentum projects. It was expected to lead to greater motivation to complete the project and will improve the client's commitment to full engagement; 3) Increased Work Placement Focus: A contractual requirement was included in Momentum to ensure that all the participants are assigned a period of work placement; and 4) Increased Employment payment: Almost one-third of the per-participant payment was attached to the achievement of an employment outcome; this was an increase of 10% on Momentum 1.

Barriers

As with M1, M2 aimed to assist 6,500 long-term unemployed people to access relevant training that would lead them towards employment in growth sectors of the economy. As with M1, M2 also experienced high drop-out rates, with only 3,282 out of 6,134 finishing the programme course (a total 13,974 participants were initially referred to the

programme). Specifically for the under 25 age group, the addition of the extra work placement block contributed to drop-out rates (as well as issues relating to personal reasons, health and attendance). Although the work placement is one of the instrument's strengths, it also caused challenges and concerns amongst participants (in terms of confidence level and pressure). However, these challenges remained consistent throughout each of the programme's phases, therefore making them difficult to overcome.

Success factors The changes made and learned from the evaluation of M1 improved the success of M2.

Monitoring As with M1, M2's success was measured by the number of participants who had signed off the Live Register at the end of the programme. The progress during the programme was measured by comparing the number of starters, against the number of finishers, then within the finishers the number who had entered full-time employment, part-time employment, or further education.

Innovativeness **VERY INNOVATIVE**

It deploys a 'delivery-outcome' based system to fund training based on meeting key performance indicators. It was the first time such a system had been tried in Ireland and it proved successful.

Sustainability

Evidence of effectiveness The long-term period of observation post-M1 allowed M2 to have greater impact and run more smoothly. The model was transparent, with clear data available at all stages to show how effective the return to work process was. The data and evaluation of the instrument have shown that higher outcomes were achieved in M2 than in M1 across recruitment, training, placement and employment. This demonstrates that the most effective element of the instrument is in its continuous evaluation. A total of 34% of participants had obtained full-time employment in M2, and a further 11% had obtained part-time employment. These results are more than those achieved in the first programme, where 24% of participants had obtained full-time employment, and 6% had obtained part-time employment. The outcome for M2 is considered positive, because evidence shows that long-term unemployed (LTU) people have LTU exit rates to employment of around 10%. In addition, M2 took place in a better economic environment than M1, which meant that greater benefits were

economic environment than M1, which meant that greater benefits were expected irrespective of the improvements made. That said, M2 tended to concentrate on a more traditional group of long-term unemployed people, whereas M1 concentrated on those who had been made unemployed as a consequence of the economic downturn.

Engagement of stakeholders

The instrument was designed on the assumption that the positive engagement between employers, training providers and stakeholders was crucial for success. This was addressed by the model's design (which was changed based on the evaluation and observation of M1), which allowed for a crucial structural link between labour market activation programmes and employers, where a reciprocal relationship sees the employer provide real work, based on a comprehensive period of state funded training, and placement provided by the public or private sector provider. The newer model also allowed the Employer to influence training-room content with insights on the sector skills gaps that need to be addressed.

Transferability **EASILY TRANSFERABLE**

The outcome-based approach to funding training providers is similar to the Work Programme in the UK and Job Services Australia. So there is potential for this type of approach to be transferred elsewhere.

Sustainability

The programme ran until the beginning of 2017, and there are currently no published plans for M3.

Skillnets

Skillnets

Description

Timespan

Skillnets was established in 1999, and is still running.

Stage

FULLY OPERATIONAL

Focus area



MATCHING SKILLS FOR TODAY'S JOB MARKET



MATCHING SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

Foundations

Policy area



ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET POLICIES

Skillnets is dedicated to promoting and facilitating training and upskilling in Ireland by engaging groups of companies in the same region/sector with similar training needs, as well as offering training networks for businesses and employees, and offering free training to eligible unemployed people. As part of Skillnets, other programmes have been implemented such as: Skillnets' Future Skills Needs Programme (FSNP). FSNP aims to develop new programmes that address emerging skills gaps within growth sectors. Other programmes that fall under the instrument are: the Training Networks Programme (TNP), the Finuas Programme, Jobseekers Support Programmes (JSSP) and ManagementWorks. The instrument targets both the labour market's existing and emerging needs through these programmes.

