

Evaluation of Skillnets TNP and Finuas Network Programmes - 2012

Submitted to

Skillnets Ltd

Prepared by

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Executive Summary

Introduction and Background

This report is submitted to Skillnets Ltd by Indecon International Economic Consultants. The report concerns an independent evaluation on the Training Networks Programme (TNP) and the Finuas Networks Programme ('Finuas') during 2012.

The background to this evaluation has been the development, since 1999 and 2009 respectively, of the Skillnets-funded and delivered Training Network Programme (TNP) and Finuas Programme. The programmes, which are funded from the National Training Fund (NTF) through the Department of Education and Skills, operate on the basis of a networks model, whereby networks of enterprises engage in the design, management and delivery of specific training programmes to employees as well as to jobseekers across a broad range of industry and service sectors nationwide.

The overall objective of this assignment was to conduct an evaluation of the TNP and Finuas programmes during 2012. The evaluation takes place at programme, training activity and network levels, and includes an assessment of the Job Seekers Support Programme (JSSP).

Conclusions from Evaluation

Funding and expenditures

Skillnets supported a total of 56 operational networks – 53 within the TNP and three under the Finuas programme – during 2012. These networks were broadly spread at regional and thematic levels, supporting activities across a diverse geographic and sectoral basis.

In terms of expenditures, overall, Skillnets remained within its budget. Across the main TNP, Finuas and constituent JSSP, FSNP and NCPD programmes, network expenditure totalled €22.8 million during 2012 across 56 networks. The majority of network expenditure arises within the 53 networks in the TNP Main Programme (€17.3 million or 75.8%) while the three Finuas networks account for €1.7 million or 7.3% of total spend (see below). Skillnets assists unemployed jobseekers via its main programmes (TNP and Finuas) and through the JSSP. A total of €3.4 million of expenditure took place through the JSSP during 2012, with 82% of this funded by the State.

The enterprise-led approach to Skillnets facilitated an increase in network funding, as matching funding increased by 1.7% from 2011 to 2012. This increased funding leverage had the overall effect of increasing total network funding by just less than 1% in 2012.

Financial Overview - Expenditure by Source and Programme in 2012					
Programme	No of Networks	Actual Expenditure	Grant Funding	Matched By Companies	% Matched
TNP	53	€17,295,009	€8,242,102	€9,052,907	52%
FINUAS	3	€1,656,270	€807,412	€848,858	51%
JSSP	43	€3,392,877	€2,789,432	€603,455	18%
NCPD	18	€266,535	€193,704	€72,831	27%
FSNP	4	€207,730	€158,716	€49,014	24%
Total	56	€22,818,421	€12,191,366	€10,627,055	47%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database					

Training activities

Skillnets exceeded its overall activity targets, as set by the Department of Education and Skills, for 2012. The key achievements are summarised in the table below and include:

- Total Trainees = 43,974 => 10% above target.
- Total Training Days = 233,068 => 16.5% above target.
- Unemployed/Jobseeker Training Days = 53,381 => 12.4% ahead of target.

Number of Trainees and Training Days – All Programmes – 2012			
Trainee	Department of Education and Skills Targets - 2012	Skillnets End of Year Total - 2012	End of Year Total as % of Target
Employed Trainees	32,000	36,962	116%
Unemployed Trainees	8,000	7,012	88%
Total Trainees	40,000	43,974	110%
Employed Trainees – Training Days	152,500	179,687	117.8%
Unemployed Trainees – Training Days	47,500	53,381	112.4%
Total Training Days	200,000	233,068	116.5%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			

Training Networks Programme (TNP)

At the programme-specific level, the aims of the TNP are centred on four themes. These relate to training that influences the transferability of skills, fosters company diversification or transferability with a sector or to another sector, facilitates increased performance and growth in priority sector and enhances the general competency skills of lifelong learners.

Indecon's assessment of the TNP indicates that overall during 2012 the programme had a successful year and continues to achieve its objectives, while also improving on a number of aspects relative to 2011. The key achievements of the TNP during 2012 were as follows:

- TNP networks spent a total of €17.8 million during 2012
- 5,099 training courses provided in 2012, in addition to 232 networking events
- 35,829 employed trainees => 19% above Skillnets target
- 167,120 employed trainee training days => 3% ahead of Skillnets target
- 3,898 jobseeker trainees => 95.3% of Skillnets target
- 12,973 jobseeker training days => 63.8% of Skillnets target

We also highlight below a number of further salient findings from our evaluation of the TNP:

- ❑ An expansion in the reach and coverage of networks, with an increase in number of Member Companies and scale of networks: 31% increase in average no. of companies per network in 2012; while 94% are SMEs.
- ❑ In relation to the current status of trainees, it is notable that despite the present very challenging labour market and high level of unemployment across the Irish economy, over 95% of individuals who undertook employee training under the TNP during 2012 are currently in employment.
- ❑ 35% of TNP jobseeker trainees are currently in employment, while 40.2% held employment at some stage since completing their training.
- ❑ A high proportion of trainees report positive impacts on skills and high levels of satisfaction with their training.
- ❑ As part of our research, Indecon also sought the views of network members companies regarding the overall effectiveness of TNP networks. On a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being very effective, we found that 75.2% of companies indicated their opinion that their network was either very effective or effective in meeting their training needs.

Finuas Networks Programme

The Finuas Networks Programme, which was established in 2009, is in its fifth year of operation. The programme is dedicated to specialised training within the international financial services sector. Finuas comprises three networks, namely the Law Society Finuas Network, the Summit Finuas Network, and the Aviation Finance Finuas Network. Finuas' objectives are focussed on developing skills for existing and potential staff, increasing the supply and mix of training, provisions for industry-specific courses, provisions for high level education, the promotion of a responsive training system, the promotion of best international practice in training, and the support of jobseekers in updating their skills and increasing their chances of employment.

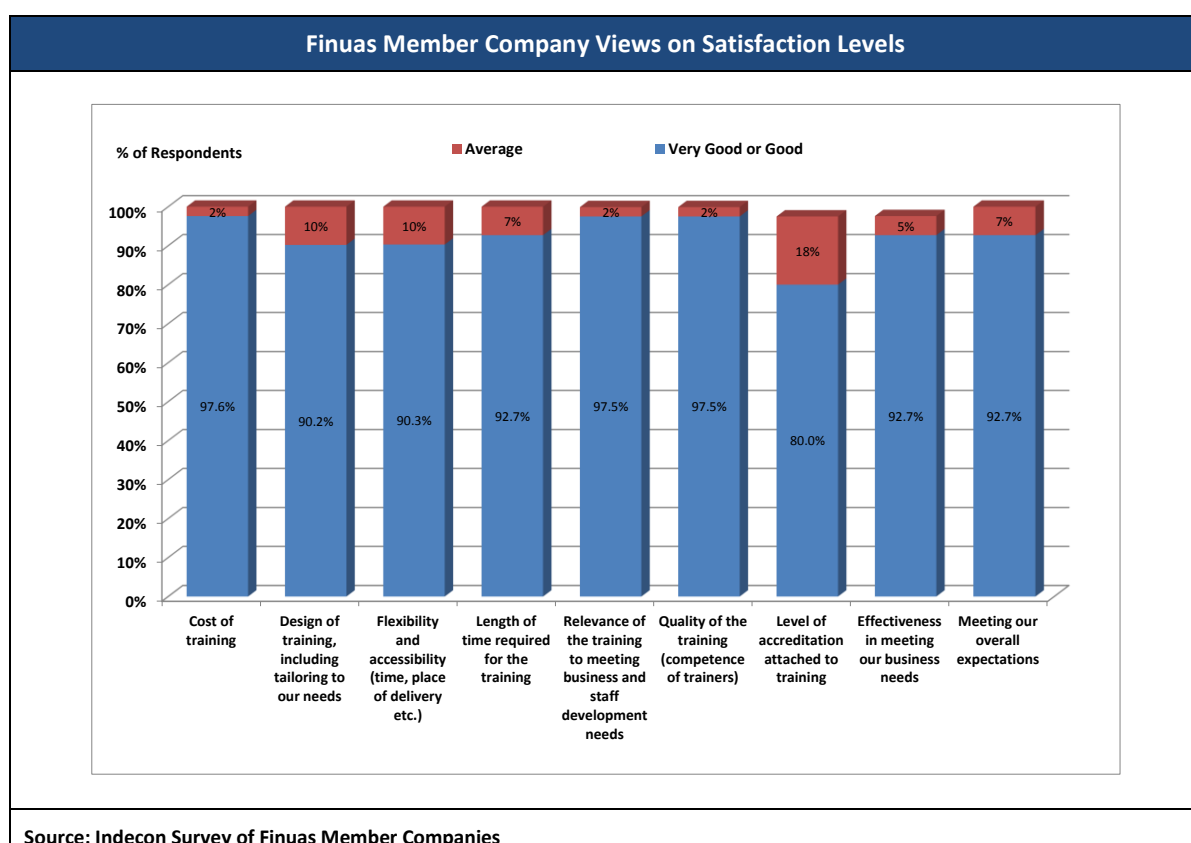
Our evaluation of Finuas during 2012 has shown that the programme continues to achieve its overall objectives to provide high quality training to companies and trainees in the international financial services sector. The key achievements of Finuas during 2012 were as follows:

- Overall expenditure = €1.7 million.
- The number of active Member Companies increased by almost 10% to 259. 89% are SMEs.
- 166 training courses were provided, with high proportion of new courses and customisation.
- 1,133 employed trainees were assisted.
- 12,567 training days were provided to employed trainees => 20% above Skillnets target.
- 176 jobseeker trainees and 713 training days on main programme.

Additional salient findings from the evaluation of Finuas included the following:

- ❑ Finuas networks have continued to expand their membership, with the number of active Member Companies increasing by almost 10% to 259 in 2012 from 236 in 2011. 89% of these companies are SMEs, while 48% are small businesses employing fewer than 10 persons.
- ❑ Indecon's research among Finuas trainees who undertook training as employed trainees during 2012 indicates that despite the challenging labour market environment, 98% of individuals are currently employed, with 96% employed in the same organisation in which they undertook their Finuas training.

- Finuas trainees generally show high levels of satisfaction with their training, particularly in relation to the quality of tutors/trainers (with 87% of trainees being either very satisfied or satisfied), the work relevance of the training (with 91.7% being very satisfied or satisfied), and the value of skills and qualifications attained for their work (86.5% very satisfied or satisfied). Overall, 83.3% of trainees indicated that Finuas training met their expectations.
- Finuas Member Companies indicate very high levels of satisfaction in relation to the cost of training, the relevance of training to meeting business and staff development needs, and the quality of training in terms of the competence of trainers, with over 97% of companies being either very satisfied or satisfied in each case.
- Overall, 92.7% of Member Companies responding to Indecon's research stated that Finuas had met their expectations during 2012 (see figure below).



Overall, Finuas has been successful in meeting its objectives and a particular achievement since its establishment has been the collaborative development of innovative new training programmes in emerging growth areas. These have included postgraduate diplomas and certificates in International Financial Services Law (with UCD) Sustainable Finance (with DCU) and Islamic Finance (CIMA).

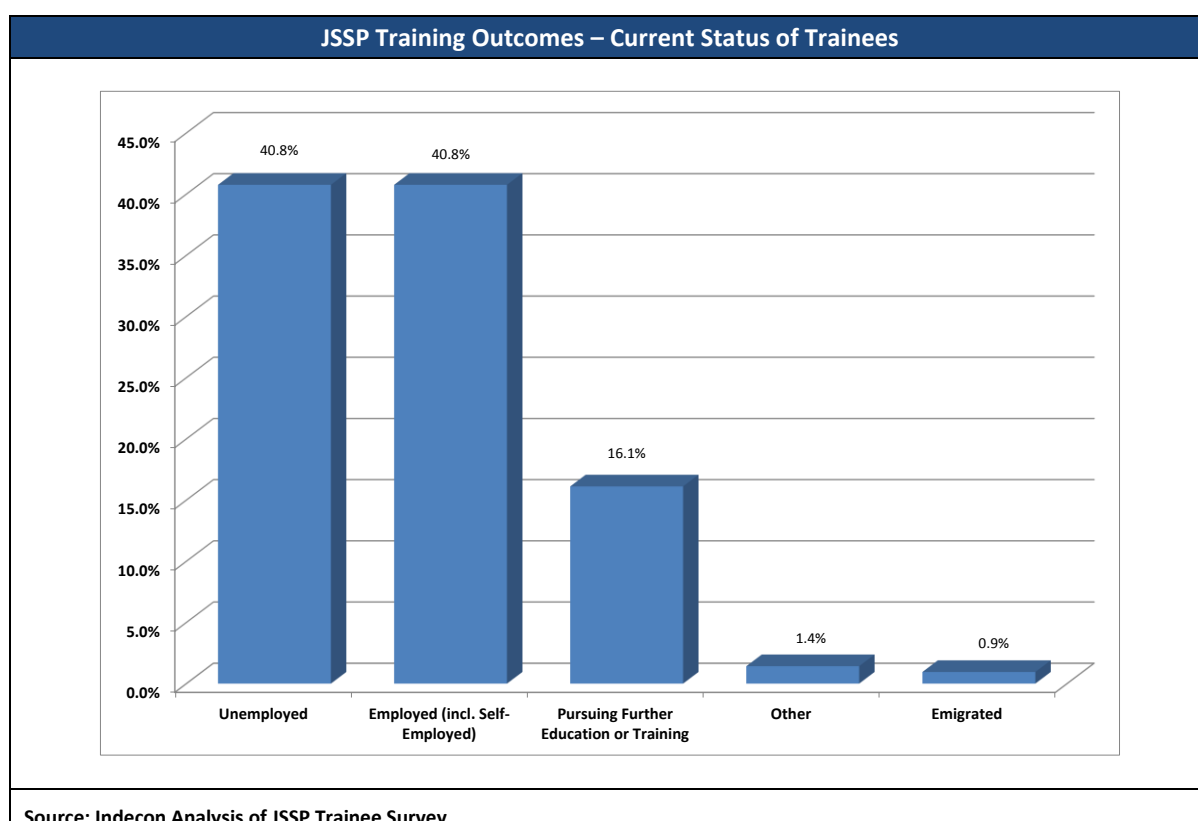
Assisting Jobseekers – Job Seekers Support Programme

Skillnets has been active in providing training for jobseekers since 2010. In addition to provision of training to up-skill the unemployed via the main TNP and Finuas programmes (on a cost-neutral basis), Skillnets also assists jobseekers through the dedicated Job Seekers Support Programme (JSSP). JSSP was established in 2010 and incorporates training as well as a work placement component. The programme also interacts with other activation measures including JobBridge.

The key achievements of the JSSP during 2012 were as follows:

- 43 networks participated in the programme, with expenditure of €3.4 million, €2.8 million or 82% of which was publicly funded, with the balance contributed by network Member Companies who participate in JSSP conversion programmes.
- A total of 385 training courses were delivered to 2,938 trainees (11% ahead of Skillnets target) over a total of 39,695 training days.
- The typical duration of JSSP training is longer than for jobseekers under TNP: 13.5 days versus 3.3 days average.
- 55.6% of JSSP trainees during 2012 were previously unemployed for one year or more (compared to 43.1% across Live Register).
- In terms of progression outcomes, 47.3% of trainees indicated that the programme fully or partially helped them to find a job, while 40.8% of trainees are currently in paid employment and 16.1% are pursuing further education or training.

The training plus work placement model within JSSP would appear to provide additional benefits for trainees over and above the core training-based model under the main programmes, while there have been a number of successes in developing and operating JSSP conversion programmes where companies have worked with networks to re-train jobseekers into new fields.



Value for Money - JSSP

An important issue concerns the extent of value for money achieved in the operation of Skillnets training programmes. As part of the evaluation process, Indecon has developed an estimated value-for-money assessment focussing on the JSSP programme, based on a similar methodology to that applied by Indecon in its recent evaluation of the JobBridge National Internship Scheme. The overall value for money from the scheme is estimated by reference to the potential net savings to the Exchequer in the form of reduced social welfare payments through removing individuals from unemployment and the additional tax revenues generated from employment, adjusted to reflect estimated deadweight. These adjusted benefits are then related to the costs of operating the JSSP programme. Our analysis focused on the cohort of scheme participants who undertook training and a work placement under JSSP during 2012.

The results of the value-for-money assessment of the JSSP suggest that even under conservative assumptions for deadweight, based on the progression outcomes examined, the programme would achieve a positive net benefit to the Exchequer if participants secure employment and remain off the Live Register for about seven months. The results also suggest that if on average participants stay in employment for more than a year, the net benefits increase significantly. The findings highlight the importance of on-going monitoring of the scheme, however, as if employment outcomes are not monitored after a short period, the impact and value for money achieved by the scheme could be reduced.

Network-level performance

An important issue in the context of assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the networks model applied by Skillnets concerns the performance of individual networks. Expenditure budgets and targets for training activities are set at network level by Skillnets on an annual basis. Based on data provided confidentially to the evaluation team by Skillnets, Indecon has analysed network-level performance in relation to expenditures and training activities relative to budgets and targets set by Skillnets for 2012. The analysis indicates that while Skillnets overall is performing well and achieving its targets, there are variations in activity levels relative to Skillnets own internal targets across networks. Skillnets maintains strong controls on network-level performance and the key issue in this context concerns the need for on-going focus on ensuring that persistent under- or over-performance at network level is examined within the context of annual planning and budgeting.

Programme Deadweight

We also as part of this evaluation assessed the extent of deadweight present in the Training Networks Programme and Finuas programme. Deadweight pertains to the extent to which the outputs or outcomes observed under a programme would have occurred in the absence of the programme. Any such publicly-funded programmes will inevitably have some element of deadweight, but the extent of such deadweight is important.

We assessed the likely extent to deadweight through our research among TNP and Finuas trainees and Member Companies. In the case of the TNP, we found that 30.7% of trainees indicated that they would have undertaken similar training elsewhere with another, non-Skillnets provider. When a similar question was asked of Member Companies, we found that in 20.4% of cases companies stated that they would have arranged alternative training no different to that received through Skillnets. In relation to Finuas, 31.0% of trainees and 15% of Member Companies indicated that they would have undertaken similar training elsewhere with another provider. While these findings are indicative of the presence of deadweight, from previous evaluations conducted by Indecon this level of deadweight is not excessive compared to some programmes.

Overall efficiency and effectiveness

In relation to cost efficiency, overall TNP networks have demonstrated improved efficiencies during 2012, although the extent of such efficiencies varies significantly across individual networks. Overall, management expenditures across the networks were 5% under budget, while measures such as average cost per trainee and average cost per Member Company also showed a decrease during 2012. Within the Finuas programme, networks experienced a reduction of 15% in the average overall cost per training day in 2012 compared to 2011, although the average cost per trainee increased by 10.7%.

Recommendations

A number of potential enhancements have been identified by Indecon on foot of the detailed analysis and assessment undertaken in this evaluation. The table below summarises our recommendations, which are designed to further enhance the effectiveness and impacts of the programmes.

Recommendations from Evaluation	
No.	Recommendation
1.	Additional mechanisms are required to facilitate optimal collaboration and enhanced knowledge transfer and coordination between network Member Companies in informing annual and on-going Training Needs Analysis.
2.	Further development of tailored, industry-specific and company-driven conversion programmes should be undertaken within the JSSP to maximise benefits for companies and unemployed trainees, particularly in the construction and other sectors experiencing high levels of unemployment.
3.	More proactive focus is required to securing work placements for JSSP participants, while the duration of these placements should be examined to maximise the benefits for trainees. This should include further development of synergies with other activation programmes including JobBridge.
4.	The application of candidate screening/profiling should be expanded to better match jobseeker attributes with training programmes and work placements.
5.	Enhanced options should be considered to maximise the accessibility of training to companies and employed trainees, and to incentivise attendance and completion of training programmes among jobseekers. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Greater use of eLearning/online platforms; (b) Training delivery for employed trainees should ensure that timing and duration of training, and lead-in times to examinations are consistent with trainees' work commitments and optimal learning approaches; (c) Provision of assistance to jobseekers to meet transport and subsistence costs where such costs are a significant barrier to participation; and (d) Expand the provision of short duration training events on a formalised basis to incentivise greater participation among senior management.
6.	Networks to work with Member Companies to develop longer-term integrated training plans to assist trainees to achieve career progression goals, as well as address companies' shorter-term skills requirements.
7.	Expanded performance indicators should be considered, to include measures on trainee progression outcomes.
8.	Further impetus is needed to minimise the complexity of compliance requirements for networks, while continuing to ensure best practice in network governance. This includes overhaul of SAM (Skillnets Activity Management database), in addition to streamlining of procedures for clearance of grant payments, minimising the extent of on-going reporting and ensuring sufficient prior communication to networks of any changes in procedures.
Source: Indecon	

Overall Conclusion

Overall, this evaluation indicates that Skillnets' TNP and Finuas programmes continue to meet their broad objectives. Skillnets overall exceeded the targets set by the Department of Education and Skills for 2012, supporting a total of nearly 44,000 trainees and providing over 233,000 training days, including over 53,000 training days provided to jobseekers. Indecon's research also shows that Member Companies and trainees continue to indicate high overall levels of satisfaction with the quality and other attributes of training provided, as well as with the management of the networks. There is also continued unanimous support among Member Companies for the networks model.

The Finuas programme has been successful in meeting its objectives and a particular achievement since its establishment in 2009 has been the collaborative development of innovative new training programmes in emerging growth areas such as International Financial Services Law, Sustainable Finance, and Islamic Finance.

This evaluation has also highlighted positive progression outcomes for trainees, including high levels of employment retention and evidence of progression to employment among jobseekers trainees. Over 40% of JSSP trainees have found employment since completing their training, while Indecon's assessment indicates that the programme delivers positive value for money to the Exchequer.

1 Introduction, Background and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

This report is submitted to Skillnets Ltd by Indecon International Economic Consultants. The report concerns an independent evaluation on the Training Networks Programme (TNP) and the Finuas Networks Programme ('Finuas') during 2012.

1.2 Background and Scope of Evaluation

The background to this evaluation has been the development, since 1999 and 2009 respectively, of the Skillnets-funded and delivered Training Network Programme (TNP) and Finuas Programme. The programmes, which are funded from the National Training Fund (NTF) through the Department of Education and Skills, operate on the basis of a networks model, whereby networks of enterprises engage in the design, management and delivery of specific training programmes to employees as well as to jobseekers across a broad range of industry and service sectors nationwide.

1.2.1 Scope and terms of reference

The overall objective of this assignment was to conduct an evaluation of the TNP and Finuas Programmes requiring a detailed assessment of the networks under each programme, as follows:

- ☐ Finuas Programme – including the training activity of three networks in the International Financial Services sector;
- ☐ Training Networks Programme (TNP) – involving the evaluation of training activity under 53 networks; and
- ☐ Evaluation to cover the following four separate funding strands (with different areas of focus):
 - ⇒ Main Programme Activity (TNP Main /FINUAS);
 - ⇒ Jobseekers Support Programme (JSSP);
 - ⇒ New Certified Programme Development (NCPD); and
 - ⇒ Future Skills Needs Programme (FSNP).