Policy goal

The policy instrument aims to address skills mismatch/gaps and to meet the evolving needs of the labour market through training and upskilling, with company groups, businesses, employees and the unemployed. The goal of Skillnets is to sustain Ireland's national competitiveness. The current rationale behind Skillnets is based on Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025, which is to increase the supply of skills to the labour market, and to strengthen the role of employers and training providers. Through its different programmes, it meets the policy goal by offering support and funding to all levels of the labour market, e.g. by developing new programmes that address emerging skills gaps with FSNP, or supporting management development training opportunities and mentoring support for SME managers with ManagementWorks.

Mismatch

EXPLICITLY DESIGNED TO ADDRESS SKILL MISMATCH

By investing in talent strategies and training networks led by the enterprises who then deliver specific training programmes across

...enterprise and service sectors training programmes across a broad range of industry and service sectors nationwide tailored to their own needs. For example, through Skillnets' FSNP, the development of new training programmes that directly address skill gaps is supported. To gain support from Skillnets in this area, proposals must demonstrate a clear demand from enterprise, identify a proven gap in supply, and represent an innovative response in terms of programme design and effectiveness.

Aim of policy instrument



UPSkill AND MATCH SKILLS OF UNEMPLOYED



ADDRESS SKILL SHORTAGES



FACILITATE JOB/CAREER TRANSITIONS

Legal basis

MINISTERIAL ORDER

Administrative level

NATIONAL

Main responsible body

The Department for Social Affairs and Protection, with funding from the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

Stakeholders



TRAINING PROVIDERS (PUBLIC/PRIVATE)



EMPLOYER FEDERATIONS



GOVERNMENT (CENTRAL & REGIONAL)



SOCIAL PARTNERS



TRADE UNIONS

Skillnets is funded from the National Training Fund (NTF) through the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The Department of Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation (DJEI) highlighted the policy priorities for Skillnets to address through its coordination of Action Plan for Jobs. The Department of Social Protection (DSP) offered collaborative support in the implementation of the Job-seekers Support Programme (JSSP). The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) identified specific skills needs and the capacity to add new jobs in specific sectors. Skillnets is actively supported and guided by national employer and employee bodies such as Ibec, Small Firms Association (SFA), Construction Industry Federation (CIF), Chambers Ireland and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). Other stakeholders include: industry representative groups, employee representative groups, training providers, and HE/FE institutions, who had input in the learning networks and training programmes.

Funding

The instrument is funded through the NTF in Ireland. The total funds committed between 2008-2017 are €167,412,000. The breakdown of these funds is as follows:

Year: 2017

Funding Level: €18,200,000

No of networks: 63

Year: 2016

Funding Level: €16,200,000

No of networks: 63

Year: 2015

Funding Level: €16,200,000

No of networks: 62

Year: 2014

Funding Level: €15,690,000

No of networks: 60

Year: 2013

Funding Level: €14,500,000

No of networks: 64

Year: 2012

Funding Level: €14,500,000

No of networks: 57

Year: 2011

Funding Level: €14,500,000

No of networks: 72

Year: 2010

Funding Level: €15,000,000

No of networks: 78

Year: 2009

Funding Level: €16,595,000

No of networks: 107

Year: 2008

Funding Level: €16,595,000

Funding Level: €26,027,000

No of networks: 123

Intended beneficiaries

The intended beneficiaries are companies wishing to upskill and train their businesses and employees, as well as job-seekers hoping to re-enter the labour market. For job-seekers, benefits are gained through the initial training, as well as available work experience through Skillnets' JSSP programme. For companies wishing to upskill, benefits are found through tailored training specific to their needs, whether they be financial training, managerial training, or industry specific training.

Processes

Use of labour market intelligence



A wide variety of data sources are utilised. The priorities of Skillsnets are set by the DJEI, drawing on analysis undertaken by, for instance, the EGFSN.

Financial schemes

Skillnets receives funding from the National Training Fund (NTF), and supports/funds groups of companies with similar training needs through subsidised training networks. Additionally, free training opportunities are also offered to eligible unemployed people under the scheme, including those receiving job-seekers allowance.