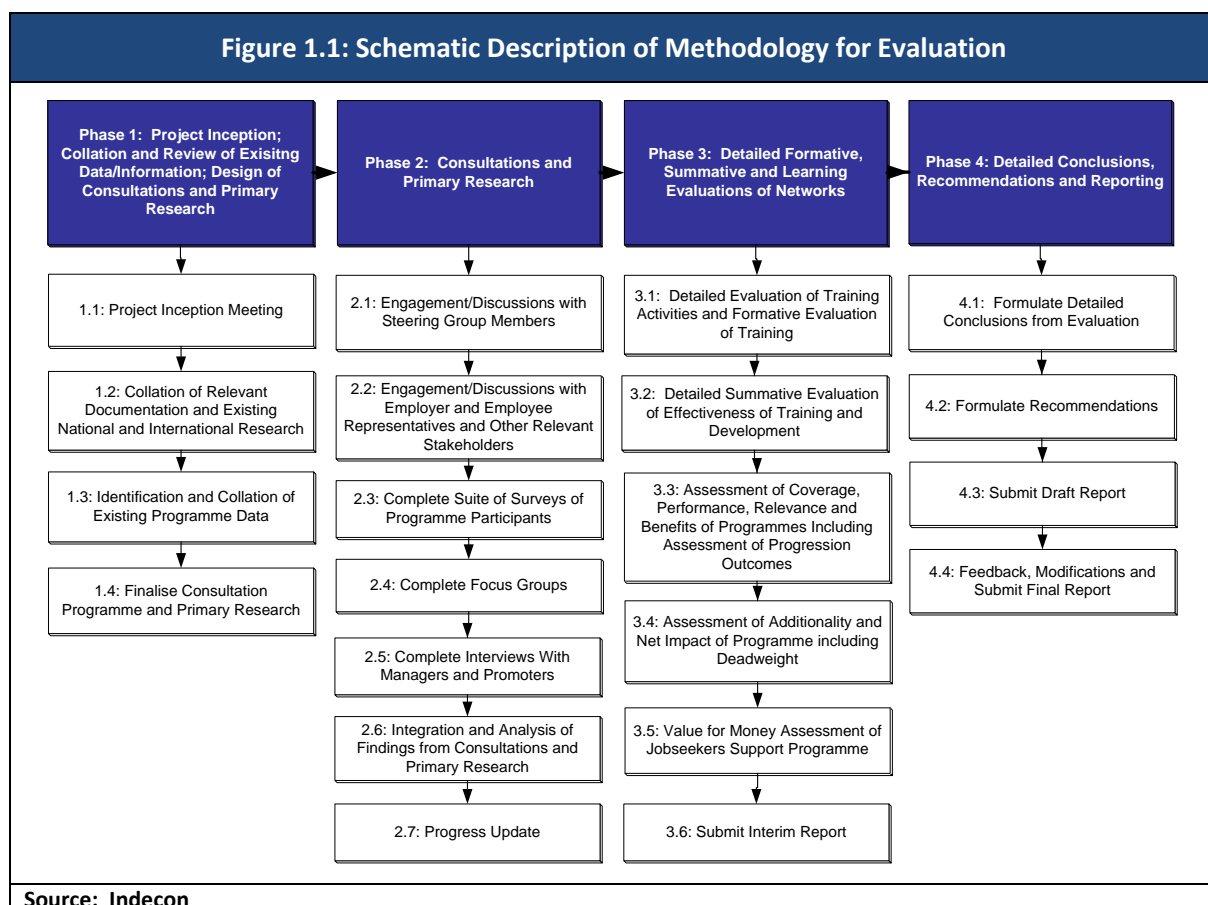
The evaluation herein takes place at several levels of analysis, namely:

- ☐ At Networks level, including:
 - A Summative evaluation to determine whether training and development was effective and achieved its objectives as stated at the outset of the process;
 - A Formative evaluation based on qualitative analysis of training as it is occurring to determine whether improvements or adjustments are required to improve the quality of the learning or ensure that it is reflective of the target groups' needs; and
 - Assessment of learning benefits, in terms of the extent to which the trainee can transfer the learning acquired back to his/her job performance.

- At Programme level, the evaluation integrates the available quantitative data with qualitative analysis of the impact of the programme on following areas:
 - Impact on the thematic areas as outlined in the application;
 - Overall impact of the TNP programme;
 - Overall impact of the Finuas programme;
 - Benefits to and progress of the unemployed trainees that have attended training; and
 - Suggestions for improvements for the future.
- At Training Activity level, in terms of training undertaken by each of the Networks, the evaluation identifies, quantifies where appropriate, and draws conclusions on a range of aspects. These include the performance of the programmes, the quality of training including levels of satisfaction among companies and employees, the relevance and benefits of training to companies and employees, the suitability of the training and network model, and the net impact of the programmes, taking into account deadweight.

1.3 Methodology for Evaluation

A schematic summary of the methodology and work programme applied in completing this evaluation is presented below. The methodology was designed to address each aspect of the terms of reference and to ensure a rigorous evaluation of the TNP and Finuas programmes.



1.3.1 Primary Research

As part of the research process, Indecon has undertaken significant primary research along a number of strands. This includes detailed engagement with a range of stakeholders to ensure that the widest set of views was sought as well as survey and focus group research supplemented by a stream of interviews. These elements are described below.

Consultations with Programme Stakeholders

Indecon's consultation with stakeholders was made up of engagement with a number of parties via initial written correspondence followed by face-to-face discussions with a number of high-level stakeholder groups. These included:

- ❑ Steering Group Members, including Skillnets management;
- ❑ Employer representative organisations;
- ❑ Employee Representatives; and
- ❑ Skillnets Network Managers and Promoters.

The objective of these consultations were to seek the views and inputs of these stakeholders in relation to issues concerning the overall design, scope, relevance and effectiveness of the programmes and networks, the management and governance of the programmes, and to identify challenges and options for the future development of the programmes.

Survey Research

Indecon undertook, with the aid of Skillnets management, a series of survey streams in order to collect detailed information at network, programme and training levels. The surveys included the following:

- ❑ Survey of Network Managers – identifying views and inputs on a range of issues surrounding the design and relevance, management and delivery of the programmes and training activities, strengths and weaknesses of the programmes, the challenges/constraints they face and recommendations for future development of the programmes and associated networks;
- ❑ Survey of Network Promoters – identifying views and inputs of promoters in relation to the achievements, strengths and weaknesses of the programmes, the challenges/constraints they face and their recommendations for future direction;
- ❑ Survey of Network Member Companies – identifying the experience and views of companies on the coverage, relevance and benefits of training, levels of satisfaction, strengths and weaknesses, and requirements for future development of the programmes;
- ❑ Survey of Employed Trainees of TNP and Finuas – to understand employed as well as un-employed trainees' experience of the programmes, including the transferability of learning to the workplace and the impact and benefits of training for employee progression;
- ❑ Survey of Jobseeker Trainees of TNP and Finuas – assessing the impacts and benefits of TNP and Finuas training for jobseekers on the main programmes; and
- ❑ Survey of Job Seekers Support Programme (JSSP) Trainees – assessing the impacts and benefits of training and work placements provided to jobseekers under the JSSP.

A breakdown of the response number and response rates achieved across the surveys undertaken is presented in the table below. This indicates the very high response rates and response numbers achieved across the surveys undertaken.

Table 1.1: Evaluation Surveys – Breakdown of Response Numbers and Response Rates			
	No. Surveys Issued	No. of Responses	Response Rate %
Network Promoters	56	51	91.1%
Network Managers	56	56	100.0%
TNP Member Companies	4,681	345	7.4%
Finuas Member Companies	92	41	44.6%
TNP Employed Trainees	16,323	1,255	7.7%
Finuas Employed Trainees	662	153	23.1%
Unemployed Trainees - TNP	2,163	274	12.7%
Unemployed Trainees - Finuas	109	40	36.7%
Unemployed Trainees (TNP and Finuas)	2,272	314	13.8%
Job Seekers Support Programme (JSSP)	1,463	245	16.7%
Source: Indecon			

Focus Groups

To enable more detailed examination of issues emerging from the survey research and stakeholder consultations, Indecon undertook a series of focus groups with:

- ☐ Finuas Trainees
- ☐ Finuas Member Companies

These focus groups assisted in developing further a range of findings that emerged through our initial primary research surveys. Within the focus group setting, Indecon was able to gain a deeper understanding of various aspects of Skillnets' programmes.

Interviews with Network Managers and Network Promoters

To complement the detailed findings from the above primary research surveys, we also undertook a series of telephone interviews with a sample of network managers and network promoters. In total, 15 network promoters and managers were interviewed. The objective of these interviews was to provide the opportunity for promoters and managers to shed further light on a range of issues including network management, efficiency and effectiveness.

1.4 Report Structure

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- ❑ Section 2 sets the scene for the subsequent detailed evaluation by recapping on the economic and policy context, in addition to providing a description of the structure and focus of the Skillnets' programmes, and an overview of financial performance and training achievements during 2012.
- ❑ Section 3 of the report details Indecon's in-depth evaluation of the Training Networks Programme. This evaluation includes an analysis of the inputs, activities, output and outcomes of the programme throughout 2012. We also present detailed findings on the progression outcomes of trainees as well as a range of programme effectiveness measures.
- ❑ Section 4 provides details of Indecon's evaluation of the Finuas Programme. This evaluation runs along similar lines as that of the Training Networks Programmes.
- ❑ Section 5 focuses on an evaluation of jobseeker trainees that undertook training within the TNP and Finuas programmes. This section of the report outlines the progression outcomes of TNP and Finuas jobseekers and the extent to which these programmes provided benefits to trainees in terms of employment and educational advancement.
- ❑ Section 6 of the evaluation relates to Indecon's assessment of the Jobseekers Support Programme, which is the dedicated programme operated by Skillnets since 2010 to assist unemployed jobseekers. The analysis in this section includes a detailed value-for-money assessment of the programme.
- ❑ Section 7 presents a review of the Skillnets network model and includes a range of views from Member Companies, network managers and promoters on various aspects of Skillnets programme operation. This section also accounts for a value-for-money analysis of the programmes in question.
- ❑ Section 8 integrates the detailed analysis and assessment undertaken in the preceding sections to deliver our overall conclusions and recommendations.

1.5 Acknowledgements and Disclaimer

Indecon would like to thank a number of people for their support throughout this evaluation. We would firstly particularly like to express our gratitude to management and staff at Skillnets for their assistance and inputs, including Alan Nuzum (CEO), Ian Menzies (Head of Finance), Brian O'Shaughnessy, Carl Blake, Tracey Donnelly, Niamh Desmond, Dave Flynn, Brenda Sheridan, Noreen Fitzpatrick, Donal O'Donovan, Mick McHugh, Sinead McGovern and Caitríona King. We are also very grateful to Skillnet Board members, including Domhnall MacDomhnaill, Brendan McGinty, Paul O'Brien, Ian Talbot, and Mairead Divilly, in addition to Marie Bourke at Forfás, for their valuable inputs. We would also like to thank all network promoters and managers, in addition to network Member Companies and trainees throughout the country who responded to our survey research participated in focus group workshops and provided inputs to throughout the evaluation. The usual disclaimer applies and the analysis and findings in this independent report are the sole responsibility of Indecon.

2 Overview of Context for Evaluation and Description of Skillnets Activities

2.1 Introduction

This section sets the scene for the subsequent detailed evaluation by recapping on the economic and policy context, in addition to providing a description of the structure and focus of the Skillnets' programmes, and an overview of financial performance and training achievements during 2012.

2.2 Policy Context for Evaluation

Skillnets operates within an economic context that has seen dramatic changes in the Irish labour market since it first received its mandate in 1999. Skillnets, like other client-orientated service providers, has had to adapt to various changes and challenges over its lifetime. While Skillnets' primary function continues to relate to enterprise-led training and up-skilling of employed trainees, this has been supplemented in recent years with a new focus on jobseekers. Before we comment further on this below, it is useful to outline the other relevant labour market interventions currently in operation within the overall policy context.

Action Plan for Jobs

The Action Plan for Jobs represents the current Government's overarching labour market policy. On taking up office, the Government instigated an annual process of identifying the key actions that can be taken to support businesses to create jobs. The Plan's primary goal is to set out the actions to be undertaken by all Government Departments and their agencies to support employment creation and new actions to be taken in support of those that are currently unemployed to help them access the labour market.¹ These actions are spread across a range of different specific interventions. We highlight a number of the main programmes below.

JobBridge

JobBridge is the National Internship Scheme that aims to provide work experience placements for interns for a six- or nine-month period. The aim of the National Internship Scheme is to assist in breaking the cycle where jobseekers are unable to get a job without experience, either as new entrants to the labour market after education or training or as unemployed workers wishing to learn new skills. The scheme also gives people a real opportunity to gain valuable experience to bridge the gap between study and the beginning of their working lives.

A recent evaluation of the JobBridge scheme, undertaken by Indecon, found that the scheme has had positive outcomes in terms of employment progression, with up to 60% of participants in the scheme having secured employment following their internship.

¹See Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, *Action Plan for Jobs – 2013*. See <http://www.djei.ie/enterprise/api.htm>.

Community Employment

Community Employment is an employment programme which helps long-term unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to work routine. The programme assists them to enhance and develop both their technical and personal skills which can then be used in the workplace. Community Employment activity provides economic and social benefits to communities around the country in terms of providing services that would otherwise be lacking – especially those in disadvantaged areas. It provides support for several hundred community organisations, local councils, VECs, Drug Task Forces, the HSE, Semi-State bodies and national charitable organisations.

Labour Market Education and Training Fund/Momentum

As part of the Action Plan for Jobs, FÁS is administering the Labour Market Education and Training Fund (LMETF). The LMETF, which is the successor to the Labour Market Activation Fund (LMAF), is funded through the Department of Education and Skills and the National Training Fund. The aim of the LMETF, which was launched in December 2012 under the brand Momentum, is to provide a range of quality, relevant education and training interventions for up to 6,500 individuals who are long-term unemployed. The concept of the LMETF is that funding will be utilised to provide solutions to the needs of both unemployed individuals and employers within a number of occupational clusters distributed nationally, including occupational clusters where demand and vacancies exist within Labour Market sectors. One theme of the programme focuses on the specific needs of people under 25 who are unemployed assisting them to access and/or return to the Labour Market.

Other Labour Market Interventions

There is a range of other similar labour market intervention evident within the Irish context. These include initiatives such as the Job Initiative Programme, the Apprenticeship Programme and Competency Development Programme.

2.2.1 Placing Skillnets within the Action Plan for Jobs

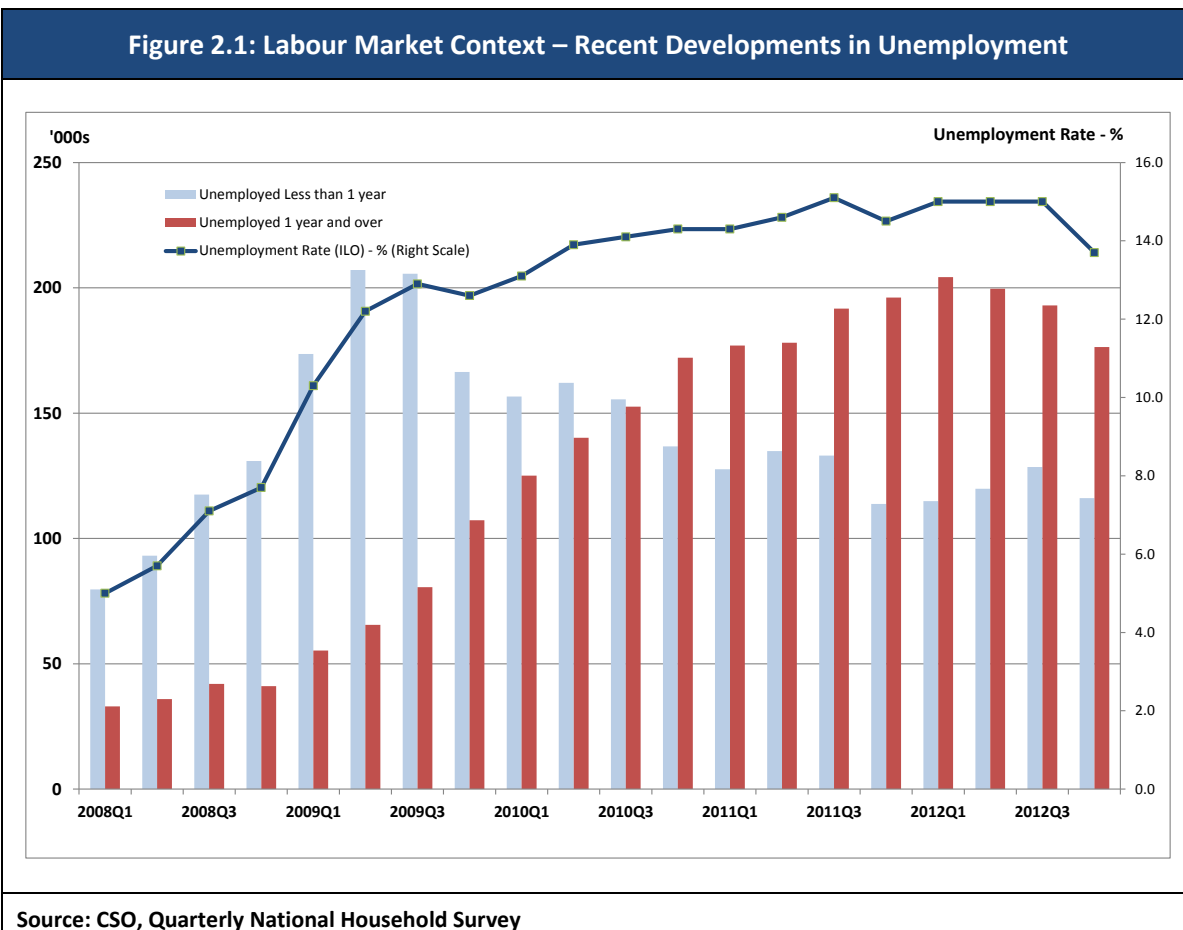
In addition to the above interventions, Skillnets is another significant labour market tool and the Action Plan for Jobs refers to Skillnets on a number of levels, in terms of:

- ☐ The alignment of skills with enterprise needs; and
- ☐ The provision of a range of training and development programmes to help SMEs to improve their performance through seeking to build their managerial capability.

Skillnets can also now be seen in terms of the current labour market policy context as it relates to jobseekers. This includes Skillnets' main programmes, namely the TNP and Finuas, in addition to the Job Seekers Support Programme (JSSP).

Assisting Jobseekers through Skillnets Programmes

The labour market context for Skillnets' programmes to assist jobseekers is described in the figure below, which shows the recent developments in the unemployment rate in Ireland as well as the structure of unemployment in terms of the numbers of persons unemployed for less than one year and those unemployed for one year or more. The unemployment rate in Ireland currently stands at just below 14%, having risen from less than 5% prior to the beginning of the recession in 2008. The structure of unemployment has also changed noticeably, with almost 60% unemployed for one year or more, compared to less than 30% in early 2008.



A number of responses to this level of joblessness have already been outlined above. However, in addition to these interventions, Skillnets has also been mandated by the Department of Education and Skills to assist in attempting to reduce unemployment in Ireland. This is achieved by Skillnets in two ways.

Firstly, networks on the TNP and Finuas programmes can allow for the inclusion of jobseeker trainees where places are available on certain training courses. However, there is no extra funding made available to the Skillnets networks, outside of their ordinary budgets, to facilitate this.

Secondly, the JSSP, which was first piloted in 2010, has facilitated increased numbers of available training course places for jobseeker trainees. The JSSP is a 100%-funded initiative, aimed solely at training unemployed people. It provides skills which are in demand by industry, combined with direct access to employers through work placements. The aim of the JSSP is to create jobs by linking jobseekers to training with companies in their sector or region.

2.2.2 The Operation of Skillnets Ltd

Skillnets fulfils its mandate through the utilisation of a network model which is designed to facilitate an enterprise-led approach to training and workforce learning. The network model is comprised of a number of networks, which totalled 56 in 2012 (made up of 53 networks within the Training Networks Programme and three networks under the Finuas Programme). A network is a group of companies that come together to carry out cross-organisational training-related activities that may not be possible on their own. Companies jointly address their training needs, collaborate with other enterprises, and engage experts, trainers, certifying bodies, industry bodies and others to work with them to achieve their goals.

There are different types of network. Each network is made up of a group of companies which have shared training needs. This may mean that Member Companies within a network may be in the same sector, the same region, or the same supply chain. A particular rationale for the networks model is that by supporting collaboration between businesses on training needs, it helps to address a market failure that arises whereby small businesses are less likely to invest in training due to resource and time constraints.

For over 10 years, sectoral networks have been the predominant type of network operated by Skillnets. This was a trend that emerged from companies and the appeal of sectoral networks is their ability to meet common training needs with other companies from within the same sector, while benefiting from increased efficiency, lower costs and networking.

2.2.3 Skillnets by Selected Sector

We detail a number of tables below which capture the sectoral dimension to Skillnets networks. Some of the main sectors include Agriculture/Food and Drink/Green Technology/Life Sciences, as detailed in the table overleaf.

Table 2.1: Skillnet by Sector - Agriculture/Food & Drink/Green Technology/Life Sciences
Skillnet
Farm Business Skillnet
ICOS Skillnet
National Organic Training Skillnet
Rural Enterprise Skillnet
Rural Food Skillnet
Wind Skillnet
XLVets Skillnet
Life Sciences Skillnet
Taste 4 Success Skillnet
Refrigeration Skillnet
First Polymer Training Skillnet
Pharmachem Skillnet
Source: Indecon Analysis

Two other sectors capture the sectoral dimension also, namely business and international financial services. A number of TNP and Finuas networks provide training in these sectors, which are identified in the table overleaf.

Table 2.2: Skillnet by Sector - Business and International Financial Services
Skillnet
Business Excellence Skillnet
CPA Skillnet
Innovation and Lean Sigma Skillnet
Irish Franchising Skillnet
Outsourcing Skillnet
Social Media Skillnet
Learning Waves Skillnet
CCMA Ireland Skillnet
Trade Union Skillnet (TUS)
IBEC Retail Skillnet
Law Society Finuas Network
Aviation Finance Finuas Network
Summit Finuas Network
Source: Indecon Analysis

2.2.4 Skillnets by Broad Regional Category

A regional network enables training to be delivered to a wide mix of Member Companies locally, which results in reduced costs and greater accessibility. Skillnets provides training in various regions and in some case multiple regions. The following tables outline the regional nature of Skillnets networks, commencing with networks that are located in the West and Mid-West regions.

Table 2.3: Skillnet by Location and Region of Course Offerings –South, West and Mid West		
Skillnet	Location of Skillnet	Skillnet Courses are Offered in Following Regions
ACIST Skillnet	Ennistymon, Co. Clare	West, Mid-West
Biznetcork Skillnet	Cork City, Co. Cork	South
ULearning Skillnet	Shannon, Co. Clare	West, Mid-West
Greasán na Méan Skillnet	Spideal, C. Galway	West
South Kerry Skillnet	Killorglin, Co. Kerry	South, Mid-West
South West Gnó Skillnet	Dingle, Co. Kerry	South, Mid-West
Galway Executive Skillnet	Galway, Co. Galway	West
ITAG Skillnet	Dangan, Co. Galway	West
Tech North-West Skillnet	Letterkenny, Co. Donegal	North-West
Limerick Chamber Skillnet	Limerick City, Co. Limerick	Mid-West
Source: Indecon Analysis		

A summary description of networks operating in the East and South-East regions is provided in the table overleaf.

Table 2.4: Skillnet by Location and Region of Course Offerings - East and South East		
Skillnet	Location of Skillnet	Skillnet Courses are Offered in Following Regions
Wind Skillnet	Oberstown, Co. Kildare	East
Design, Print and Packaging Skillnet	Dublin, Co. Dublin	East
ICT Ireland Skillnet	Dublin, Co. Dublin	East
IPFMA Skillnet	Dublin, Co. Dublin	East
Digital Media Forum Skillnet	Dublin, Co. Dublin	East
Positive2Work Skillnet	Dublin, Co. Dublin	East
RIAI Skillnet	Sandyford, Co. Dublin	East
ISA Software Skillnet	Dublin, Co. Dublin	East
Carlow Kilkenny Skillnet	Carlow, Co. Carlow	South-East
County Tipperary Skillnet	Clonmel, Co. Tipperary	South-East
Waterford Chamber Skillnet	Waterford, Co. Waterford	South-East
Social Media Skillnet	Clonmel, Co. Tipperary	South, East
South-East Micro Skillnet	Clonmel, Co. Tipperary	East, South-East
Source: Indecon Analysis		
Notes: While a network is located in one place, the course offered within it can be at multiple locations. Thus location and region are distinguished in the above table.		

Finally, a large number of thematically-based networks provide training activities on a national basis. These networks, which operate under the TNP and Finuas networks programmes, are described in the table overleaf.

Table 2.5: Skillnets Networks - National and Mixed Locations

Skillnet	Location of Skillnet	Skillnet Courses are Offered in Following Regions
Rural Enterprise Skillnet	Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal	Border, Midlands, West
ROLE Skillnet	Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim	Border, Midlands, West
MBE Skillnet	Ballinafad, Co. Sligo	Border, Midlands, East
CPA Ireland Skillnet	Dublin, Co. Dublin	West, Mid-West, Midlands
Farm Business Skillnet	Bluebell, Co. Dublin	West, East, Midlands
First Polymer Training Skillnet	Athlone, Co. Roscommon	Midlands
Space Industry Skillnet	Athlone, Co. Roscommon	Midlands, East
XLVets Skillnet	Cappamore, Co. Limerick	Mid-West, East
Business Excellence Skillnet	Limerick City, Co. Limerick	South, Mid-West, East, West
Life Sciences Skillnet	Limerick City, Co. Limerick	West, South, Midlands, East
Law Society Skillnet	Dublin, Co. Dublin	South-West, East
Rural Food Skillnet	Listowel, Co. Kerry	Nationwide
PharmaChem Skillnet	Cork City, Co. Cork	Nationwide
HPSU Skillnet	Galway, Co. Galway	Nationwide
ISME Skillnet	Dublin 2, Co. Dublin	Nationwide
ICOS Skillnet	Dublin, Co. Dublin	Nationwide
Innovation & Lean Sigma Skillnet	Limerick City, Co. Limerick	Nationwide
Taste 4 Success Skillnet	Rathowen, Co. Westmeath	Nationwide
Leading Healthcare Providers Skillnet	Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin	Nationwide
Trainers Learning Skillnet	Naas, Co. Kildare	Nationwide
CITA Skillnet	Dublin, Co. Dublin	Nationwide
Refrigeration Skillnet	Dublin, Co. Dublin	Nationwide
Law Society Finuas	Dublin, Co. Dublin	Nationwide
Summit Finuas Network	Dublin, Co. Dublin	Nationwide
Aviation Finance Finuas Network	Limerick City, Co. Limerick	Nationwide
Source: Indecon Analysis		
Notes: While a network is located in one place, the course offered within it can be at multiple locations. Thus location and region are distinguished in the above table.		

In fulfilling the mission set by Skillnets, networks undertake a range of activities. These include:

- ☐ Analysing the training and development needs of Member Companies and potential trainees, identifying skills requirements and priorities;
- ☐ Assessing the strategic importance of long-term competitiveness of the skills identified;
- ☐ Identifying solutions/delivery mechanisms to meet those needs;
- ☐ Developing network structures and processes to establish the operation of the network as a basis for specified training activity;
- ☐ Organising the delivery and implementation of training;
- ☐ Promoting collaboration and co-operative activity, sharing of knowledge and the exchange of best practice;

- ❑ Monitoring and measuring results, providing performance indicators and quality standards for training activity engaged in by trainees; and
- ❑ Reporting on the progress, outcomes and impact of network training activities and processes to Skillnets.

The degree to which these and other activities were undertaken throughout 2012 represents a focal point for this evaluation.

2.3 Overview of Financial and Programme Activities in 2012

2.3.1 Financial overview

The current State budgetary position in Ireland mandates that public organisations are being challenged to do more with tighter budgets that are, if not declining, then broadly similar year to year. Skillnets is no different in this respect. Skillnets' grant budget from the Department of Education and Skills was unchanged from 2011 to 2012. The drawdown of this budget in 2012 was relatively static in comparison to that of 2011.

Table 2.6: Financial Overview - Summary of Key Skillnets Financial Data in 2011 and 2012			
	€ - 2011	€ - 2012	% Change 2011 - 2012
Funding Source			
Grant Funding	12,154,623	12,191,366	0.3%
Matching Funding	10,450,622	10,627,055	1.7%
Total Network Funding	22,605,254	22,818,421	0.9%
<i>Matching Funding - % of Total</i>	<i>46.2%</i>	<i>46.6%</i>	
Network Cost Type			
Network Management Costs	4,530,550	4,340,019	-4.2%
Network Training Cost	18,074,704	18,478,402	2.2%
Total Network Expenditure	22,605,254	22,818,421	0.9%
<i>Network Management Costs - % of Total</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>19%</i>	
Other Costs			
Skillnets Central Administration Costs	2,104,000	2,114,168	0.5%
Programme Support Costs	228,061	240,073	5.3%
Total Expenditure	24,937,315	25,172,662	0.9%
<i>Other Costs – % of Total Expenditure</i>	<i>9.4%</i>	<i>9.4%</i>	
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			

The enterprise-led approach to Skillnets facilitated an increase in network funding as matching funding increased by 1.7% from 2011 to 2012. This increased funding leverage had the overall effect of increasing total network funding by just less than 1% in 2012. In terms of network cost-effectiveness and efficiency, a notable feature of Skillnets financial performance during 2012 was a decrease of 4.2% in network management costs, which totalled €4.3 million.

A breakdown of expenditures by programme is provided in the table below. In terms of expenditures, overall, Skillnets remained within its budget during 2012. Across the main TNP, Finuas and constituent JSSP, FSNP and NCPD programmes, network expenditure totalled €22.8 million during 2012 across 56 networks. The majority of network expenditure arises within the 53 TNP networks (€17.3 million or 75.8%) while the three Finuas networks account for €1.7 million or 7.3% of total spend (see below). Skillnets assists unemployed jobseekers via its main programmes (TNP and Finuas) and through the JSSP. A total of €3.4 million of expenditure took place through the JSSP during 2012, with 82% of this funded by the State.

Table 2.7: Financial Overview - Expenditure by Source and Programme in 2012					
Programme	No of Networks	Actual Expenditure	Grant Funding	Matched By Companies	% Matched
TNP	53	€17,295,009	€8,242,102	€9,052,907	52%
FINUAS	3	€1,656,270	€807,412	€848,858	51%
JSSP	43	€3,392,877	€2,789,432	€603,455	18%
NCPD	18	€266,535	€193,704	€72,831	27%
FSNP	4	€207,730	€158,716	€49,014	24%
Total	56	€22,818,421	€12,191,366	€10,627,055	47%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database					
Notes: The JSSP, NCPD and FSNP programmes operate within the same networks as the TNP and Finuas programmes thus the number of networks as outlined in the table do not sum.					

2.3.2 Overview of training activity during 2012

Across all the networks in operation in 2012, the Department of Education and Skills set a target of 40,000 trainees to be trained by Skillnets, comprising 32,000 employed trainees and a further 8,000 unemployed trainees, or to provide a total of 200,000 training days, of which 47,500 days would relate to jobseeker training. The table overleaf outlines how Skillnets performed relative to these targets during 2012. Overall the figures indicate that Skillnets achieved or exceeded its activity goals during 2012, accommodating a total of 43,974 trainees, which was 10% ahead of the Department's high-level target, while networks provided a total of 233,068 training days, which was 16.5% above the target set. Networks also assisted a total of 7,012 jobseekers. This was 12% below the target level, but the target for jobseeker training days was surpassed by 12.4%.

Notwithstanding the positive overall achievements of Skillnets during 2012, significant variations exist in performance across the networks and this is particularly the case in relation to assisting jobseekers, which remains a challenge for many networks. We consider the issue of network-level performance throughout this evaluation.

Table 2.8: Programme Overview – Number of Trainees and Training Days – All Programmes			
Trainee	Department of Education and Skills Targets - 2012	Skillnets End of Year Total - 2012	End of Year Total as % of Target
Employed Trainees	32,000	36,962	116%
Unemployed Trainees	8,000	7,012	88%
Total Trainees	40,000	43,974	110%
Employed Trainees – Training Days	152,500	179,687	117.8%
Unemployed Trainees – Training Days	47,500	53,381	112.4%
Total Training Days	200,000	233,068	116.5%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			

Training and up-skilling of trainees are the two key elements to Skillnets' work. While reaching targets for training days is important, it is also important that a proportion of these days be focused specifically towards the certification of trainees. In this respect the Department of Education and Skills' targets include targets in respect of certification activity on training activity. In 2012, 75% of training days were to be focused certified training days. This target was made up of 45% National Framework Qualifications (NFQ) and 30% industry accreditations. The table below outlines the extent to which these targets were achieved during 2012. While industry-accredited days fell short of target, this was compensated by an over-achievement through NFQ training days. Overall, Skillnets met the Department of Education and Skills' target for overall certified training days during 2012, at 75% of overall training days.

Table 2.9: Programme Overview - Certified Training Days in 2012 - Target and Total Achieved							
Certification Levels	Target	Total Achieved	TNP	Finuas	JSSP	NCPD	FSNP
Overall NFQ Training Days	45%	61%	59%	66%	69%	91%	-
Overall Industry Training Days	30%	14%	14%	14%	11%	-	92%
Total Certified Days	75%	75%	73%	80%	80%	91%	92%
Source: Skillnets Activity Management Database							
Notes: Data relates to all Skillnets Programmes							

Focussing specifically on accreditation from Levels 1 to 5, the table below indicates that the 50% target for training days at these NFQ levels was not achieved. In terms of employed and unemployed trainees, it is evident that there was slightly more success in the provision of Level 1-5 certified training days for unemployed trainees (43% of training days).

Table 2.10: Programme Overview - Levels of Certification at FETAC and HETAC Levels in 2012 – Target and Total Achieved							
Certification Levels	Target	Total Achieved	TNP	Finuas	JSSP	NCPD	FSNP
NFQ Trainee Levels 1-5	50%	34%	34%	3%	50%	18%	29%
Employed Trainees: L1-5	-	33%	33%	3%	-	10%	30%
Unemployed Trainees: L1-5	-	43%	39%	2%	50%	25%	-
Source: Skillnets Activity Management Database							
Notes: Data relates to all Skillnets Programmes							

The types of qualifications that trainees are gaining are an important consideration of this evaluation. While certification alone is positive, especially for those trainees with low levels or no prior certification, it is important that these certifications be focussed and ultimately useful for the trainee. Thus the table overleaf presents an overview of the increasing accreditation levels of trainees from Level 5 upwards across all programmes.

Table 2.11: Overview of Up-Skilling–Number and Percentage of Trainees Increasing Qualifications by NFQ Level – All Programmes				
Pre Training NFQ Level of Trainees	Number of Trainees at NFQ Level	Post Training NFQ Level of Trainees	Number of Trainees at NFQ Level	% of Trainees Increasing Qualification Level
Level 1	402	Level 5	52	12.9% of 402
		Level 6	34	8.5% of 402
		Level 7	1	0.2% of 402
Level 2	553	Level 5	52	9.4% of 553
		Level 6	21	3.8% of 553
		Level 7	1	0.2% of 553
Level 3	2,878	Level 5	559	19.4% of 2,878
		Level 6	205	7.1% of 2,878
		Level 7	27	0.9% of 2,878
		Level 8	1	0.0% of 2,878
Level 4	3,287	Level 5	696	21.2% of 3,287
		Level 6	235	7.1% of 3,287
		Level 7	16	0.5% of 3,287
		Level 8	4	0.1% of 3,287
		Level 9	1	0.0% of 3,287
Level 5	11,631	Level 6	970	8.3% of 11,631
		Level 7	284	2.4% of 11,631
		Level 8	79	0.7% of 11,631
		Level 9	30	0.3% of 11,631
Level 6	9,255	Level 7	366	4.0% of 9,255
		Level 8	128	1.4% of 9,255
		Level 9	69	0.7% of 9,255
		Level 10	3	0.0% of 9,255
Level 7	7,695	Level 8	238	3.1% of 7,695
		Level 9	222	2.9% of 7,695
Level 8	15,786	Level 9	1,290	8.2% of 15,786
		Level 10	4	0.0% of 15,786
Level 9	6,041	Level 10	7	0.1% of 15,786
Total (All Levels)	57,528	All Levels	5,595	20.3% of 57,528
Source: Skillnets Activity Management Database				
Notes: Data relates to individual participants. As some participants undertake multiple training courses, there may be some double counting of participants in the above data.				

A breakdown of training undertaken by type/sector across Skillnets programmes during 2012 is presented overleaf. This demonstrates the wide range of training provided by Skillnets programmes.

Table 2.12: All Programme Training Activities - Type of Training Undertaken by All Participants in 2012		
Training Type	Number of Training Days	% of Total
Agricultural/Horticultural Skills	2,321	4.0%
Communication Skills	4,494	7.8%
Creative & Digital Arts/Media	1,036	1.8%
Customer Service	2,592	4.5%
Financial	4,521	7.9%
Health & Safety	5,630	9.8%
Healthcare	2,406	4.2%
Information Technology	9,526	16.5%
Legal	1,956	3.4%
Management Development Skills	9,818	17.1%
Management Development Strategy	778	1.4%
Manufacturing Skills	1,514	2.6%
Personal Wellbeing & Development	1,606	2.8%
Sales & Marketing	2,510	4.4%
Technical Skills	5,671	9.9%
Funds Administration/Funds Servicing	453	0.8%
Insurance/Reinsurance	7	0.0%
International Banking/Capital Markets	110	0.2%
International Tax, Legal, Accountancy Expertise	254	0.4%
Investment Management	71	0.1%
Quantitative Financial Analysis/Actuarial Skills	18	0.0%
Risk Management/Compliance	269	0.5%
Total	57,561	100.0%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		

A description of training methodologies is presented in the table overleaf. The vast majority (77.1%) of training days delivered during 2012 were instructor-led within a classroom setting, while 17.6% of days were provided through mixed learning events (classroom and non-classroom).

Table 2.13: All Programme Training Activities - Training Methodologies in 2012		
Training Methodology	Number of Training Days	% of Total
Activities to accredit acquired prior learning	408	0.7%
Instructor led i.e. primarily classroom	43,600	77.1%
Mixed learning event (classroom & non-classroom)	9,932	17.6%
On the job - involving input from instructor/trainer/staff	1,491	2.6%
On-Site Learning	32	0.1%
Self-paced e.g. e-learning, distance learning	1,056	1.9%
Total	56,519	100%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		

An indication of the extent of innovation in Skillnets training design is provided below by reference to the extent of customisation of training courses during 2012. The largest proportion (45%) of training days provided was based on existing, off-the-shelf courses. However, 15.4% of training days related to existing courses which were significantly customised for networks, while 18.9% of days related to courses which had some level of customisation. Notably, 20.6% of training days provided during 2012 were through new courses developed by networks.

Table 2.14: All Programme Training Activities - Extent of Customisation of Training in 2012		
Type of Customisations	Number of Training Days	% of Total
Existing (off-the-shelf) course	25,926	45.0%
Existing course significantly customised for network	8,885	15.4%
Existing course with some customisation for network	10,888	18.9%
New courses developed by network	11,862	20.6%
Total	57,561	100.0%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		
Notes: Data relates to individual participant. Those participants who undertook multiple training courses will be counted also thus the number of participants are more than the number of actual trainees. The data relates to formal events only. All programmes include TNP, Finuas, JSSP, NCPD and FSNP.		

2.4 Summary of Findings

This section sets the scene for the subsequent detailed evaluation by recapping on the economic and policy context, in addition to providing a description of the structure and focus of Skillnets programmes, and an overview of financial performance and training achievements during 2012. The key findings were as follows:

- ❑ Skillnets operates within an economic context that has seen dramatic changes in the Irish labour market since it first received its mandate in 1999. Skillnets, like other client-oriented service providers, has had to adapt to various changes and challenges over its lifetime. While Skillnets' primary function continues to relate to enterprise-led training and up-skilling of employed trainees, this has been supplemented in recent years with a new focus on jobseekers.
- ❑ Skillnets represents an important part of the Government's Action Plan for Jobs, which refers to Skillnets on a number of levels, including in relation to the alignment of skills with enterprise needs, and the provision of a range of training and development programmes to help SMEs to improve their performance through seeking to build their managerial capability. Skillnets can also now be seen in terms of the current labour market policy context as it relates to jobseekers. This includes the Skillnets main programmes, namely the TNP and Finuas, in addition to the Job Seekers Support Programme (JSSP).
- ❑ Since 2010, Skillnets has also been mandated by the Department of Education and Skills to assist in attempting to reduce unemployment in Ireland. This is achieved by Skillnets through providing places for jobseeker trainees on its main TNP and Finuas programmes, and through the dedicated JSSP programme.
- ❑ Skillnets fulfils its mandate through the utilisation of a network model which is designed to facilitate an enterprise-led approach to training and workforce learning. The network model is comprised of a number of networks, which totalled 56 in 2012, made up of 53 networks within the Training Networks Programme and three networks under the Finuas Networks Programme.
- ❑ The current State budgetary position in Ireland mandates that public organisations are being challenged to do more with tighter budgets that are, if not declining, then broadly similar year to year. Skillnets is no different in this respect as its budget from the Department of Education and Skills was unchanged from 2011 to 2012.
- ❑ The enterprise-led approach to Skillnets facilitated an increase in network funding as matching funding increased by 1.7% from 2011 to 2012. This increased funding leverage had the overall effect of increasing total network funding by just less than 1% in 2012.
- ❑ Overall, Skillnets remained within its budget during 2012. Across the main TNP, Finuas and constituent JSSP, FSNP and NCPD programmes, network expenditure totalled €22.8 million during 2012 across 56 networks. The majority of network expenditure arises within the 53 TNP networks (€17.3 million or 75.8%) while the three Finuas networks account for €1.7 million or 7.3% of total spend. Skillnets assists unemployed jobseekers via its main programmes (TNP and Finuas) and through the JSSP. A total of €3.4 million of expenditure took place through the JSSP during 2012, with 82% of this funded by the State.
- ❑ In terms of network cost-effectiveness and efficiency, a notable feature of Skillnets financial performance during 2012 was a decrease of 4.2% in network management costs, which totalled €4.3 million.

- In relation to training activities, overall, Skillnets achieved or exceeded its goals during 2012, accommodating a total of 43,974 trainees, which was 10% ahead of the Department of Education and Skills' high-level target (40,000 trainees), while networks provided a total of 233,068 training days, which was 16.5% above the target set. Networks also assisted a total of 7,012 jobseekers. This was 12% below the target level, but the target for jobseeker training days was surpassed by 12.4%. Skillnets also met the overall target for certified training days during 2012, at 75% of overall training days provided.

3 Evaluation of Training Networks Programme

3.1 Introduction

The Training Networks Programme (TNP) is Skillnets' largest programme. The TNP encompassed 53 networks in 2012 across sectors ranging from services to agriculture and from technology to hospitality. This section of the evaluation focuses on the inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes for employed trained under the TNP during 2012 (the evaluation of jobseeker training activities under the TNP main programme is undertaken in Section 5).

3.2 Aims and Objectives of Programme

The overall aims and objectives of the TNP are summarised in the table below. These centre around four broad themes. Trainees benefit in that their training provides up-skilling which boosts their contribution in their current employment and assists their future mobility and employability. Network Member Companies benefit through the acquisition and transferability of skills from their employees, while a further impact can come at the sectoral level where improved business performance can create competitive advantage.

Table 3.1: Training Networks Programme – Aims and Objectives of TNP in 2012

Theme 1: Facilitating the transferability of individuals' skills to increase mobility and employability across mixed sectoral/regional networks.

- The primary focus of this theme is on up-skilling, re-skilling and cross-skilling of workers across sectors and/or regions. Training delivered under this theme promotes the adoption of incremental skills which are required to facilitate increased mobility, employability and enhanced business performance of network members.

Theme 2: Facilitating company diversification or transferability within a sector or from one sector to another.

- The primary focus of this theme is facilitating the acquisition and transferability of skills to allow companies to diversify within their sector or to secure the transformational change of their business offering to a completely new sector.

Theme 3: Facilitating increased performance and growth in priority sectors.

- The primary focus of this theme is on up-skilling individuals in the key skills necessary to enter into/expand within certain priority sectors which have been identified as high potential growth sectors.

Theme 4: Enhancing the general competency skills of the lifelong learner.

- The primary focus of this theme is the up-skilling of individuals in certain key competencies which have been identified by European policy as necessary skills for all European workers.

Source: Skillnets

3.3 Assessment of Programme Inputs

In order to achieve the programme aims, Skillnets harnesses financial inputs from both the State and matching funding from Member Companies in order to operate a number of networks every year. These inputs are detailed below.

3.3.1 Analysis of Financial Inputs

The total 2012 expenditure on the TNP was €17,295,009. This figure represented an increase of 4.9% from the €16,486,335 spent the previous year. The number of networks declined in the same year from 66 to 53. Looking at expenditure on a per network basis, we find that average expenditure per network increased from €249,793 in 2011 to €326,321 in 2012.

Table 3.2: Financial Overview – TNP Expenditure in 2011 and 2012						
No of Networks - 2011	Actual Expenditure - 2011	Average Expenditure Per Network - 2011	No of Networks - 2012	Actual Expenditure - 2012	Average Expenditure Per Network - 2012	% Change in Actual Expenditure 2011 - 2012
66	€16,486,335	€249,793	53	€17,295,009	€326,321	4.9%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database						

There are a number of features of TNP expenditure that are useful to highlight at this point. Firstly, actual training expenditure was ahead of target in 2012. This is explained by increased company matching funding to networks. This was 4% ahead of budget at €9,052,907, highlighting the benefits of increased leverage of matching funding to support networks' training activities. Another notable feature of 2012 financial performance under the TNP was a saving in management expenditure, which came in 5% under budget (see table below).

Table 3.3: Financial Overview – Breakdown of TNP Expenditures in 2012			
Category	Budgeted Expenditure (€)	Actual Expenditure (€)	Actual as % of Budget
Training Expenditure	€12,193,290	€13,228,045	108%
Management Expenditure	€4,298,017	€4,066,964	95%
Total Expenditure*	€17,182,923	€17,295,009	101%
*Of which, State funds	€8,466,726	€8,242,102	97%
*Of which, company matching funds	€8,716,197	€9,052,907	104%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			

3.4 Assessment of Programme Outputs and Outcomes

The outputs of training are important in terms of the level of benefits that can actually be achieved by various participants. These outputs are a function of financial inputs provided by the programme and its Member Companies, and the activities undertaken as a result of these inputs. The outputs in turn impact on the outcomes for trainees in terms of sustaining employment and increasing skills and accreditations among other outcomes.