Frequency of updates

Annually

Development

Skillnets programmes are adjusted year-on-year, based on recommendations put forward through an evaluation process and published evaluation reports. From the 2016 evaluation, adjustments such as new key performance indicators have been put forward, as well as the priority to adapt to the challenge of Brexit, in terms of assisting enterprises to prepare as well as proposing the establishment of a dedicated, cross-sectoral programme that exclusively addresses Brexit-related skills requirements. In each evaluation, the need to address 'deadweight' is included (referring to instances where the outputs or outcomes of a programme would have occurred in the absence of the programme), and each year changes are made to minimise its occurrence.

Barriers

JSSP faced barriers due to declining unemployment levels in Ireland, resulting in less demand for unemployment training. Brexit also worked against the Training Network Programme, due to high degrees of uncertainty by Member Companies. As stated in the 2016 report, 42% of firms had already seen an impact from exchange rate fluctuations after the Brexit referendum. To overcome this, suggestions on how to prepare for Brexit have been put forward in 2017 for Skillnets implementation. From the 2016 evaluation of Skillnets, the remaining challenges faced include the need for a rigorous focus on ensuring relevancy and quality of training, developing capacity within the networks to respond rapidly to increasing demand, and continuing to demonstrate value for money in the deployment of NTF funds.

Success factors

The instrument was praised by the OECD for its decentralised model, which generates highly specialised knowledge on employment and training related issues, resulting in better alignment between labour market needs and the supply of skills. For example, the instrument funds and supports groups of companies in the same region/sector with similar training needs, through training networks. These networks are led and managed by the enterprises themselves to design, manage and deliver specific training programmes across a broad range of industry and service sectors nationwide.

Monitoring

The indicators used to measure progress vary between each of Skillnets' programmes. For example, TNP considers the number of trainees on the programme, the number of training days, and then compares this to previous years in order to check progression. The progress of the overall instrument is also measured through surveys with managers, trainees etc in each programme, the findings of which are compiled in the final evaluation.

Innovativeness **VERY INNOVATIVE**

The instrument's model is free to adapt to the changing needs of each enterprise, which makes it innovative and able to have a larger impact. Many of the programmes also promote lifelong learning and skills acquisition, as well as targeting future skills needs for priority sectors in the Irish economy. Therefore, increasing the future impact of the instrument in relation to the labour market.

Sustainability

Evidence of effectiveness

From the 2016 evaluation, Skillnets delivered a total of 344,434 training days to 50,373 trainees, exceeding the overall targets set by the DES by 20% and 38% respectively, which impacted the accelerating recovery in the Irish economy by helping to address the increased demand and growth in training activity. The evaluation also highlighted continued positive employment retention and progression outcomes for trainees. The benefits of Skillnets exceeded expectations in 2016 in relation to the training offered, as follows:

- Total Trainees = 50,373 in 2016 (vs. DES target of 42,000), an increase of 3% from 2015
- Total Training Days = 344,434 (vs. DES target of 250,000)
- In-Employment Training Days = 277,701 (vs. DES target of 195,000), an increase of 6% from 2015
- 66,733 training days to 5,915 Unemployed/Jobseeker Trainees (vs. DES target of 55,000 days)

Engagement of stakeholders

By including employers and training providers in the decision making process, the role of stakeholders is seen to be prominent. Additionally, a renewed Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies was launched by the Irish Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in 2016. Skillnets adopted the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies in conjunction with the renewal of its mandate and funding agreement with the Department of Education and Skills (DES), and as a consequence Skillnets' boards (Evaluation & Performance Monitoring, Audit, Finance & General Purpose) have meetings to ensure their compliance (17 were held in total in 2017: 6 with the core board, 4 with evaluation, 5 with audit, and 2 with finance).

Transferability **EASILY TRANSFERABLE**

This instrument could be transferred to any MS wishing to increase the supply of skills to the labour market and to strengthen the role of employers in training provision. As Skillnets' training networks are led and managed by the enterprises themselves to design, manage and deliver specific training programmes, the instrument could be easily transferred. As all learning networks are composed of clusters of companies from the same sector, geographical location, or a combination of both it is easy to bring the firms together and for the networks to be created.

Sustainability

The instrument has developed and been successful (with Governmental backing) since it began. At present Skillnets has a planned strategy until 2019.

Source URL: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/matching-skills/country-fiches/ireland>