3.4.1 Analysis of Training Outputs

In relation to training outputs, a total of 5,099 training courses provided to employed trainees under the TNP during 2012 (see table below). In addition, the 2011 evaluation of the TNP indicated that there was a need for networks to spend more time and resources on non-training activities. It appears that Skillnets has successfully responded to this recommendation, with TNP networks providing a total of 232 network events during 2012, compared to 92 in 2011.

Table 3.4: TNP Training Outputs – Number of Events in 2012	
Event	No of Events/Courses
Training Courses	5,099
Networking Events	232
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database	

3.4.2 Network structure and size

The structure of TNP networks in terms of the number and size of Member Companies is summarised in the table overleaf. There was an increase in the typical scale of TNP networks during 2012, with the average number of Member Companies per network expanding from 150 in 2011 to 196 in 2012. There is also some evidence that the size of companies within TNP networks, as measured by numbers of persons employed, has increased during 2012.

Table 3.5: TNP Profile of Member Companies - Number of Active Member Companies by Network Size in 2011 and 2012

2012							
Number of Companies in Network	<99	100 - 199	200 - 299	300 - 399	400 - 499	>500	Total
Number of Networks	23	15	6	3	1	5	53
% of Total Networks	43%	28%	11%	6%	2%	9%	100%
Number of Active Companies*	1,426	2,225	1,449	1,032	475	3,793	10,400
% of Total Companies	14%	21%	14%	10%	5%	36%	100%
Average Number of companies per network	62	148	242	344	475	759	196
2011							
Number of Companies in Network	<99	100 - 199	200 - 299	300 - 399	400 - 499	>500	Total
Number of Networks	33	18	7	2	2	4	66
% of Total Networks	50%	27%	11%	3%	3%	6%	100%
Number of Active Companies*	1,643	2,439	1,548	603	848	2,834	9,915
% of Total Companies	17%	25%	16%	6%	9%	29%	100%
Average Number of companies per network	50	136	221	302	424	709	150
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database * The number of active TNP companies is based on those companies that are deemed active by a network. For example, this can include companies that contribute financially or sponsor a networking event and not just the number of companies that attended training in the year.							

Prior Training Activity

Looking at Member Companies in more detail, the prior training activity of companies indicates that for one-fifth of companies, they had not undertaken training activity before, either with Skillnets or another organisation.

Table 3.6: TNP Profile of Member Companies - Member Company Training Prior To 2012	
Prior to 2012, did your organisation participate in a planned (Skillnets or other) training process?	% of Total
Yes	78.9%
No	21.1%
Total	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Member Companies Survey	

Among those companies that indicated that they had previously participated in planned training programmes, the findings from Indecon's survey also show that close to a quarter (23.6%) participated in Skillnets training, while 12.7% undertook training outside of Skillnets. The majority (63.8%) of Member Companies, however, indicated that their previous training activities included a mixture of Skillnets and non-Skillnets training (see table below).

Table 3.7: TNP Profile of Member Companies - Provider of Prior Training	
If 'Yes', did this involve Skillnets training, training provided by other (non-Skillnets) organisations, or a mixture of both?	% of Total
Skillnets Training	23.6%
Non-Skillnets Training	12.7%
Both	63.8%
Total	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Member Companies Survey	

3.4.3 Analysis of training outcomes

One way Skillnets remains relevant is by consistently attracting trainees to undertake courses throughout the networks. In this respect, the TNP assisted a total of 35,829 employed trainees during 2012 and provided a total of 167,120 training days to these individuals (see table overleaf). Activity levels were broadly stable in 2012 compared with 2011, with the number of employed trainees increasing by 2.7%, while the number of training days decreased slightly by 1.3%. Based on Skillnets targets set across the networks during the annual budgeting process, TNP networks exceeded the budgeted level of employed trainees and training days by 19% and 3%, respectively, in 2012.

Table 3.8: TNP Employed Training Outcomes – Trainees and Training Days

Indicator	TNP Employed - 2012	TNP Employed - 2011
Programme	TNP	TNP
Actual Trainees*	35,829	34,873
Target Trainees	30,072	33,199
<i>Actual Trainees as a % of Target Trainees</i>	<i>119%</i>	<i>105%</i>
Actual Training Days*	167,120	169,264
Target Training Days	162,843	153,866
<i>Actual Training Days as a % of Target Training Days</i>	<i>103%</i>	<i>110%</i>
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		
Note: Targets shown relate to Skillnets internal figures set across the networks during the annual budgeting process. These differ from the high-level targets for trainees and training days set by the Department of Education and Skills.		
* Figures for actual trainees and training days include activities relating to FSNP and NCPD.		

Assisting sufficient numbers of trainees is important to the success of Skillnets itself but for trainees it is also important that their training provides or leads to concrete outcomes. We assess the training and labour market progression outcomes among TNP trainees below.

Progression Outcomes of Employed Trainees

Depending on the type and nature of intervention, the progression outcomes of trainees are very important indicators for the overall health of any labour market support programme. What we would like to see in terms of Skillnets are two related outcomes. Firstly, given the focus on training, an outcome that is important is increasing skill levels in terms of accreditations. Secondly, and in connection to the latter, an outcome that would reflect positively on the TNP programme is employment sustained after training has been completed. These are discussed below following an overview of the profile of TNP employed trainees.

Age profile of employed trainees

Considering the profile of trainees on one measure, namely the age profile, it is evident that TNP training has supported employed trainees across a diverse age spectrum (see table overleaf).

Table 3.9: TNP Employed Training Outcomes - Age Profile of Trainees in 2012

Age	% of Total
Under 20	0.9%
20 - 24	6.5%
25 - 29	13.9%
30 - 34	19.5%
35 - 39	17.5%
40 - 49	25.4%
50 - 59	13.7%
60 and Over	2.7%
Total	100.0%
Source: Indecon Analysis Skillnets Activity Management System	

The prior educational attainment of trainees who undertook employed training under the TNP during 2012 is described in the table below. Fewer than half (44.3%) of trainees held qualifications up to higher certificate or diploma levels, while 55.7% were qualified to primary or postgraduate degree level.

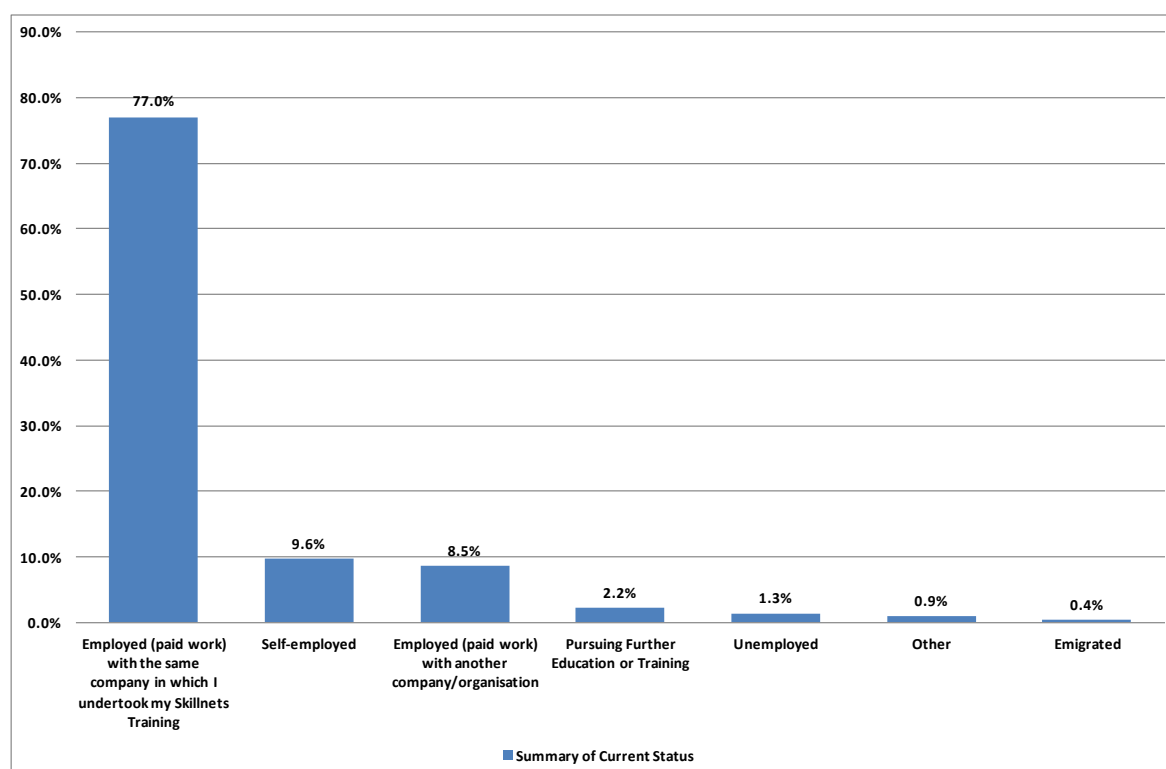
Table 3.10: TNP Training Outcomes – Prior Educational Profile of Employed Trainees

Education Level	% of Total
Completed education before Junior Certificate	0.6%
Junior Certificate	2.4%
Leaving Certificate or equivalent	14.0%
Higher Education Certificate or Diploma	27.3%
Primary (e.g. Bachelors) Degree	35.5%
Master's Degree or Higher	20.2%
Total	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Employed Trainee Survey	

Current status of trainees

An important dimension concerns the current employment status of trainees. The findings from our survey of TNP trainees, summarised in the figure overleaf, indicate that among those who undertook employed training during 2012, 95.1% of participants currently remain employed in some respect (77% with the same company in which they undertook their training and 9.6% with a different company, while a further 8.5% of trainees became self-employed). This is a positive achievement in terms of Skillnets' contribution to retaining employment in the current very challenging labour market context.

Figure 3.1: TNP Training Outcomes – Current Status of Employed Trainees



Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Employed Trainee Survey

Certified training outcomes

Increases in skill levels represent an immediate outcome that would be expected for a programme such as the TNP. The table overleaf examines the post-training certified qualifications of trainees. This data relates to Skillnets Activity Management ('SAM') database and thus varies from our survey findings as indicated in the previous table but the conclusions from the data are broadly similar in that Skillnets is working for a variety of participants and not just those with higher levels of educational attainment.

Table 3.11: TNP Training Outcomes – Post-Training Qualification Levels of Participants	
Level of Award on NFQ	% of Total
Level 1 (FETAC)	0.6%
Level 2 (FETAC)	3.4%
Level 3 (FETAC)	3.0%
Level 4 (FETAC)	8.3%
Level 5 (FETAC)	32.1%
Level 6 (HETAC)	22.7%
Level 7 (HETAC)	8.7%
Level 8 (HETAC)	15.4%
Level 9 (HETAC)	5.7%
Level 10 (HETAC)	0.1%
Total	100%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database	
Notes: Data relates to individual participants. As some participants undertake multiple training courses, there may be some double counting of participants in the above data. Furthermore, this data relates only to formal events.	

Analysis also shows that in the case of 44.5% of employed TNP trainees, their training resulted in a qualification, while 46.2% of trainees reported that their training did not result in an accredited outcome.

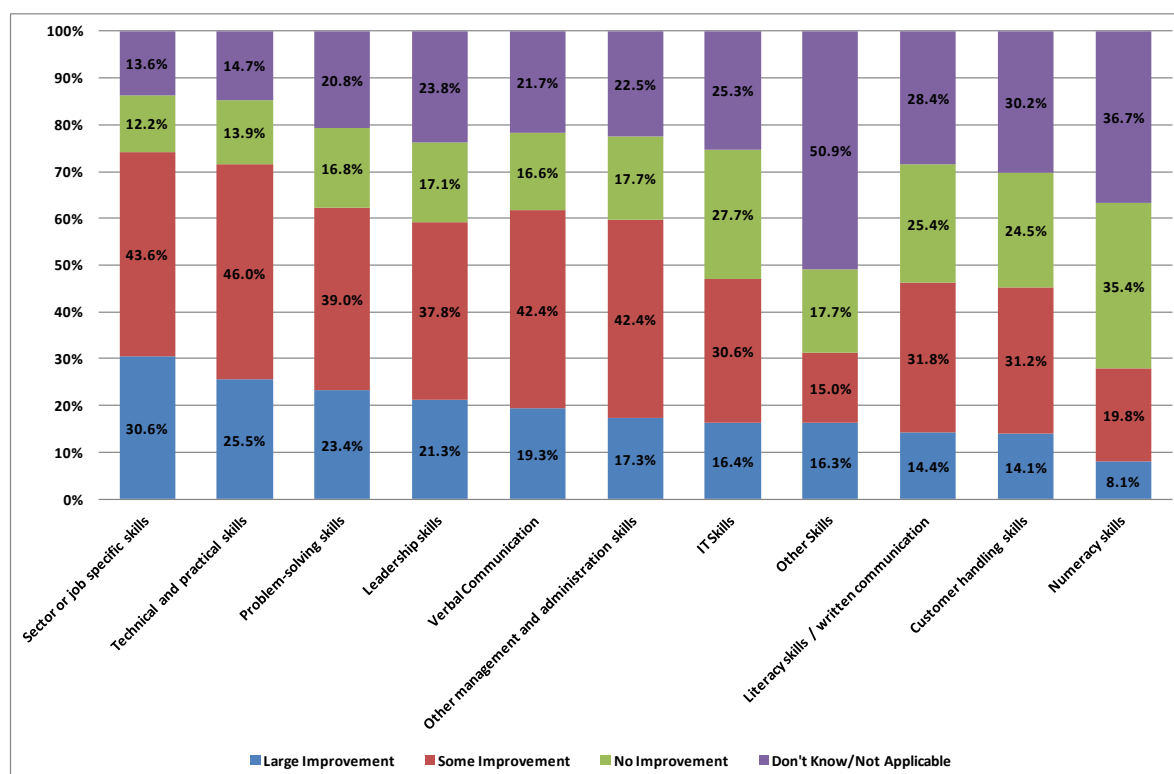
Table 3.12: TNP Training Outcomes – Profile of Qualifications Attained by Employed Trainees	
Has (or will) this Skillnets training result in any qualifications?	% of Total
No awards or qualifications	46.2%
HETAC Accredited (Higher Education Levels 6-10)	13.3%
FETAC Accredited (Further Education – Levels 1-5)	18.4%
Accredited by industry-recognised professional body / institute	12.8%
Don't know	9.3%
Total	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Employed Trainee Survey	

Based on detailed data provided to Indecon from the SAM database, we have also examined the extent of up-skilling evident from the provision of employed training under the TNP, based on the numbers and proportions of trainees who increased their qualification levels. The analysis is presented in the table below and indicates that overall, 10.3% of trainees attained higher qualification levels as a result of their Skillnets TNP training. On some categories, however, significantly higher proportions of trainees boosted their qualification levels. This was most evident among trainees who had previously held qualifications to Levels 3 or 4, with 23.8% of those with Level 3 and 25.4% with Level 4 qualifications going on to achieve qualifications up to Level 8.

Table 3.13: Overview of Up-skilling - Number and Percentage of TNP Trainees Increasing Qualifications at Various Levels				
Pre Training NFQ Level of Trainees	Number of Trainees at NFQ Level	Post Training NFQ Level of Trainees	Number of Trainees at NFQ Level	% of Trainees Increasing Qualification Level
Level 1	342	Level 5	38	11.1% of 342
		Level 6	11	3.2% of 342
		Level 7	1	0.3% of 342
Level 2	503	Level 5	29	5.8% of 503
		Level 6	16	3.2% of 503
		Level 7	1	0.2% of 503
Level 3	2,472	Level 5	422	17.1% of 2,472
		Level 6	138	5.6% of 2,472
		Level 7	26	1.1% of 2,472
		Level 8	1	0.0% of 2,472
Level 4	3,036	Level 5	590	19.4% of 3,036
		Level 6	166	5.5% of 3,036
		Level 7	13	0.4% of 3,036
		Level 8	4	0.1% of 3,036
Level 5	10,396	Level 6	734	7.1% of 10,396
		Level 7	274	2.6% of 10,396
		Level 8	45	0.4% of 10,396
		Level 9	25	0.2% of 10,396
Level 6	8,288	Level 7	341	4.1% of 8,288
		Level 8	56	0.7% of 8,288
		Level 9	54	0.7% of 8,288
Level 7	6,058	Level 8	228	3.8% of 6,058
		Level 9	192	3.2% of 6,058
Level 8	13,829	Level 9	1,153	8.3% of 6,058
Total (All Levels)	44,421	All Levels	4,558	10.3% of 44,421
Source: Skillnets Activity Management Database				
Notes: Data relates to individual participants. As some participants undertake multiple training courses, there may be some double counting of participants in the above data.				

It is also instructive to consider trainees' own assessment of the extent of up-skilling they have received through undertaking TNP training. The figure below summarises the findings from Indecon's survey of TNP employed trainees in this respect. It is notable that a majority (>50%) of participants indicated that they experienced a large or some improvement in terms of acquiring skills specific to their job or sector, technical and practical skills, problem-solving skills, leadership skills, verbal communication skills, and other management and administration skills.

Figure 3.2: TNP Employed Training Outcomes – Trainee Views on Changes in Skill Levels



Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Employed Trainee Survey

3.4.4 TNP Training Outcomes – Case Studies

As part of the evaluation we also developed a series of case studies on selected examples of how the provision of training has impacted on the ground. One example of how training is provided under the TNP is the Innovation and Lean Sigma Skillnet, which is described overleaf.

Box 3-1: Case Study – Innovation and Lean Sigma Skillnet	
Network Name	Innovation & Lean Sigma Skillnet
Background	<p>The Innovation and Lean Sigma Skillnet (ILSS) was established in 2008 by leading cross-sectoral companies in Ireland that saw the need for a knowledge-sharing network that would actively support and promote innovation and lean/sigma ideas so as to increase the competitive advantage of Member Companies and of Ireland as a whole.</p> <p>Training, Education & Development is of the utmost importance to all ILSS Member Companies and therefore is a key area of focus for the network. Training Education & Development is at the centre of all network activity and is supported by the other Core Processes of ILSS/ICBE. These include:</p> <p>Call For Support, Networking Forums/ Business Forums & Conferences, Sharing Best Practice/Knowledge Sharing, Emerging Member Needs.</p>
Key Features	The ILSS re-enforces formal training and education with formal and informal networking opportunities, best-practice visits and opportunities to learn from other practitioners. Knowledge sharing, transfer, and application are paramount to the success of the network.
Programme	The Training Networks Programme
Participant	Lake Region Medical
Link Between Company and Skillnet	A gap analysis carried out in 2009 led to the company developing, in conjunction with the Innovation & Lean Sigma Skillnet, a range of ground-breaking learning solutions which has resulted in Lake Region Medical becoming a centre of manufacturing excellence.
Impact of the Skillnet	In 2012, Lake Region Medical became the first company in Ireland & the first European Medical Device Manufacturer to achieve the prestigious Shingo accreditation. Dubbed by Business Week magazine as ‘The Noble Prize for Manufacturing’ the Shingo Prize was established in 1988 by the University of Utah to recognize organizations that had achieved World Class status in Manufacturing Excellence. Shingo is a very exclusive club with only seven organizations worldwide achieving accreditation during 2012. Lake Region Medical’s achievement was also recognized by the Irish Medical Device Association when they crowned them Irish Medical Technology Company of the year at their annual conference in Galway in December.
Awareness of Company/Skillnet Impact	<i>“Congratulations to all at Lake Region, this is a great example of the spirit of innovation, hard work and dedication which is so vital in assisting Ireland on the path to economic recovery.”- Taoiseach Enda Kenny</i>
Source: Skillnets and Lake Region Medical	

A further example of TNP training can be seen from the activities of the Space Industry Skillnet, which is described in the box overleaf.

Box 3-2: Case Study – Space Industry Skillnet	
Network Name	Space Industry Skillnet
Background	The Space Industry Skillnet national training network was established for the TNP 2006/2007 Skillnets programme and consists of Irish companies who are or who want to be involved in the delivery of technology and services to the European Space Agency (ESA). Such companies develop and supply applications that rely on programmes such as telecoms, navigation and earth observation. In addition, other non-space companies participate to improve their manufacturing process & quality systems based on best practice in the space sector.
Programme	Training Networks Programme (TNP)
Key Features	The Space Industry Skillnet (SIS) developed three core principles: Foresight: Delivery of information to members about future commercial space activities; Collaboration: Provide a forum for collaboration; and Competency Building: Facilitate access to space industry training at the highest level.
Training Course	The network has hosted unique Space Reliability, Space Safety and Space Quality Assurance training courses in Ireland with instructors from the European Space Agency and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). As a result of these courses some of the network members Éirecomposites, ACRA CONTROL, AMPAC ISP & InTune were able to bid successfully for new exports business in the space industry.
Certification	Wherever possible the training provided to Network members is certified through an NFO system of accreditation but when it relates to professional skills training for industrial skills (e.g. IPC or ESA Electronic Assembly) then the Network management ensure that the training provider is accredited to examine and issue the relevant certification to participants on completion of the relevant course.
Participants	The current network has 21 Member Companies. This has been achieved through network development in a national context, as members are located in all regions of Ireland & in most industry technology sectors. The Network Member profile is made up of companies from Industry Sectors such as Electronics, Software, Optics, Materials, Mechanical Engineering and Telecoms.
Trainee and Company feedback	<i>"I am using the skills picked up every day in my job – course was excellent." – Course Participant</i> <i>"Staff from all levels with ACRA CONTROL have benefited from training provided through the Space Industry Skillnet. The training has improved our competitiveness in the highly specialised space industry. Recently the company has won a number of major space technology development contracts with ESA & in the US we have expanded our technical staff in line with the new project requirements." - Fergal Bonner, Managing Director, ACRA CONTROL LTD.</i>
Source: Skillnets and Space Industry Skillnet	

A case study on the achievements of the Irish Software Association Skillnet is presented overleaf.

Box 3-3: Case Study – ISA Skillnet

Network Name	Irish Software Association Skillnet (within Training Networks Programme)
Background	<p>The ISA Software Skillnet is leading the development of skills across one of the most dynamic sectors in the economy. The network enables companies to acquire and share knowledge and skills to enhance export success in global markets. It has 150 active digital technology and software Member Companies spanning emerging indigenous firms through to subsidiaries of Multinational companies based in Ireland. The network is led by the Irish Software Association, which provides strategic leadership to the network on sector skills needs.</p> <p>One of the main strategic priorities identified by the ISA was the need for advanced product management skills and the lack of courses available in Ireland in this field. Product management professionals are among a growing group of experts who are critical to delivering value to the customer and the company. As Siobhan Maughan, Vice President of Product Management at Openet – Ireland's largest privately held software company with customers in 28 countries explains: <i>'Product management is a vital discipline that crosses all departments in an organisation including sales, marketing, and engineering whilst managing and co-ordinating client needs and user requirements. This programme addresses the need for a multifaceted set of competencies that can make the difference between product failure and success.'</i></p>
Key Features of Qualifications Development	<p>The ISA Product Management Working group sought an educational partner through a competitive tender and appointed DIT to develop a Postgraduate Diploma in Product Management (Level 9 NFQ) which was launched in 2011 and further expanded to include MSc progression in 2012. Also in 2012 the network added a CPD Diploma in Product Management at Level 8. This learning path enables highly experienced professionals who do not have the requisite academic qualifications to enter Level 9 programmes, an opportunity to re-enter the educational process at Level 8.</p> <p>The partnership of industry leaders and Dublin Institute of Technology draws on the expertise of leading academics, international experts, recognised industry practitioners and the latest research to deliver this world class qualification for technology professionals:</p> <p><i>'The postgraduate product management programme is the first of its kind in Europe. It is making a vital contribution to Irish software companies gaining a competitive edge in the global marketplace.'</i> (Jonathan Boylan, Chief Technology Officer, FINEOS Corporation.)</p> <p>Company assignments, capstone projects and the Master's dissertation are carried out within the context of product management challenges facing the participant's company - so the learning is integrated into their job roles. The programmes are both academically rigorous and highly practical. A key feature which emerged for the industry academic partnership is the integration of a company-based assignment in each module. This drives application of programme learning and delivers an immediate return on investment for the companies. Claire Mc Bride, Programme Manager at DIT, summarises the learning model:</p> <p><i>'The course has been designed to provide enterprise level outcomes for the company through a proven blend of academic and applied learning for the individual.'</i></p> <p>Product managers and marketers from nearly 50 companies are participating in the programmes, including companies such as Avego, CR2, IBM-Curam, Mapflow, IBM, OpenJaw Technologies, S3 Group, Fineos, Openet, and Ammeon. The programmes are becoming an essential accreditation for product managers, marketers and others working in a lead role in developing products. The programme also brings additional benefits to the full ISA Software Skillnet membership. International experts who come to Ireland to lead individual modules in DIT also provide short courses and industry seminars so that the wider network can benefit from their expertise. Typically over 100 professionals attend each event which, to date, has been provided free to network members.</p>
Future Development	<p>The ISA Software Skillnet is now exploring additional opportunities to build a full suite of learning opportunities in addition to these key qualifications which will allow managers to engage in a continuous professional development across the span of their careers and keep abreast of new techniques research and industry developments.</p>
Source: Skillnets and ISA Skillnet	

3.5 Programme Cost-Effectiveness

We also examined programme cost-effectiveness by reference to a number of unit cost ratios, in addition to considering the extent to which networks successfully leveraged Member Company funding. We also assess the issue of programme deadweight.

3.5.1 Cost per Training Day

In terms of average cost per training day, our analysis indicates that costs have fallen slightly compared to 2011 (see table below).

Table 3.14: TNP Programme Effectiveness -Costs Per Training Day in 2011 and 2012			
Year	Total Training Days	Total Expenditure	Cost Per Training Day
2012	180,093	€17,295,009	€96.00
2011	168,517	€16,486,335	€97.80
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			
Notes: Both employed and jobseeker training days are accounted for in the above training day figures. NCPD and FSNP training days are included in training days above.			

3.5.2 Cost per Trainee

Measured on the basis of average cost per trainee, the data also suggests that the TNP has been become more cost-effective during 2012 compared with 2011 (see table below), with average costs falling from €436.30 per trainee to €435.30 per trainee.

Table 3.15: TNP Programme Effectiveness -Costs Per Trainee in 2011 and 2012			
Year	Total Number of Trainees	Total Expenditure (Incl. State Grant and Matched Company Expenditure)	Cost Per Trainee
2012	39,727	€17,295,009	€435.35
2011	37,786	€16,486,355	€436.31
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			
Notes: Data relates to employed and jobseeker trainees			

3.5.3 State Funding Costs per Trainee

It is also important to consider the State funding costs of TNP training. Analysis of the movement in average State funding costs per trainee, shown in the table overleaf, indicates that the average cost per trainee in terms of total State grant funding increased from €203.16 in 2011 to €207.47 in 2012.

Table 3.16: TNP Programme Effectiveness -State Costs Per Trainee in 2011 and 2012

Year	Total Number of Trainees	Total State Grant Funding	Cost Per Trainee
2012	39,727	€8,242,102	€207.47
2011	37,786	€7,676,740	€203.16
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			
Notes: Data relates to employed and jobseeker trainees			

3.5.4 Member Company Cost per Trainee

The cost per trainee in terms of Member Company costs declined from €233.10 in 2011 to €227.80 in 2012. This reflected an increase in the number of trainees during the year.

Table 3.17: TNP Programme Effectiveness -Member Company Costs Per Trainee

Year	Total Number of Trainees	Total Member Company Matched Funding	Cost Per Trainee
2012	39,727	€9,052,907	€227.80
2011	37,786	€8,809,615	€233.10
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			
Notes: Data relates to employed and jobseeker trainees			

Funding leverage, in relation the extent to which networks are in a position to attract Member Company-matching funding, is an important driver of overall cost-effectiveness as higher company funding will reduce the overall unit costs of State grant funding for any given level of training activity. Analysis of funding leverage across the TNP networks, summarised in the table below, suggests a wide variation across networks in terms of success in attracting matching funding. Overall, TNP networks surpassed the Skillnets-budgeted level of matching funding for 2012 by 5.6%.

Table 3.18: Funding Leverage - Matching Funding Achieved as % of Matching Funding Budget – TNP Main Programme

	% of Matching Budget
Total - All TNP Main Networks*	105.6%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets data	
* 53 networks. Figures exclude JSSP, FSNP and NCPD.	

3.5.5 Assessment of programme deadweight

As part of this evaluation, we assessed the extent of deadweight present in the Training Networks Programme. Deadweight pertains to the extent to which the outputs or outcomes observed under a programme would have occurred in the absence of the programme. Any such publicly-funded programmes will inevitably have some element of deadweight, but the extent of such deadweight is important. Indecon, through its survey of TNP employed trainees, sought views on their potential decisions in the event that they had not undertaken Skillnets training. We found that 30.7% of trainees would have undertaken similar training elsewhere with another provider; while a further 19.6% would have received less training or taken longer to undertake this training; and 30.4% of trainees suggested that they would not have undertaken any other training in the absence of Skillnets.

Table 3.19: TNP Programme Effectiveness –Trainees’ Assessment of Deadweight	
If you had not undertaken/commenced Skillnets training, what do you think you would have done?	% of Total
Would have undertaken similar training elsewhere/with another provider	30.7%
Would have received less training or taken longer to undertake the training	19.6%
Would have undertaken alternative training but at a later date	19.2%
Would not have undertaken any training at all	30.4%
Total	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Employed Trainee Survey	

We also posed a similar question to the Member Companies with whom these trainees work. We found that 20.4% of companies indicated that they would have arranged alternative training no different to that received through Skillnets, while 12.5% of companies stated that in the absence of Skillnets training that they would not have arranged any training at all.

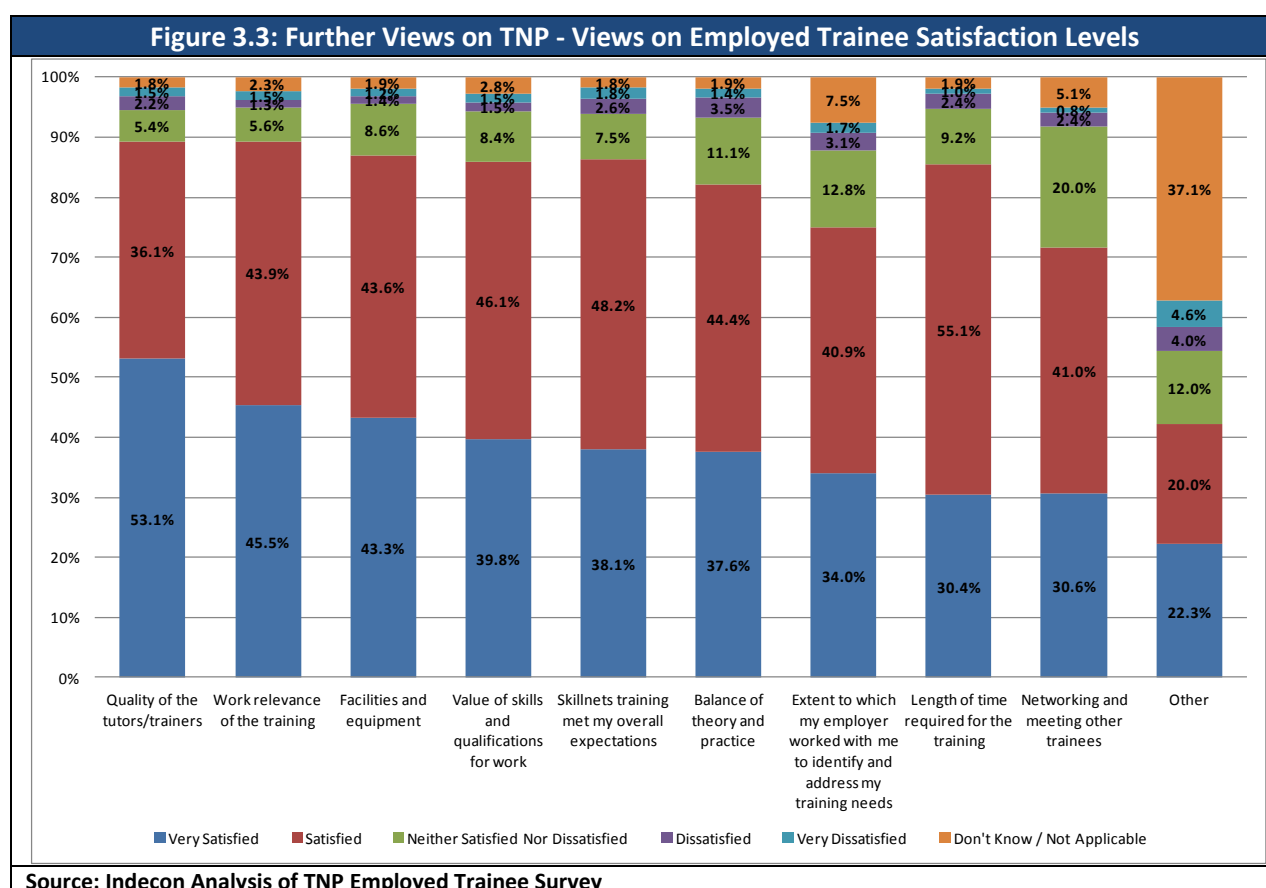
Table 3.20: TNP Programme Effectiveness -Member Companies Views on Likely Decisions in the Absence of Skillnets	
In the absence of the Skillnets training, please indicate the likely decisions your organisation would have made.	% of Total
We would have arranged alternative training no different to that received through Skillnets	20.4%
We would have arranged alternative training but to a lesser degree (e.g. through shorter courses and/or offered to fewer people)	53.4%
We would have arranged alternative training but at a later date	13.7%
We would not have arranged any training at all	12.5%
Total	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Member Companies Survey	

The above assessment indicates is that there is some deadweight in the TNP programme. However, all such programmes exhibit deadweight and from previous evaluations conducted by Indecon, and this level of deadweight is not seen as out of line with other programmes.

3.6 Views of Trainees and Member Companies

3.6.1 Trainee Views

We sought the view of trainees on which of the various aspects with which they were most and least satisfied. Our findings are displayed below. What we see is that trainees are most satisfied with the quality of the tutors/trainers (53.1% reported being very satisfied) and the work relevance of the training they undertook (over 45% found this aspect very satisfying). Dissatisfaction levels were reported as being quite low, with 3.5% of trainees unhappy with the balance of theory and practice in their training.



As an example of feedback provided, one trainee indicated the following:

"I found the Lean Six sigma green belt training excellent. Our tutor was top notch." – TNP Employed Trainee.

In terms of more specific benefits occurring as a result of training, we sought trainees' views on a number of progression indicators that have or have not occurred since their training. We found that 12.5% of trainees had secured a promotion since their training. A further 18% received a salary increase. Another 12.5% responded saying that they moved to a more satisfactory job at the same level, while 3.7% became self-employed. As indicated in the table below, a significant number of employed trainees believe that they will receive a promotion/salary increase/satisfaction increase/become self-employed within the next 2-3 years.

Table 3.21: Further Views on TNP - Employed Trainee Views on Occurrence of Benefits and Potential Benefits of Skillnets Training			
Please indicate whether any of the following benefits have occurred or not since you undertook your Skillnets training, and also whether you would expect any of the benefits listed to be likely to occur in the next 2 – 3 years	Has Occurred since Skillnets Training	Has Not Occurred but is Likely to Occur in the Next 2 to 3 Years	Has Not Occurred and is Not Likely to Occur in the Next 2 to 3 Years
I have secured a promotion/better job	12.5%	37.7%	49.8%
I have received a salary increase	18.0%	28.1%	54.0%
I have moved to a more satisfactory job at the same level	12.5%	28.1%	59.4%
I have become self-employed	3.7%	8.5%	87.8%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Employed Trainee Survey			

The table below attempts to shed some further light on this aspect. We asked trainees if certain outcomes were primarily due to Skillnets training. Trainees indicated a range of responses to this question. In terms of securing a promotion/better job, over one-third of trainees indicated that this was primarily or partially due to their TNP training, which is a positive response reflection on the quality of training provided.

Table 3.22: Further Views on TNP - Employed Trainee Views on Benefits and Potential Benefits of Skillnets Training			
Please indicate whether any of the following benefits have occurred or not since you undertook your Skillnets training, and also whether you would expect any of the benefits listed to be likely to occur in the next 2 – 3 years	Outcome Primarily due to Skillnets Training	Outcome Partially due to Skillnets Training	Outcome Not Related to Skillnets Training
I have secured a promotion/better job	6.8%	26.8%	66.4%
I have received a wage/salary increase	4.4%	21.9%	73.7%
I have moved to a more satisfactory job at the same level	5.5%	23.5%	70.9%
I have become self-employed	2.6%	6.0%	91.4%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Employed Trainee Survey			

Reflections from trainees on additional benefits and impacts are displayed in the table below. Across all the categories we have outlined, the majority of trainees indicate that Skillnets training either fully contributed or partially contributed to benefits or impacts that trainees experience thereafter. A number of standout benefits experienced by trainees include the development of learning in other new areas and likelihood that their training would assist trainees in undertaking their jobs in the future.

Table 3.23: Further Views on TNP - Employed Trainee Views on Additional Benefits/Impacts of Skillnets Training

Did (does) the Skillnets training contribute to any of the following additional benefits/impacts?	Fully Contributed	Partially Contributed	Did Not Contribute	Don't Know
Has helped me to achieve a qualification	29.6%	18.0%	44.8%	7.6%
Has assisted me in undertaking my existing job today	25.7%	55.0%	16.9%	2.4%
Is likely to assist me in undertaking my job in the future	32.8%	54.2%	9.1%	3.9%
Will assist me in keeping my present job	24.1%	38.2%	29.6%	8.1%
Has helped me to make decisions about my career	19.7%	34.4%	39.3%	6.6%
Has helped me develop contacts or networks that will assist me in getting a job	13.9%	28.4%	48.0%	9.7%
Has improved my team-working ability	19.6%	43.9%	32.6%	3.9%
Has improved my motivation	23.4%	46.3%	27.2%	3.2%
Has developed my learning in other new areas	31.9%	43.3%	20.7%	4.1%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Employed Trainee Survey				

Finally, in terms of TNP employed trainees views on the programme, we surveyed opinions on the future training plans of trainees. What we discovered was that over one-third of trainees expect to undertake a Skillnets training programme in the future (see table overleaf).

Table 3.24: Further Views on TNP - Employed Trainee Future Training Plans	
If you have completed your Skillnets training commenced during 2012, do you plan to pursue further training or learning?	% of Total
No current plans to pursue further training or learning	34.7%
Yes, on a Skillnets training programme (with an accredited qualification)	23.6%
Yes, on a Skillnets training programme (without an accredited qualification)	10.4%
Yes, with a professional body/institute	12.9%
Yes, other further education/training with accredited qualification	14.9%
Yes, other further education/training without accredited qualification	3.4%
Total	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Employed Trainee Survey	

Trainees are experiencing tangible benefits from Skillnets training, as evident from the survey results outlined in the tables above. They are also broadly satisfied with a variety of aspects of the programmes they are undertaking and they plan to undertake more training with Skillnets in the future.

3.6.2 Member Company Views

Member companies undertake training for a variety of reasons. As well as up-skilling their staff, business objectives can centre on protecting sales and revenues, and growing new business.

Where education positively influences an individual's chances of obtaining a better job and expands their career choices, training can have a similar impact for a company. Training can also help businesses to overcome barriers. As part of this evaluation, Indecon sought the views of Member Companies within the TNP programme on a range of aspects.

In the first table overleaf we outline a number of barriers that businesses are experiencing in terms of their training needs and the extent to which Skillnets training has helped Member Companies to overcome these barriers.

Table 3.25: Further Views on TNP - Member Companies Views on Skillnets Training and Overcoming Barriers in 2012

Please indicate the extent to which participation in Skillnets training during 2012 helped your company/business to overcome the following barriers	Barrier Overcome	Barrier Partially Overcome	Barrier Remains	Not a Barrier
Finding training that is relevant	43.5%	38.0%	4.0%	14.6%
Finding training of a satisfactory quality	58.8%	27.4%	2.1%	11.6%
Finding training at convenient dates/times	50.2%	33.6%	5.2%	11.0%
Finding training at satisfactory cost	58.6%	29.6%	6.6%	5.1%
Finding training providers based locally	44.3%	33.3%	10.1%	12.2%
Convincing the organisation to participate following poor experience of training in the past	25.3%	30.2%	5.2%	39.2%
Perception that staff receiving training are more likely to leave	19.8%	27.7%	8.8%	43.7%
Other	17.0%	4.3%	12.8%	66.0%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Member Companies Survey				

We found that Skillnets has had the biggest impact in terms of breaking down barriers for businesses in relation to the provision of training at a satisfactory cost (58.6% report barrier overcome) and to a satisfactory quality (58.8% report barrier overcome). For 10.1% of Member Companies, the ability to find locally-based training remains a barrier. Although some barriers remain for Member Companies the research illustrates their general satisfaction with Skillnets training.

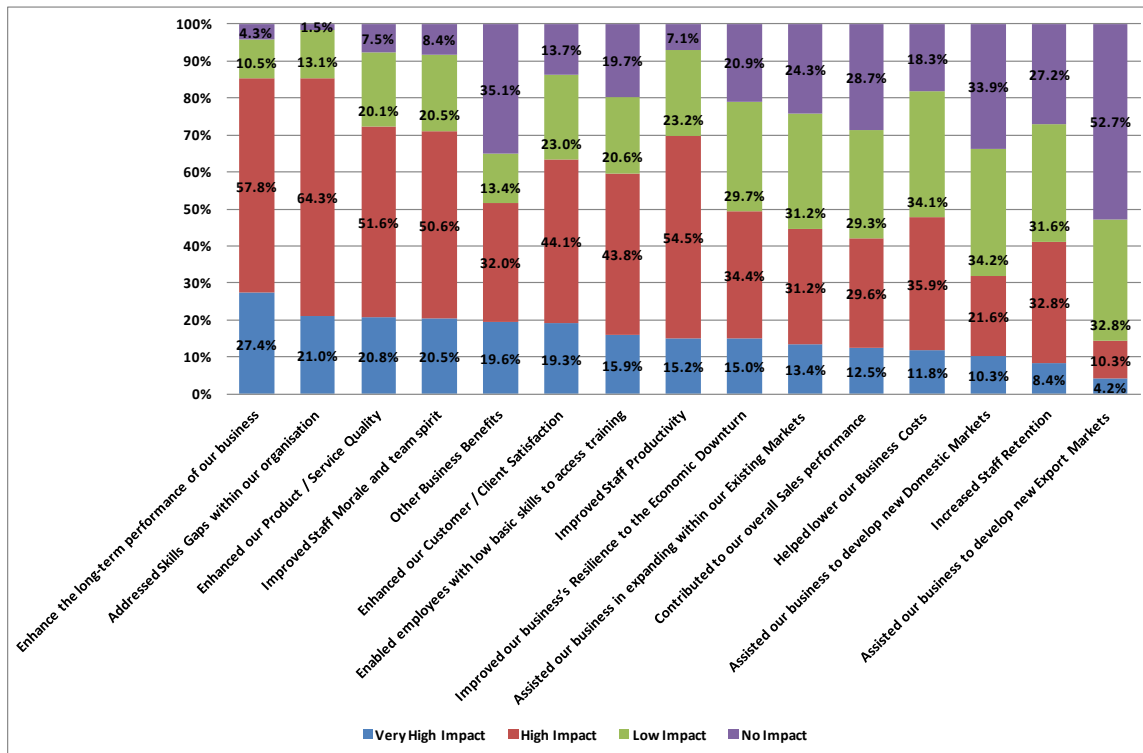
This is especially true for the cost of programme, the quality of the training and the relevance of the training in meeting business and staff development needs. These and other indicators are outlined in the table overleaf.

Table 3.26: Further Views on TNP - Member Companies Views on Satisfaction Levels

Please rate the Skillnets Training provided to your company/business according to the following criteria	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
Cost of training	50.0%	39.5%	9.3%	1.2%	0.0%
Design of training, including tailoring to our needs	46.3%	46.9%	6.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Flexibility and accessibility (time, place of delivery etc.)	46.6%	41.5%	11.3%	0.6%	0.0%
Length of time required for the training	42.2%	46.4%	11.1%	0.3%	0.0%
Relevance of the training to meeting business and staff development needs	47.8%	43.3%	8.1%	0.3%	0.6%
Quality of the training (competence of trainers)	59.1%	36.7%	3.6%	0.3%	0.3%
Level of accreditation attached to training	37.9%	43.3%	16.4%	1.8%	0.6%
Effectiveness in meeting our business needs	41.1%	51.7%	6.0%	0.9%	0.3%
Meeting our overall expectations	44.8%	49.0%	5.1%	0.9%	0.3%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Member Companies Survey					

As we discussed at the outset of this section, businesses may have a variety of reasons for undertaking training with Skillnets. The data displayed below attempts to shed light on the main benefits companies experience from their relationship with Skillnets. It is evident that companies experience benefits in terms of enhancing the long-term performance of their business as a result of Skillnets training.

Along with more expected benefits such as the addressing of skills gaps (21% report very high impact), companies also identify their ability to enhance product or service quality as a benefit of Skillnets training (20.8% report very high impact).

Figure 3.4: Further Views on TNP - Member Companies Views on Benefits of Skillnets Training


Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Employed Trainee Survey

Member Company views on effectiveness of TNP networks

As part of our survey analysis we asked Member Companies their views on effectiveness. A majority of companies (75.2%) indicated that in general, they believed that the Skillnets network model and approach in terms of responding to and addressing company training needs was either Effective or Very Effective.

Table 3.27: TNP Programme Effectiveness - Member Companies Views on Skillnets Effectiveness	
Overall, how effective do you consider the current Skillnets network model/approach to be in terms of responding to and addressing your training and staff development needs? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'Not at all effective' and 5 is 'Very effective'.	% of Total
1	1.5%
2	4.8%
3	18.4%
4	45.6%
5	29.6%
Total	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Member Companies Survey	

3.7 Future Skills Needs Programme and New Certified Programme Development

The Future Skills Needs Programme (FSNP) and the New Certified Programme Development (NCPD) are funding programmes for the development of new training programmes which were first introduced in 2011, and were continued in 2012.

3.7.1 FSNP - Financial Performance

Skillnets launched a new programme in 2011 for existing networks operating in six sectors identified by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) sectoral reports.

The strategic intent of the FSNP programme is to upskill current and future employees in these sectors in order to support the competitiveness of Member Companies, to sustain and increase market growth, maximise exports, enhance employment opportunities for jobseekers and to enable companies within the sectors to make a significant contribution to the national economy.

In 2012, the FSNP spent its full budget of €207,703.

Table 3.28: FSNP Performance, Impacts and Effectiveness - Expenditures in 2012			
Category	Budgeted Expenditure (€)	Actual Expenditure (€)	%
Training	207,100	207,730	100%
Management	0	0	-
Total Expenditure*	207,100	207,730	100%
*of which company matching funds	42,784	49,014	115%
*of which State Grant Funding	164,316	158,716	97%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			

The programmes provided within the FSNP in 2012 related to the ICT sector, the medical devices sector and the food and beverages sector. There were a number of awards across several levels of qualifications ongoing in 2012 as can be seen in the table below.

Table 3.29: FSNP Performance, Impacts and Effectiveness – Overview of Programmes Provided in 2012			
Sector	Skillnet	Award	NFQ Level
ICT	ISA Software Skillnet	CPD Diploma in Product Management	Level 8
Medical Devices	Life Sciences Skillnet	Lean Leadership	Level 7
Food & Bever- ages	Taste 4 Success Skill- nets	Certificate in Food Industry Skills	Levels 4, 5 & 6
		Culinary Apprenticeship	
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			

3.7.2 Selected FSNP Networks

Taste 4 Success Skillnet

The Taste4Success Skillnet represents a significant, innovative and strategic collaboration between a growing number of Member Companies across a number of specific food and beverage sub-sectors, such as production, processing, artisan and services. Companies in each of the respective sectors range from micro indigenous artisan producers to large international conglomerates. The strategic collaboration in the network has provided increased efficiencies for a number of different cluster groups as well as manufacturing and processing companies linked either by supply chain and/or geography.

The Taste4Success Skillnet started out with a small group of 16 companies in 1999 based in the north west of Ireland, and since then it has grown its membership to over 125 active members across a national base.

PharmaChem Skillnet

The Pharmachem Skillnet is an ever growing network of companies that offer Pharmaceutical training courses as well as Chemical and Medical Device training in the Munster and Leinster regions. The network was established in 2006 being formed to avail of subsidised training and networking under the Skillnets training programme, with the aim of fostering a climate of whole company development in the provision of industry specific technical training and soft skills in companies large and small nationally, consistent with the goals of Member Companies.

The network operates as a business resource for organisations nationally and has been formed in response to a real need in the workplace for “best in class” training and development at a realistic and very affordable price.

3.7.3 NCPD - Financial Performance

Fostering the development of new certified training has been an integral part of Skillnets strategy. The focus of the New Certified Programme Development (NCPD) is to cultivate new training programmes where there is a clearly identified gap in provision and a proven demand from enterprise. Training is NFQ certified or alternatively, has appropriate industry verification and is also accessible to jobseekers. The overall aim of the programme is to provide a significant increase in the availability of new certified training to network Member Companies.

The NCPD under spent its budget in 2012 by 16.9%. Expenditure amounted to €266,535.

Table 3.30: NCPD Performance, Impacts and Effectiveness - Expenditures in 2012			
Category	Budgeted Expenditure (€)	Actual Expenditure (€)	%
Training	320,865	266,535	83.1%
Management	0	0	-
Total Expenditure*	320,865	266,535	83.1%
*of which company matching funds	64,463	72,831	112.9%
*of which State Grand Funding	256,402	193,704	75.5%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			

3.7.4 Selected NCPD Networks

Farm Business Skillnet

The IFA Member Services training wing, Farm Business Skillnet organises relevant, comprehensive and professional training at discounted prices in following areas:

- ☐ Personal Development;
- ☐ Leadership & Negotiation;
- ☐ Taxation & Finance;
- ☐ Computers & Technology and
- ☐ Health and Safety.

The benefits of completing a course with the Farm Business Skillnets are as follows:

- ☐ Increased productivity, efficiency and skill levels among farmers trained;
- ☐ Increased confidence in your own abilities; and
- ☐ An opportunity to liaise, converse and network with your peers.

Trainers Learning Skillnet

The Irish Institute of Training and Development is the professional association which has represented the Training and HRD Profession in Ireland since 1969. The Institute has successfully applied to Skillnets for the establishment of a Network for Training Providers and in particular, for those in Micro Training Organisations and training departments within larger companies. The network is called the Trainers' Learning Skillnet.

The Trainers' Learning Skillnet is funded by Member Companies and the Training Networks Programme, an initiative of Skillnets Ltd, funded from the National Training Fund through the Department of Education and Skills. The purpose of the Trainers' Learning Skillnet is to provide a forum where organisations can collaborate, network and promote best practice in trainer competencies and skills. The network aims to develop the skills of those in the training profession while simultaneously providing industry with individuals who can provide training which will yield quantifiable benefits that can be sustained.

3.8 Summary of Findings

At the programme-specific level, the aims of the TNP are centred on four themes. These relate to training that influences the transferability of skills, fosters company diversification or transferability with a sector or to another sector, facilitates increased performance and growth in priority sector and enhances the general competency skills of lifelong learners. Indecon's assessment of the TNP employed training indicates that overall during 2012 the programme had a successful year and improved on a number of aspects relative to 2011. We highlight below a number of salient findings from our assessment of TNP employed training activities during 2012:

- ❑ TNP networks spent a total of €17.3 million during 2012, while average expenditure per network has increased from €249,793 in 2011 to €326,321 in 2012. In relation to training activity levels, the TNP substantially exceeded its target for the number of trainees, assisting a total of 35,829 employed trainees (19% above target), while it also surpassed by 3% the target set for the number of training days delivered across the networks. In addition, 73% of training days under the TNP programme were certified training days.
- ❑ The scale of TNP networks increased during 2012 to 196 companies per network, compared to 150 companies per network during 2011. This is a positive development in terms of expanding the reach and coverage of networks while also enabling networks to benefit from economies of scale in their operations.
- ❑ Another important feature in relation to Member Companies is that networks under the TNP work primarily with SMEs (employing up to 250 persons), which represented 94% of Member Companies during 2012, while 58% of companies employed fewer than 10 persons.
- ❑ The 2011 evaluation of the TNP indicated that there was a need for networks to spend more time and resources on non-training activities. It appears that TNP networks have responded in this area, with an increase in the number of networking events evident, from 92 in 2011 to 232 during 2012.
- ❑ TNP training caters to individuals across the education spectrum, and not only to graduates. Our research among trainees found that 44.3% of employed trainees were previously educated to below primary degree level, while 55% were graduates. This is positive in terms of up-skilling in general and reflecting the poor employment prospects of certain categories within the labour force.
- ❑ In relation to the current status of trainees, it is notable that despite the present very challenging labour market and high level of unemployment across the Irish economy, over 95% of individuals who undertook employee training under the TNP during 2012 are currently in employment (either with the same or different employer, or self-employed).

- ❑ In terms of the impact of training on skills, our research found that the main impact of TNP training for employed trainees was in relation to acquiring sector- or job-specific skills, with 74.2% of trainees indicating a large or some improvement in this area. This was followed by technical and practical skills, where 71.5% of trainees attributed a large or some improvement as a result of their participation in training under TNP. Other areas where a majority of trainees cited positive impacts in terms of skills include problem-solving skills, leadership skills, verbal communication and other management & administrative skills. Trainees in general also expressed high levels of satisfaction with the quality of training received.
- ❑ A number of benefits of training received under TNP have been highlighted by trainees, with 87% indicating that training would assist them in their jobs while 75.2% state that their training under TNP has fully or partially contributed to learning in new areas.
- ❑ As part of our research, Indecon also sought the views of network members companies regarding the overall effectiveness of TNP networks. On a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being very effective, we found that 75.2% of companies indicated their opinion that their network was either very effective or effective in meeting their training needs.
- ❑ When asked to assess the extent to which Skillnets has helped in overcome specific barriers, we find that that TNP networks have the most impact in providing training at a satisfactory cost, with over 88% of Member Companies stated that their networks have partially or fully overcome this as a barrier to providing training for their staff. In addition, 86% of companies consider that their networks are fully or partially addressing the barrier of how to access training that is of sufficient quality. Other barriers or issues which a majority of Member Companies believe are being successfully addressed within their networks include finding training at convenient dates / times, finding training that is relevant to their needs, finding training providers that are based locally, and convincing their organisation to participate in Skillnets training programmes following poor experience of training in the past.

4 Evaluation of Finuas Networks Programme

4.1 Introduction

This section of the evaluation assesses the impact of the Finuas Networks Programme, focussing on the provision of employed training under the programme (the evaluation of jobseeker training under the main Finuas programme is presented in Section 5).

4.2 Context of Finuas Programme

The Finuas programme operates within the context of the financial services sector in Ireland. The Finuas Networks Programme is dedicated to specialised training within the international financial services sector and is jointly funded by the Irish government and companies within the sector. Finuas aims to support the sector in maintaining Ireland's position as a top international financial services centre through investment in the specialist skills and expertise of its workforce.

The Finuas programme has been highlighted in a recent policy report by the Department of An Taoiseach² as having promoted skills development in the sector through increased co-ordination and scale. The report also goes on to say that the programme has continued to support a cost effective way of improving capabilities, encouraging additional higher-value activities to be based in Ireland while protecting jobs.

At the heart of the Irish financial sector is the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in Dublin. In 2012 the IFSC celebrated its 25th year as one of the world's leading financial services centres. The importance of the International Financial Services Centre to the Irish economy is significant. It has become one of the leading hedge fund service centres in Europe, and many of the world's most important financial institutions have a presence here. They employ an estimated 32,700 people and pay about €1 billion in corporate taxes each year, with a further €1 billion going to the Exchequer in payroll taxes.

More than 500 operations were approved to trade in under the IFSC programme. The centre is host to half of the world's top 50 banks and to half of the top 20 insurance companies. Merrill Lynch, Sumitomo Bank, ABN Amro, Citibank, AIG, JP Morgan (Chase), Commerzbank, BNP Paribas and EMRO are just some of the operators that have chosen to locate in the area. Moreover, a sophisticated support network has also developed around the IFSC³.

Thus the importance of the Irish financial services sector is clear as is the supportive impact of the Finuas programme is its sustenance and future development, especially within the current national employment context.

4.3 Aims and Objectives of Programme

Finuas commenced in 2009 and was born out of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) report on the Future Skills and Research Needs of the International Financial Services Industry which suggested that Finuas be used as a vehicle for skills training in the sector. Finuas is funded

²The Department of An Taoiseach (2011) 'A Strategy for the International Financial Services Industry in Ireland 2011 – 2016'.

³www.ifsc.ie

by the National Training Fund and managed by Skillnets on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. Finuas aims to support the financial sector in maintaining Ireland's position as a top international financial services centre through investment in the specialist skills and expertise of its workforce. Within this general aim, Finuas has a number of specific objectives which are outlined below.

Table 4.1: Finuas Programme – Aims and Objectives of Finuas in 2012

A number of specific objectives have been identified for the Finuas programme. These include:

- ☐ To promote an enterprise-led approach to learning within the international financial services sector through the establishment of Finuas networks where groups of enterprises can develop strategic answers to their joint training needs;
- ☐ To develop the skills of existing staff and expand the pool of high value, specialised and market-appropriate skills within the industry;
- ☐ To increase the supply and mix of current training and education provision and create flexible learning opportunities;
- ☐ To make available new or revised industry-specific course materials, programmes, modules and awards that are aligned to identified business/market needs;
- ☐ To enable strategic high level education provision, to be newly created or updated, in line with industry developments and provide opportunities for specialisation;
- ☐ To put in place a flexible process, which can respond rapidly to industry changes or developments;
- ☐ To create value-added training by promoting best international practice within the training, including impact measurement, benchmarking and strategic approaches to learning and development; and
- ☐ To support jobseekers in updating their skills, networking and increasing their employability through industry-led training.

Source: Skillnets

4.4 Assessment of Programme Inputs

4.4.1 Analysis of Financial Inputs

Finuas operated three networks in 2012; the Law Society Finuas Network, the Summit Finuas Network and the Aviation Finance Finuas Network. This was a reduction of one from the previous year as the Munster Finuas network was no longer in operation in 2012. Across the three networks that remained, Finuas' financial inputs amounted to €1,656,270. This was a 2.76% reduction on the previous year. However, while the overall expenditure has dropped, in terms of average expenditure per network, this has increased on last year from €425,827 to €552,090.

Table 4.2: Financial Overview – Finuas Expenditure in 2011 and 2012

No of Networks - 2011	Actual Expenditure - 2011	Average Expenditure Per Network - 2011	No of Networks - 2012	Actual Expenditure - 2012	Average Expenditure Per Network - 2012	% Change in Actual Expenditure 2011 - 2012
4	1,703,309	425,827	3	1,656,270	552,090	-2.76%

Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database

The table below also provides a breakdown of this expenditure in terms of the State's contribution and the amount provided by Member Companies. The Finuas networks provided for the training needs of their clients while remaining under budget in terms of expenditures in 2012. Where training expenditure was 5% ahead of budget at €1,383,215, management expenditure was 8% below budget.

Table 4.3: Financial Overview – Breakdown of Finuas Expenditure in 2012

Category	Budgeted Expenditure(€)	Actual Expenditure(€)	Actual as % of Budget
Training	€1,317,689	€1,383,215	105%
Management Expenditure	€296,312	€273,055	92%
Total Expenditure*	€1,695,103	€1,656,270	98%
<i>*Of which, State funds</i>	€828,236	€807,412	97%
<i>*of which company matching funds were</i>	€866,867	848,858	98%

Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database

4.5 Assessment of Programme Outputs and Outcomes

4.5.1 Analysis of Training Outputs

We begin by assessing the extent of Finuas training outputs. What we find is that there were 166 recorded training events and 12 networking events in 2012. In terms of the percentage of total events in 2012, training courses represented 93% of events while networking events represented 7%. This compares with 96% and 4%, respectively, for the TNP on the same indicators. We saw from previous evaluations of the TNP and Finuas, a recommendation to increase the level of networking events which was acted upon successfully within the TNP in 2012. In comparing the percentages above, it would also appear that the Finuas programme is successfully balancing the need for pure training events with networking opportunities for participants and Member Companies.

Table 4.4: Finuas Training Outputs - Number of Events in 2012

Event	No of Events/Courses
Training Courses	166
Networking Events	12
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database	

4.5.2 Network structure and size

The Law Society Finuas Network is the largest of the three networks in terms of the number of companies, with 50% of all Finuas network Member Companies located in this network. The Summit Finuas Network, which focuses on the training needs of the Irish financial services sector, contained 96 active companies in 2012, with the Aviation Finuas Network making up the final 34 companies (13% of total). Overall, there has been an increase in the number of companies since 2011 from 236 to 259.

Table 4.5: Finuas Profile of Member Companies - Number of Active Member Companies in 2011 and 2012

Network	Number of Active Companies	% of Total
Law Society Finuas	129	50%
Summit Finuas Network	96	37%
Aviation Finance Finuas Network	34	13%
All Companies - 2012	259	100%
All Companies - 2011	236	100%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		

In terms of the employment structure of these companies, the majority of companies are SMEs, while 48% employ fewer than ten people. Over 259 companies were members of Finuas during 2012 (see table overleaf).

Table 4.6: Finuas Profile of Member Companies - Number of Active Companies by Employment Category in 2012

Average Number of Employees	Number of Active Companies	% of Total
0 - 9	126	48%
10 - 49	69	27%
50 - 250	36	14%
250 +	29	11%
Total	259	100%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		

Prior Training Activity

Indecon was eager to discover whether the companies that took part in Finuas training in 2012 had previously undertaken training and indeed where they had acquired this training. What we found was that nearly 70% of companies have previously participated in a planned training process.

Table 4.7: Finuas Profile of Member Companies - Member Company Training Prior To 2012	
Prior to 2012, did your organisation participate in a planned (Finuas or other) training process?	% of Total
Yes	68.3%
No	31.7%
Total	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Member Companies Survey	

While 16.7% of these companies have trained with Skillnets before, a further 70% had undertaken training with both Skillnets and other providers.

Table 4.8: Finuas Profile of Member Companies - Provider of Prior Training	
If 'Yes', did this involve Finuas training, training provided by other (non-Finuas) organisations, or a mixture of both?	% of Total
Skillnets Training	16.7%
Non-Skillnets Training	13.3%
Both	70.0%
Total	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Member Companies Survey	

4.5.3 Analysis of Training Outcomes

Of importance in assessing the overall achievements of the Finuas programme in providing training to employed trainees concerns the extent of training activity, as measured by the number of trainees assisted and training days provided. The table below summarises the outcomes for 2012 and compares these to the activities in 2011. Finuas provided training to 1,133 employed trainees and over 12,693 training days during 2012. Training activities were broadly stable relative to 2011, in that while the number of employed trainees assisted was down by 17%, although the number of training days increased by 13.5%. When assessed relative to the budgeted figures set by Skillnets across the networks, it is evident that the number of trainees assisted was close to (96% of) the target for 2012, while the target for training days was exceeded by 21%.

Table 4.9: Finuas Training Outcomes– Employed Trainees and Training Days in 2011 and 2012

Indicator	Employed Trainees - 2012	Employed Trainees - 2011
Programme	Finuas	Finuas
Actual Trainees	1,133	1,365
Target Trainees	1,182	1,321
<i>Actual Trainees as a % of Target Trainees</i>	<i>96%</i>	<i>103%</i>
Actual Training Days	12,693	11,186
Target Training Days	10,461	10,301
<i>Actual Training Days as a % of Target Training Days</i>	<i>121%</i>	<i>109%</i>
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		
Note: Targets shown relate to Skillnets internal figures set across the networks during the annual budgeting process. These differ from the high-level targets for trainees and training days set by the Department of Education and Skills		

Progression Outcomes of Employed Trainees

Age profile of trainees

In assessing progression outcomes among Finuas trainees, it is important to take into account the profile of trainees. Firstly, we note the wide spread in terms of age profile of trainees assisted under the programme (see table overleaf).

Table 4.10: Finuas Training Outcomes - Age Profile of Employed Trainees

Age	% of Total
Under 20	0.1%
20 - 24	9.8%
25 - 29	26.8%
30 - 34	28.8%
35 - 39	17.4%
40 - 49	12.2%
50 - 59	3.8%
60 and Over	1.1%
Total	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis Skillnets Activity Management System	

The prior education profile of Finuas employed trainees is described in the table below. A high proportion of these trainees are educated to degree level or higher, with 48.3% holding primary degrees and 32.4% having postgraduate qualifications including Master's degrees. This reflects the more specialised nature of the sectors covered by Finuas.

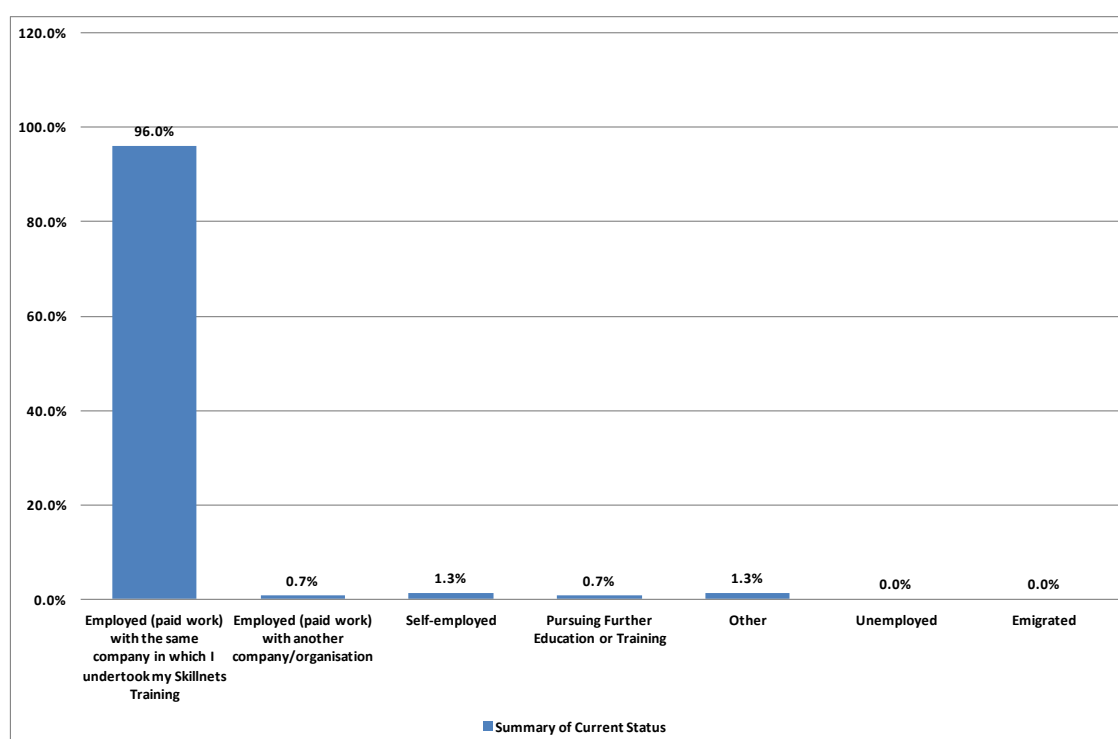
Table 4.11: Finuas Training Outcomes– Prior Educational Profile of Employed Trainees

Education Level	Number of Responses	% of Total
Completed education before Junior Certificate	0	0.0%
Junior Certificate	0	0.0%
Leaving Certificate or equivalent	6	4.1%
Higher Education Certificate or Diploma	22	15.2%
Primary (e.g. Bachelors) Degree	70	48.3%
Master's Degree or Higher	47	32.4%
Other	12	8.3%
Total	157	108%

Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Employed Trainee Survey

Current status

In relation to the current status of trainees who undertook employed training under Finuas during 2012, it is notable that 98% of trainees currently remain in employment (see figure overleaf), which is a very positive outcome in the current challenging labour market.

Figure 4.1: Finuas Training Outcomes–Current Status of Employed Trainees

Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Employed Trainee Survey

In terms of specific training outcomes, the table below indicates that following their Finuas training, where trainees achieved certified qualifications, the majority were to NFQ Level 7 and above.

Table 4.12: Finuas Training Outcomes– Post Training Qualification Levels of Participants		
Level of Award on NFQ	Number of Employed Participants	% of Total
Level 6	6	2%
Level 7	140	47%
Level 8	50	17%
Level 9	102	34%
Total	298	100%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		
Notes: Data relates to individual participants. As some participants undertake multiple training courses, there may be some double counting of participants in the above data. Furthermore, this data relates only to formal events.		

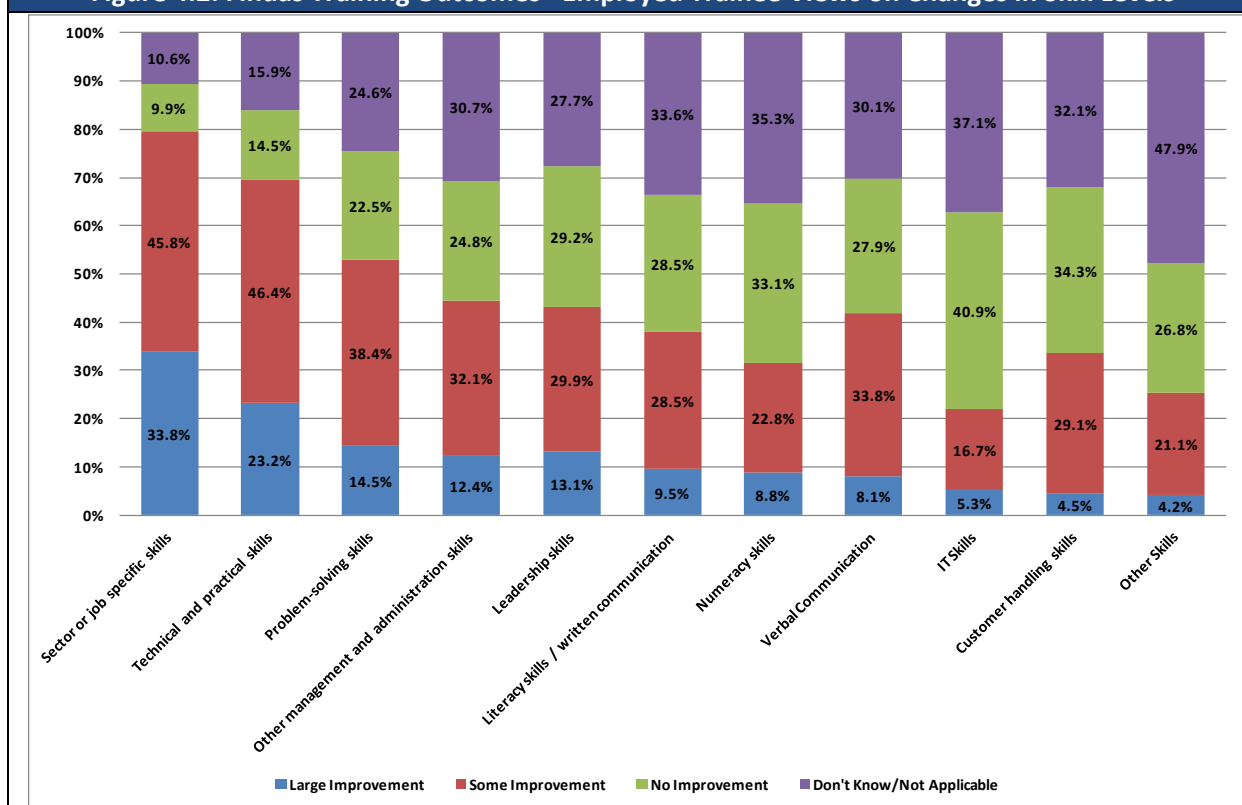
This finding is consistent with our survey research on the degree to which training resulted in a new qualification for trainees. This data is indicated below and suggest that just over one-third of trainees gained a qualification and all of these qualifications were to Level 6 or above (see table overleaf).

Table 4.13: Finuas Training Outcomes– Profile of Qualifications Attained by Employed Trainees		
Has (or will) this Skillnets training result in any qualifications?	Number of Responses	% of Total
No awards or qualifications	72	49.7%
HETAC Accredited (Higher Education Levels 6-10)	33	22.8%
FETAC Accredited (Further Education – Levels 1-5)	0	0.0%
Accredited by industry-recognised professional body / institute	16	11.0%
Don't know	24	16.6%
Total	145	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Employed Trainee Survey		

In attempting to comprehensively assess the skills related progression outcomes of Finuas trainees, we included a question in our survey in order to gain a deeper understanding of trainee views on changes in skill levels related to their training activity. This includes benefits which are not strictly quantifiable but are important, such as increased motivation and confidence.

We found that Finuas employed trainees saw that largest improvement in skills that are specific to their job or their sector, followed by improvements in technical and practical skills.

Figure 4.2: Finuas Training Outcomes– Employed Trainee Views on Changes in Skill Levels



Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Employed Trainee Survey

In terms of the outputs and outcomes of training, the data suggests the Finuas programme is providing tangible benefits to trainees, and almost all trainees currently remain in employment. Allied to this is a general increase in accreditations and skill levels as a result of training.

4.6 Programme Cost-Effectiveness

4.6.1 Cost per Training Day

In terms of costs per training day, the Finuas networks saw a reduction from €146.80 per day in 2011 to €124.70 per training day in 2012 (see table below).

Table 4.14: Finuas Programme Effectiveness– Costs Per Training Day in 2011 and 2012

Year	Total Training Days	Total Expenditure	Cost Per Training Day
2012	13,280	€1,656,270	€124.70
2011	11,602	€1,703,309	€146.80
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			
Notes: Both employed and jobseeker training days are accounted for in the above training day figures.			

4.6.2 Cost per Trainee

However, in terms of costs per trainee, there was an overall increase in the cost per trainee across the Finuas networks, from €1,143.20 in 2011 to €1,265.30 in 2012 (see below).

Table 4.15: Finuas Programme Effectiveness– Costs Per Trainee in 2011 and 2012			
Year	Total Number of Trainees	Total Expenditure (Incl. State Grant and Matched Company Expenditure)	Cost Per Trainee
2012	1,309	€1,656,270	€1,265.30
2011	1,490	€1,703,309	€1,143.20
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			
Notes: Data includes both employed and jobseeker training days			

4.6.3 State Funding Costs per Trainee

The increase in cost per trainee overall is also evident when we analyse this indicator in terms of State funding costs per trainee. This can be seen in the table overleaf. Overall State funding costs per trainee within the Finuas networks increased during 2012.

Table 4.16: Finuas Programme Effectiveness– State Costs Per Trainee in 2011 and 2012			
Year	Total Number of Trainees	Total State Grant Funding	Cost Per Trainee
2012	1,309	€807,412	€616.80
2011	1,490	€784,747	€526.70
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			
Notes: Data includes both employed and jobseeker training days			

4.6.4 Member Company Costs per Trainee

From the perspective of Member Companies, unit costs increased during 2012 to €648.80 per trainee compared with Member Company funding costs of €616.50 per trainee in 2011 (see table below).

Table 4.17: Finuas Programme Effectiveness– Member Company Costs Per Trainee in 2011 and 2012			
Year	Total Number of Trainees	Total Member Company Matched Funding	Cost Per Trainee
2012	1,309	€848,858	€648.80
2011	1,490	€918,562	€616.50
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			
Notes: Data includes both employed and jobseeker training days			

4.6.5 Funding leverage

In terms of overall funding leverage, our analysis of funding performance at network level indicated that, overall, Finuas networks achieved matching funding from their Member Companies which was in line with budgeted levels for 2012. In one case, matching funding fell short of the budgeted level.

Table 4.18: Funding Leverage - Matching Funding Achieved as % of Matching Funding Budget - Finuas Main Programme	
	% of Matching Budget
Total - All Finuas Main Networks*	99.6%
<i>Range</i>	
Min	88.9%
Max	102.1%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets data	
* Three networks. Figures exclude JSSP, FSNP and NCPD.	

4.6.6 Assessment of Programme Deadweight

In relation to programme deadweight, what we found in the case of Finuas is that 31.0% of trainees would have undertaken similar training elsewhere with another provider. This indicates that there is a level of deadweight in the Finuas programme in that there is a cohort who would have undertaken training elsewhere. This is nearly identical to the findings in relation to the TNP.

However, results from previous evaluations conducted by Indecon, including a recent evaluation of JobBridge, suggest that this level of deadweight is not significantly different from estimates in other programmes. Having said this, Indecon believes that scheme administrators should always be vigilant and work as efficiently as possible to manage the level of deadweight where possible.

Table 4.19: Finuas Programme Effectiveness– Trainees’ Assessment of Deadweight	
If you had not undertaken/commenced Skillnets training, what do you think you would have done?	% of Total
Would have undertaken similar training elsewhere/with another provider	31.0%
Would have received less training or taken longer to undertake the training	16.2%
Would have undertaken alternative training but at a later date	25.4%
Would not have undertaken any training at all	27.5%
Total	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Employed Trainee Survey	

We also posed a similar deadweight-related question to Finuas Member Companies. What we found that 15% of companies indicate that they would have arranged alternative training no different to that received through Skillnets. A further 60% of respondents indicated that they would have arranged alternative training but to a lesser degree. Finally, 17.5% of companies would

not have arranged any training at all. Again, this data indicates a level of deadweight but it also indicates a general need for training as expressed by companies.

Table 4.20: Finuas Programme Effectiveness– Member Companies Views on Likely Decisions in Absence of Training	
In the absence of the Finuas training, please indicate the likely decisions your organisation would have made.	% of Total
We would have arranged alternative training no different to that received through Skillnets	15.0%
We would have arranged alternative training but to a lesser degree (e.g. through shorter courses and/or offered to fewer people)	60.0%
We would have arranged alternative training but at a later date	7.5%
We would not have arranged any training at all	17.5%
Total	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Member Companies Survey	

Overall however, while there is a level of deadweight present in the Finuas programme, this level of deadweight is not seen as out of line with other programmes.

4.7 Views of Trainees and Member Companies

4.7.1 Views of Trainees

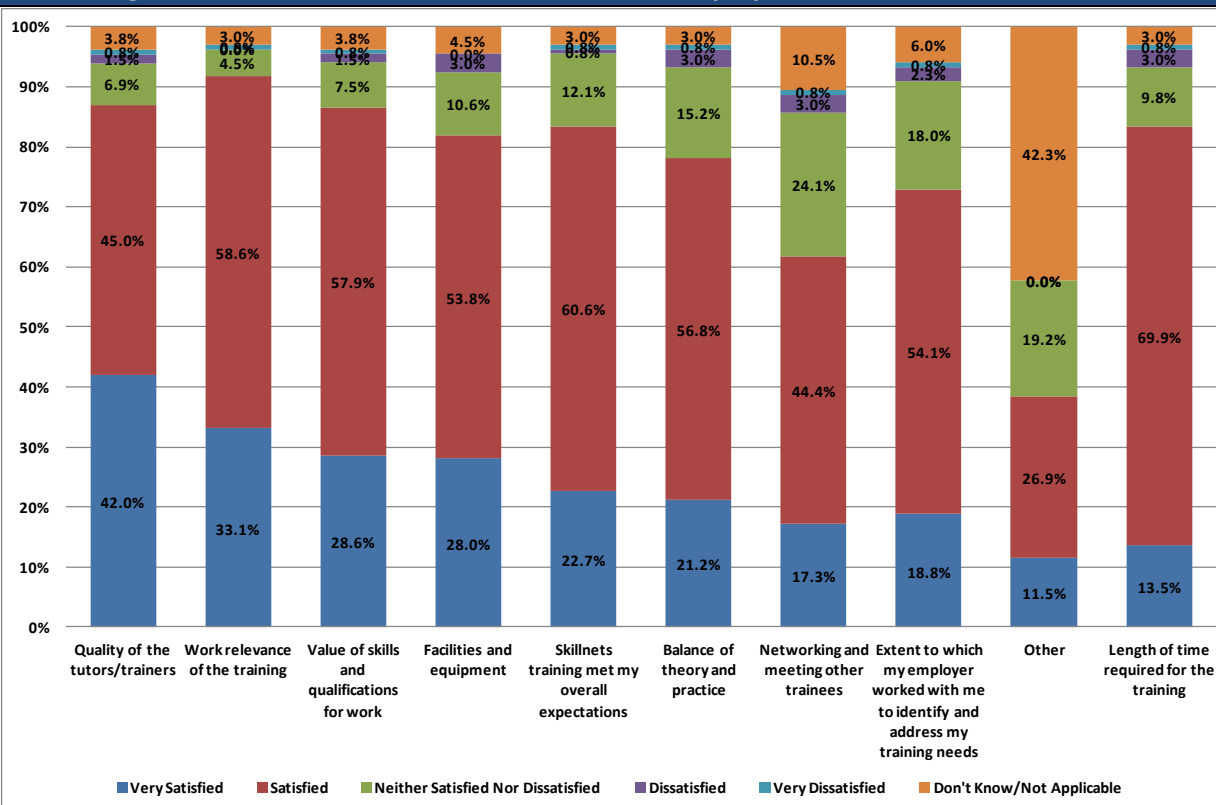
We started by asking trainees their views on overall levels satisfaction with Skillnets training. Our results mirrored those we found for the TNP. Trainees indicated that the quality of tutors/trainers (42% report being Very satisfied and 45% report being Satisfied) and the work relevance of the training (33.1% report being Very Satisfied and 58.6% report being Satisfied) were aspects with which they were most satisfied.

These findings are illustrated in some of the conclusions from Indecon’s focus group work that was undertaken with Finuas trainees and Member Companies. For example, some of the views of trainees related to quality of tutors and training:

“In-house training very convenient and tends to be more tailored.” – Finuas Trainee.

“Tutors/lecturers very high quality and interactive.” – Finuas Trainee.

Figure 4.3: Further Views on Finuas - Views on Employed Trainee Satisfaction Levels



Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Employed Trainee Survey

Dissatisfaction levels were extremely low among Finuas trainees with no rating higher than 5% across all options listed in the figure above.

We surveyed trainees in a quantified sense in relation to a variety of progression outcomes which we have analysed above. We add to this analysis with the following two tables in terms of assessing trainee's views on the occurrence or potential occurrence of progression outcomes over time.

There is a range of findings evident from the data below. In terms of benefits that have occurred since Skillnets training:

- 16.9% of trainees have secured a promotion/better job;
- 26.9% of trainees have received a salary increase; and
- 11.8% of trainees moved to a more satisfactory job at the same level.

Table 4.21: Further Views on Finuas - Employed Trainee Views on Occurrence of Benefits and Potential Benefits of Skillnets Training

Please indicate whether any of the following benefits have occurred or not since you undertook your Skillnets training, and also whether you would expect any of the benefits listed to be likely to occur in the next 2 – 3 years	Has Occurred since Skillnets Training	Has Not Occurred but is Likely to Occur in the Next 2 to 3 Years	Has Not Occurred and is Not Likely to Occur in the Next 2 to 3 Years
I have secured a promotion/better job	16.9%	54.4%	28.7%
I have received a salary increase	26.9%	41.0%	32.1%
I have moved to a more satisfactory job at the same level	11.8%	35.3%	52.9%
I have become self-employed	0.9%	4.3%	94.8%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Employed Trainee Survey			

There is also a range of findings in terms of benefits that trainees believe are likely to occur in the next two to three years. These indicators are helpful in a sense but when we add a measure of attribution to Skillnets training, they become more interesting. In this respect, we asked trainees if a range of outcomes were primarily or partially due to Skillnets training. The majority of responses indicated that these outcomes were related to Skillnets training, however, in terms of benefits partially being attributed to Skillnets training we find this in:

- ❑ 34.5% of cases for securing a promotion or a better job; and
- ❑ 30.9% of cases where a trainee received a wage increase.

Table 4.22: Further Views on Finuas - Views on Benefits and Potential Benefits of Skillnets Training

Please indicate whether any of the following benefits have occurred or not since you undertook your Skillnets training, and also whether you would expect any of the benefits listed to be likely to occur in the next 2 – 3 years	Outcome Primarily due to Skillnets Training	Outcome Partially due to Skillnets Training	Outcome Not Related to Skillnets Training
I have secured a promotion/better job	4.4%	34.5%	61.1%
I have received a wage/salary increase	2.7%	30.9%	66.4%
I have moved to a more satisfactory job at the same level	2.1%	22.9%	75.0%
I have become self-employed	0.0%	4.5%	95.5%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Employed Trainee Survey			

The views of trainees on additional benefits and impacts, such as those softer benefits we alluded to earlier, are displayed in the table below. Across most of the categories, the majority of trainees indicate that Skillnets training either fully contributed or partially contributed to benefits or impacts that trainees experience thereafter. Benefits are particularly evident in helping trainees to achieve a qualification and assisting trainees in undertaking their jobs today.

Table 4.23: Further Views on Finuas - Employed Trainee Views on Additional Benefits/Impacts of Skillnets Training				
Did (does) the Skillnets training contribute to any of the following additional benefits/impacts?	Fully Contributed	Partially Contributed	Did Not Contribute	Don't Know
Has helped me to achieve a qualification	29.2%	20.4%	40.9%	9.5%
Has assisted me in undertaking my existing job today	15.3%	69.4%	13.9%	1.4%
Is likely to assist me in undertaking my job in the future	22.1%	66.4%	5.7%	5.7%
Will assist me in keeping my present job	13.9%	44.5%	34.3%	7.3%
Has helped me to make decisions about my career	15.3%	42.3%	34.3%	8.0%
Has helped me develop contacts or networks that will assist me in getting a job	13.5%	28.6%	51.1%	6.8%
Has improved my team-working ability	12.4%	38.0%	42.3%	7.3%
Has improved my motivation	17.8%	37.0%	41.5%	3.7%
Has developed my learning in other new areas	22.6%	54.9%	19.5%	3.0%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Employed Trainee Survey				

A number of other points were raised at the focus group stage on additional benefits and how networks could potentially make improvements in future. These included two comments on network publicity.

“Network(s) need to improve their publicity.” – Finuas Trainee.

“It would also be helpful if there was more information on the networks website for trainees.” – Finuas Trainee.

Finally, in terms of trainees’ future training plans, we found that nearly half have no current plans to undertake future training; however, nearly 20% of trainees indicated that they plan on undertaking further Skillnets training.

Table 4.24: Further Views on Finuas - Employed Trainee Future Plans

If you have completed your Skillnets training commenced during 2012, do you plan to pursue further training or learning?	Number of Responses	% of Total
No current plans to pursue further training or learning	57	47.1%
Yes, on a Skillnets training programme (with an accredited qualification)	14	11.6%
Yes, on a Skillnets training programme (without an accredited qualification)	9	7.4%
Yes, with a professional body/institute	23	19.0%
Yes, other further education/training with accredited qualification	17	14.0%
Yes, other further education/training without accredited qualification	1	0.8%
Total	121	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Employed Trainee Survey		

The evidence suggests that Finuas trainees were generally very satisfied with their training experience during 2012. There is a range of benefits flowing to trainees and positive outcomes in terms of employment sustained and increased skill levels.

4.7.2 Views of Member Companies

As discussed previously, Member Companies undertake training for a variety of reasons. These include the obvious such as to up-skilling their staff but there may also be indirect reasons for their participation such as benefits in terms of general business improvements.

Table 4.25: Further Views on Finuas - Member Companies Views on Skillnets Training and Overcoming Barriers in 2012

Please indicate the extent to which participation in Finuas training during 2012 helped your company/business to overcome the following barriers	Barrier Overcome	Barrier Partially Overcome	Barrier Remains	Not a Barrier
Finding training that is relevant	41.5%	43.9%	4.9%	9.8%
Finding training of a satisfactory quality	46.3%	41.5%	2.4%	9.8%
Finding training at convenient dates / times	43.9%	39.0%	4.9%	12.2%
Finding training at satisfactory cost	61.0%	36.6%	0.0%	2.4%
Finding training providers based locally	53.7%	26.8%	7.3%	12.2%
Convincing the organisation to participate following poor experience of training in the past	24.4%	24.4%	4.9%	46.3%
Perception that staff receiving training are more likely to leave	7.5%	35.0%	2.5%	55.0%
Other	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	88.9%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Member Companies Survey				

We see evidence of this in relation to a variety of barriers that are overcome by Member Companies through their involvement with Skillnets. These include:

- ❑ Finding training at satisfactory costs (61% of companies overcame this barrier); and
- ❑ Finding training providers based locally (53.7% of companies overcame this barrier).

The latter finding is positive in comparison to Member Companies in the TNP who have difficulty here. Overall these findings suggest that businesses are benefiting from involvement with Finuas in overcoming a range of barriers. Member companies are also generally expressing satisfaction with Finuas training. This is especially so when we look at the cost of training (also consistent with overcoming barriers) and in terms of the relevance and quality of the training.

Table 4.26: Further Views on Finuas - Member Companies Views on Satisfaction Levels					
Rating of Finuas training provided to Member Companies according to following criteria:	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
Cost of training	61.0%	36.6%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Design of training, including tailoring to our needs	39.0%	51.2%	9.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Flexibility and accessibility (time, place of delivery etc.)	36.6%	53.7%	9.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Length of time required for the training	31.7%	61.0%	7.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Relevance of the training to meeting business and staff development needs	46.3%	51.2%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Quality of the training (competence of trainers)	46.3%	51.2%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Level of accreditation attached to training	30.0%	50.0%	17.5%	0.0%	2.5%
Effectiveness in meeting our business needs	26.8%	65.9%	4.9%	0.0%	2.4%
Meeting our overall expectations	41.5%	51.2%	7.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Member Companies Survey					

Finally, there are other indirect benefits that Member Companies experience through their involvement with their Finuas networks. These benefits are presented in the figure below. They show that the highest impact of Skillnets training is seen through addressing the skill gaps that companies experience as well as enhancing the long-term performance of Member Company business.

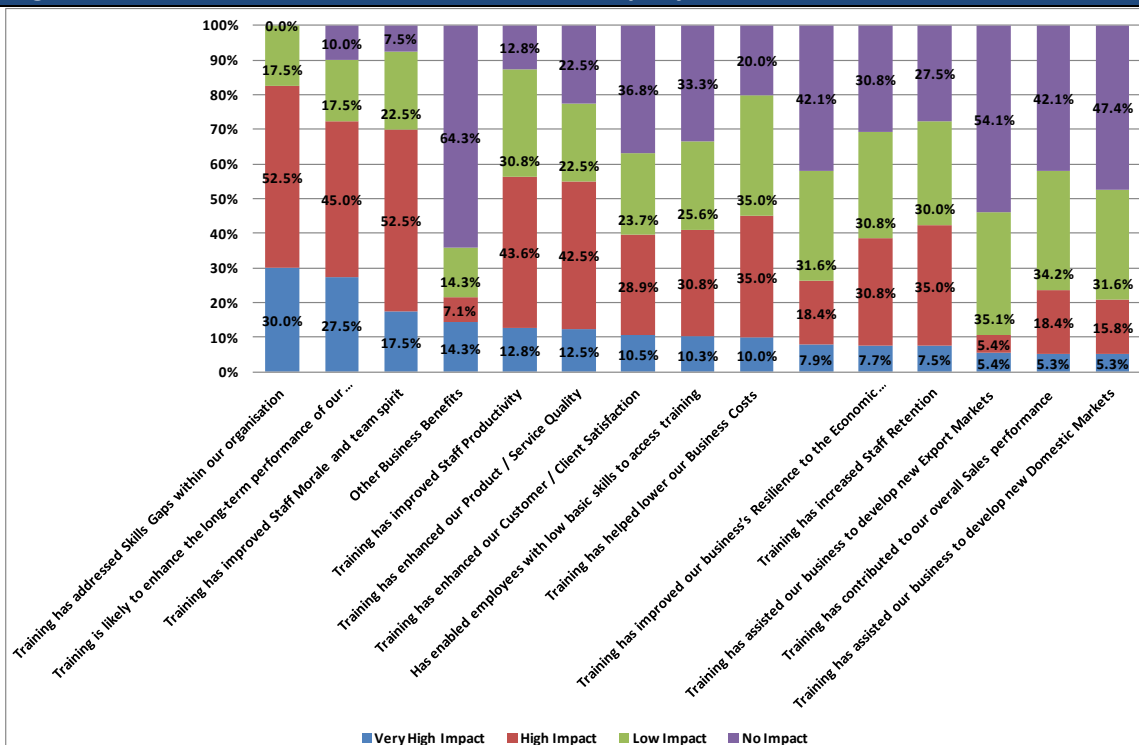
One point that was echoed in our discussion with Finuas Member Companies in terms of future improvements related to collaboration.

“Existing collaboration among the Member Companies allows for scalability – e.g. availing of high calibre lecturers (international experts) due to large number of participants.” – Member Company.

“Further improved collaboration among Member Companies would enhance knowledge and information sharing and help to collaborate to face legislation.” – Member Company.

These points indicate that while overall companies are generally happy with their experience with Finuas, there are always areas that the programme can seek to improve upon.

Figure 4.4: Further Views on Finuas - Member Company Views on Benefits of Skillnets Training



Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Employed Trainee Survey

Member Company views on overall effectiveness of networks

As part of our survey analysis we asked Finuas Member Companies their views on effectiveness. Companies indicated to Indecon that in general they believed that the Skillnets network model and approach in terms of responding to and addressing company training needs was either effective or very effective. On a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being Very Effective, we found that 75.6% of companies indicated 4 or 5; thus a positive response. This compares to 75.2% for TNP which indicates very similar views on the effectiveness across Member Companies.

Table 4.27: Further Views on Finuas - Member Companies Views on Skillnets Effectiveness

Overall, how effective do you consider the current Finuas networks model / approach to be in terms of responding to and addressing your training and staff development needs? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'Not at all effective' and 5 is 'Very effective'.	% of Total
1	2.4%
2	7.3%
3	14.6%
4	46.3%
5	29.3%
Total	100%

Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Member Companies Survey

4.8 Summary of Findings

The Finuas Networks Programme is dedicated to specialised training within the international financial services sector. Finuas comprises three networks, namely the Law Society Finuas Network, the Summit Finuas Network, and the Aviation Finance Finuas Network. Finuas' objectives during 2012 were focussed on developing skills for existing and potential staff, increasing the supply and mix of training, provisions for industry-specific courses, provisions for high level education, the promotion of a responsive training system, the promotion of best international practice in training, and the support of jobseekers in updating their skills and increasing their chances of employment.

- ❑ The Finuas networks continued to provide for the training needs of their clients while remaining under budget in terms of expenditures in 2012. Overall expenditure across the three networks totalled €1.7 million, which represented a small decline of 2.76% on the previous year, while being 2% below budget for 2012.
- ❑ In relation to activity levels, Finuas networks provided training to 1,133 individual employees during 2012, which was slightly (4%) below target. However, Finuas exceeded the overall target for the number of training days by 20%, providing a total of 12,567 training days in 2012. In addition to delivering a total of 166 training courses during 2012, Finuas networks also held 12 networking events to assist in promoting and developing networks.
- ❑ Finuas networks have continued to expand their membership, with the number of active Member Companies increasing by almost 10% to 259 in 2012 from 236 in 2011. 89% of these companies are SMEs, while 48% are small businesses employing fewer than 10 persons.
- ❑ We found that compared to the TNP, Finuas employed training has a comparatively greater focus on graduates, with 80.7% of those responding to Indecon's survey being educated to primary degree level and higher. This, however, reflects the more specialised focus of Finuas in areas such as legal services, international finance and aviation finance.
- ❑ The majority (over 81%) of programmes provided under Finuas are based on existing off-the-shelf courses. However, 2012 saw a noticeable increase in new course innovation, with 16.3% of participants attending new courses developed by Finuas networks, versus 8.8% in 2011.
- ❑ Indecon's research among Finuas trainees who undertook training as employed trainees during 2012 indicates that despite the challenging labour market environment, 98% of individuals are currently employed, with 96% employed in the same organisation in which they undertook their Finuas training.
- ❑ In terms of the skills impacts of Finuas employed training, 79.6% of trainees responding to Indecon's survey indicated that their training led to a large or some improvement in providing sector- and job-specific skills, while 69.6% saw improved skills in relation to technical and practical skills, and 52.9% stated that Finuas training improved their problem-solving skills.
- ❑ Trainees also generally show high levels of satisfaction with their Finuas training, particularly in relation to the quality of tutors/trainers (with 87% of trainees being either very satisfied or satisfied), the work relevance of the training (with 91.7% being very satisfied or satisfied), and the value of skills and qualifications attained for their work (86.5% very sat-

isfied or satisfied). Overall, 83.3% of trainees indicated that Finuas training met their expectations.

- ❑ Finuas Member Companies indicate very high levels of satisfaction in relation to the cost of training, the relevance of training to meeting business and staff development needs, and the quality of training in terms of the competence of trainers, with over 97% of companies being either very satisfied or satisfied in each case.
- ❑ One area where a noticeably higher proportion of Member Companies (17.5%) indicated 'average' levels of satisfaction was in relation to the level of accreditation provided with training, although 80% of companies were still satisfied overall on this factor. This aspect was also seen in the findings from our research among Finuas employed trainees, where 49.7% of trainees indicated that their Finuas training did not result in any qualification or award. This proportion, which was similar to that found among TNP trainees, reflects the greater focus on in-company training, where certified training is less common.
- ❑ 92.7% of Member Companies responding to Indecon's research stated that Finuas had met their expectations during 2012.
- ❑ Overall, Finuas has been successful in meeting its objectives and a particular achievement since its establishment in 2009 has been the collaborative development of innovative new training programmes in emerging growth areas. These have included postgraduate diplomas and certificates in International Financial Services Law (with UCD) Sustainable Finance (with DCU) and Islamic Finance (CIMA).

5 Evaluation of TNP and Finuas Jobseeker Supports

5.1 Introduction – Aims and Objectives

This section of the evaluation assesses the impact of the Skillnets' TNP and Finuas Networks Programmes in terms of the jobseekers that undertook training within their networks. Under remit from the Department of Education and Skills, both programmes are required to facilitate a cohort of jobseeker trainees within their training networks.

Jobseekers can participate in Skillnets training programmes in areas that are in demand by employers subject to a range of eligibility criteria. The benefits for jobseekers of training with a Skillnets network relate to access to training that is directly relevant to industry needs as well as an added advantage of networking opportunities with companies and employees in the trainees' chosen sector and/or region.

5.2 Programme Inputs

5.2.1 Funding of jobseeker training

In relation to inputs and resourcing, an important feature of the provision of training to jobseekers under the main TNP and Finuas programmes is that this training is undertaken as part of on-going network training activities and incurs no additional training costs. This is because training places for jobseekers are allocated based on available places once employed trainees are placed on individual programmes, with the costs of jobseeker places effectively being cross-subsidised by the employed trainee places.

It is, however, important to note that while there is no direct training-related cost associated with the provision of training to jobseekers on the main programmes, there is an indirect economic cost insofar as these training places could have been allocated to fully-paid employed trainee places. In addition, the costs associated with recruiting, selection and managing of unemployed trainees are also absorbed into existing network budgets for employed training.

However, relative to the other jobseeker programme operated by Skillnets, namely the JSSP (which is 100% funded), the unit costs associated with assisting jobseekers through the main programmes are lower.

5.3 Assessment of Programme Outcomes

Programme outcomes from the point of view of jobseeker trainees may be viewed somewhat differently than with respect to employed trainees. For the latter we have analysed outcomes such as employment sustained and changing skill levels. However, for the jobseeker cohort, while we look at changes in skill levels, analysing the creation of new employment is very important as is the degree to which Skillnets training is facilitating this.

5.3.1 Assessment of jobseeker training outcomes – TNP main programme

Jobseeker training activities during 2012

The table below summarises the position in relation to the number of jobseeker trainees and training days provided under the TNP main programme during 2012 relative to the internal Skillnets network targets set for the year.

Table 5.1: TNP Training Outcomes–Jobseeker Trainees and Training Days in 2012	
Indicator	Jobseeker Trainees - 2012
Programme	TNP
Actual Trainees*	3,898
Target Trainees	4,091
<i>Actual Trainees as a % of Target Trainees</i>	95.3%
Actual Training Days*	12,973
Target Training Days	20,330
<i>Actual Training Days as a % of Target Training Days</i>	63.8%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database	
Note: Targets shown relate to Skillnets internal budgeted figures set across the networks. These may not be consistent with high-level targets for trainees and training days set by the Department of Education and Skills. * Figures for actual jobseekers and training days provided under the TNP include trainees and training days relating to FSNP and NCPD.	

The figures indicate that a total of 3,898 jobseeker trainees were assisted under the programme during 2012, while these trainees undertook a total of 12,973 training days. Assisting jobseekers under the main TNP programme has been challenging, however, for many networks and this is evident in the fact that across the networks the number of jobseeker trainees was below target, while the number of training days achieved was 36.2% behind the budgeted figure set by Skillnets across the networks during the funding process. The aggregate figures presented above also mask substantial variation in performance across the networks, with some networks achieving less than 10% of their targets, while others attained over three times their target level of trainees or training days. To assist jobseekers under the main programme, i.e., outside of JSSP, requires networks to find places on training courses that are not taken up by employed trainees (to which they must give preference), as well as recruit jobseekers to fill these places. Freeing-up places on training programmes can be difficult, particularly on more expensive courses, where there may be a resulting greater loss of revenue. Of greater challenge for many networks, however, is the recruitment of jobseekers and Indecon understands from our discussions with network managers that many networks have struggled to find sufficient numbers of suitable jobseekers to place on training programmes. This reflects a range of factors, including the extent of relationships developed with local employment services and DSP offices, the level of awareness of Skillnets among jobseekers, and the extent of time given by managers to attendance at jobs fairs and other events for jobseekers.

Profile of trainees

Age profile

The age profile of TNP main programme jobseeker trainees is described below based on information from the Skillnets SAM database. The figures indicate a wide spread of age groups participating in jobseeker training under the TNP.

Table 5.2: TNP Training Outcomes - Age Profile of Jobseeker Trainees

Age	Number of Jobseeker Trainees	% of Total
Under 20	97	2.4%
20 - 24	400	10.0%
25 - 29	452	11.3%
30 - 34	613	15.3%
35 - 39	568	14.2%
40 - 49	1,059	26.4%
50 - 59	675	16.8%
60 and Over	147	3.7%
Total	4,011	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis Skillnets Activity Management System		
Notes: 240 trainees did not report an age and thus are not included in the calculations. Some trainees may be counted multiple times due to their undertaking multiple courses.		

Prior education attainment

The progression outcomes of jobseekers will partly reflect their prior educational attainment. The table below summarises the findings from Indecon's survey of TNP unemployed trainees in relation to their educational qualifications prior to undertaking TNP training. It is notable that 48% of trainees responding to the survey were educated to below primary degree level, with the main subset (33.2%) holding a higher certificate or diploma, while a similar proportion (48.7%) held primary degree or postgraduate qualifications. This indicates a very broad spread of jobseeker participants on the main TNP programme in terms of prior educational attainment.

Table 5.3: TNP Training Outcomes—Prior Educational Profile of Jobseeker Trainees

Education Level	Number of Responses	% of Total
Completed education before Junior Certificate	1	0.4%
Junior Certificate	9	3.3%
Leaving Certificate or equivalent	30	11.1%
Higher Education Certificate or Diploma	90	33.2%
Primary (e.g. Bachelors) Degree	78	28.8%
Master's Degree or Higher	54	19.9%
Other	9	3.3%
Total	271	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Unemployed Trainee Survey		

Previous unemployment history

Also of importance in relation to the factors influencing progression outcomes for jobseekers will be their previous unemployment history. The table below summarises the findings from Indecon's research among TNP jobseeker trainees in relation to the duration of unemployment they had experienced prior to participating on the programme. Nearly one-third (30.3%) of respondents indicate that they had previously been unemployed for up to six months, while 53.6% had been unemployed for up to a year. Notably, however, 46.3% of participants were unemployed for more than a year, while 12.1% had been out of work for more than three years before they undertook their TNP jobseeker training.

Table 5.4: TNP Training Outputs - Overview of Prior Unemployment of Jobseekers

How long had you been unemployed before you commenced your Skillnets Jobseeker training?	Number of Responses	% of Total
Less than 3 months	45	17.5%
3 to 6 months	33	12.8%
More than 6 months and up to 12 months	60	23.3%
More than 12 months and up to 2 years	55	21.4%
More than 2 years and up to 3 years	33	12.8%
More than 3 years	31	12.1%
Total	257	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Unemployed Trainee Survey		

Progression Outcomes of TNP Jobseeker Trainees

Of particular importance from the perspective of assessing the effectiveness of jobseeker training concerns the impacts on trainees' skills and their labour market progression following completion of their training. We consider these dimensions below.

Training outcomes – qualifications achieved

In terms of specific training outcomes, an important issue concerns the extent to which trainees acquire qualifications as a result of their training. The figures presented in the table overleaf indicate that 46.6% of TNP jobseeker trainees received a qualification as a result of their training, with 23.3% of trainees receiving qualifications up to NFQ Level 5, while 9.5% have acquired qualifications between Levels 6 and 10. This as an important indicator as the TNP is facilitating the up-skilling of those trainees with low levels of educational attainment as well as those who may already have more significant qualifications.

Table 5.5: TNP Training Outcomes–Profile of Qualifications Attained by Jobseeker Trainees

Has (or will) this Skillnets training result in any qualifications?	Number of Responses	% of Total
No awards or qualifications	111	43.9%
HETAC Accredited (Higher Education Levels 6-10)	24	9.5%
FETAC Accredited (Further Education – Levels 1-5)	59	23.3%
Accredited by industry-recognised professional body/institute	35	13.8%
Don't know	24	9.5%
Total	253	100%

Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Unemployed Trainee Survey

A more detailed analysis of jobseeker training outcomes under the TNP is provided below. This shows that that highest proportions of jobseeker trainees attained qualifications during 2012 at Levels 5 and 6, and at Level 8.

Table 5.6: TNP Training Outcomes–Post Training Qualification Levels of Jobseeker Participants

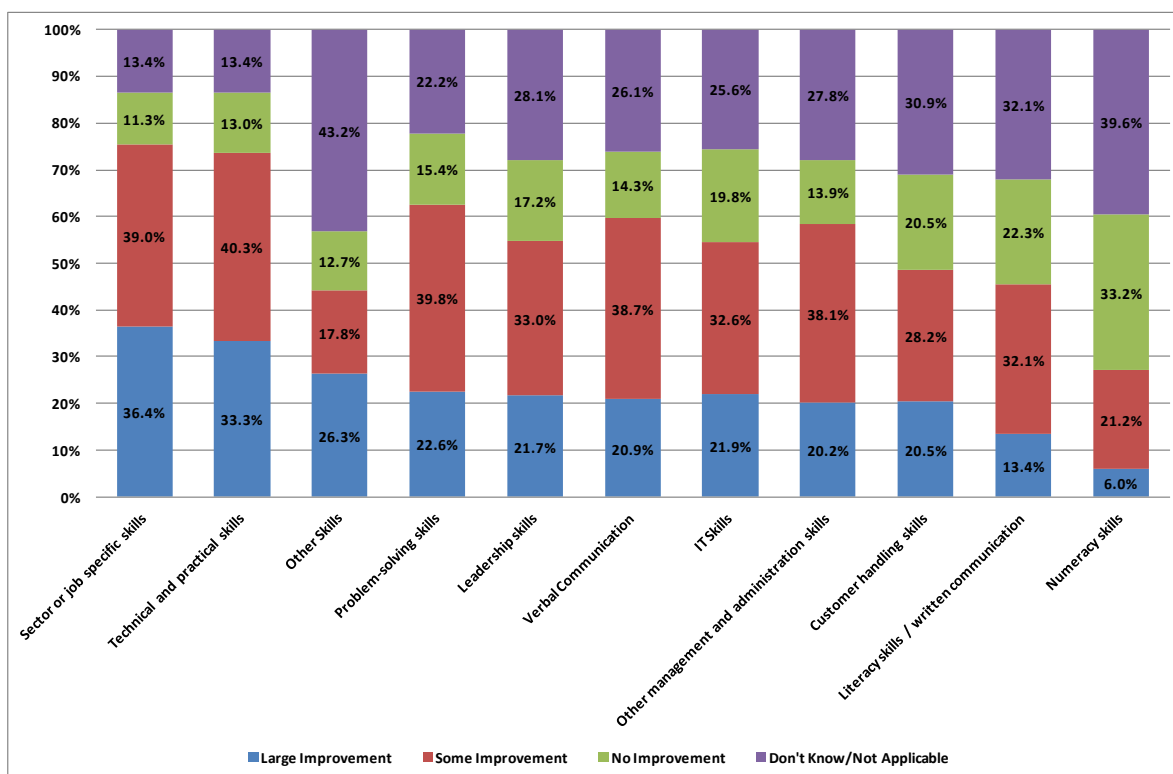
Level of Award on NFQ	Number of Jobseeker Participants	% of Total
Level 1	0	0.0%
Level 2	23	1.4%
Level 3	34	2.0%
Level 4	102	6.1%
Level 5	457	27.4%
Level 6	354	21.2%
Level 7	73	4.4%
Level 8	479	28.7%
Level 9	145	8.7%
Level 10	0	0.0%
Total	1,667	100.0%

Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database

Notes: Data relates to individual unemployed participants. As some participants undertake multiple training courses, there may be some double counting of participants in the above data. Furthermore, this data relates only to formal events.

In a more qualitative sense, we outline jobseeker trainee view on changes in skill levels in the figure below. These findings are consistent with employed trainees in both the TNP and Finuas programmes in the type of skills that trainees are most improving. These skills include sector specific and technical and practical skills. Problem solving is also highly rated by TNP jobseeker trainees with 22.6% of trainees reporting a large improvement and 39.8% reporting some improvement.

Figure 5.1: TNP Training Outcomes–Jobseeker Trainee Views on Changes in Skill Levels

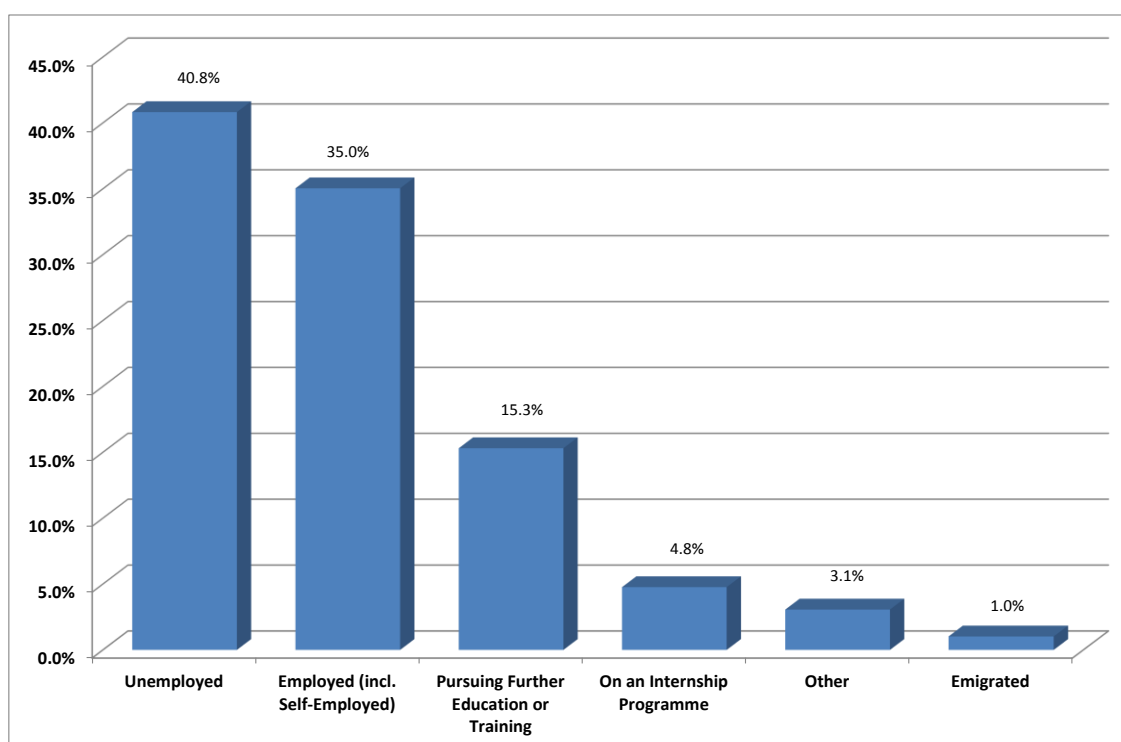


Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Unemployed Trainee Survey

Current status of trainees

As part of our research among TNP jobseeker trainees we sought information on trainees' current labour market status. The findings are highlighted in the figure overleaf.

Figure 5.2: TNP Training Outcomes—Current Status of Jobseeker Trainees



Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Unemployed Trainee Survey

The research on current status of TNP jobseeker trainees indicates the following:

- ❑ 35% of TNP jobseeker trainees found employment since their training and were currently employed at the time of the survey;
- ❑ 40.8% were unemployed;
- ❑ 15.3% of trainees were pursuing further education and training;
- ❑ 4.8% of trainees are participating on an internship programme (e.g. JobBridge); and
- ❑ 1% of trainees have emigrated since their completed their training.

We also asked jobseeker trainees if they had been in paid employment at any stage since completing their TNP training and 40.2% of respondents replied positively to this question (see table overleaf).

Table 5.7: TNP Training Outcomes – Paid Employment Since Completion of Training by Jobseeker Trainees

If you have completed/finished your Skillnets training, have you been in paid employment at any stage since you completed/finished the training?	Number of Responses	% of Total
Yes	100	40.2%
No	149	59.8%
Total	249	100%

Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Unemployed Trainee Survey

The findings in relation to current labour market status are broadly positive, particularly in relation to the proportion of TNP jobseeker trainees who found employment and the proportion undertaking further education or training. It would be important, however, to undertake on-going monitoring of progression outcomes among trainees to assess the longer-run position and persistence of employment status 12 months and more following completion of their training.

5.3.2 Assessment of jobseeker training outcomes – Finuas main programme

Jobseeker training activities during 2012

A summary analysis of jobseeker training activity outcomes under the Finuas main programme (excluding JSSP) during 2012 is presented below. Overall across the three Finuas networks, a total of 176 jobseeker trainees were assisted during 2012, which was 25.7% above the target level set by Skillnets of 140 trainees. However, the number of training days provided to jobseekers, at 713, was 32% below the budgeted figure set by Skillnets.

Table 5.8: Finuas Training Outcomes–Jobseeker Trainees and Training Days in 2012

Indicator	Jobseeker Trainees
Programme	Finuas
Actual Trainees	176
Target Trainees	140
<i>Actual Trainees as a % of Target Trainees</i>	<i>125.7%</i>
Actual Training Days	713
Target Training Days	1,048
<i>Actual Training Days as a % of Target Training Days</i>	<i>68%</i>

Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database

Note: Targets shown relate to Skillnets internal budgeted figures set across the networks. These may not be consistent with high-level targets for trainees and training days set by the Department of Education and Skills.

Profile of trainees

Age profile

The age profile of jobseeker trainees under the Finuas main programme during 2012 is shown below. The majority of jobseekers undertaking Finuas training during 2012 were in the 30-49 age cohort.

Table 5.9: Finuas Training Outputs - Age Profile of Jobseeker Trainees - 2012		
Age	Number of Jobseeker Trainees	% of Total
Under 20	0	0.0%
20 - 24	4	2.4%
25 - 29	23	13.5%
30 - 34	42	24.7%
35 - 39	46	27.1%
40 - 49	44	25.9%
50 - 59	11	6.5%
60 and Over	0	0.0%
Total	170	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis Skillnets Activity Management System		
Notes: 6 trainees did not report an age and thus are not included in the calculations. Some trainees may be counted multiple times due to their undertaking multiple courses.		

Prior educational attainment

The education attainment level of Finuas jobseeker trainees prior to their training is described below based on Indecon's survey research. It is notable that a much higher proportion (64.1%) of Finuas jobseeker trainees during 2012 was educated to primary degree or postgraduate level, compared to the proportion among TNP jobseeker trainees.

Table 5.10: Finuas Training Outcomes—Prior Educational Profile of Jobseeker Trainees		
Education Level	Number of Responses	% of Total
Completed education before Junior Certificate	0	0.0%
Junior Certificate	0	0.0%
Leaving Certificate or equivalent	3	7.7%
Higher Education Certificate or Diploma	7	17.9%
Primary (e.g. Bachelors) Degree	16	41.0%
Master's Degree or Higher	9	23.1%
Other	4	10.3%
Total	39	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Unemployed Trainee Survey		

Previous unemployment history

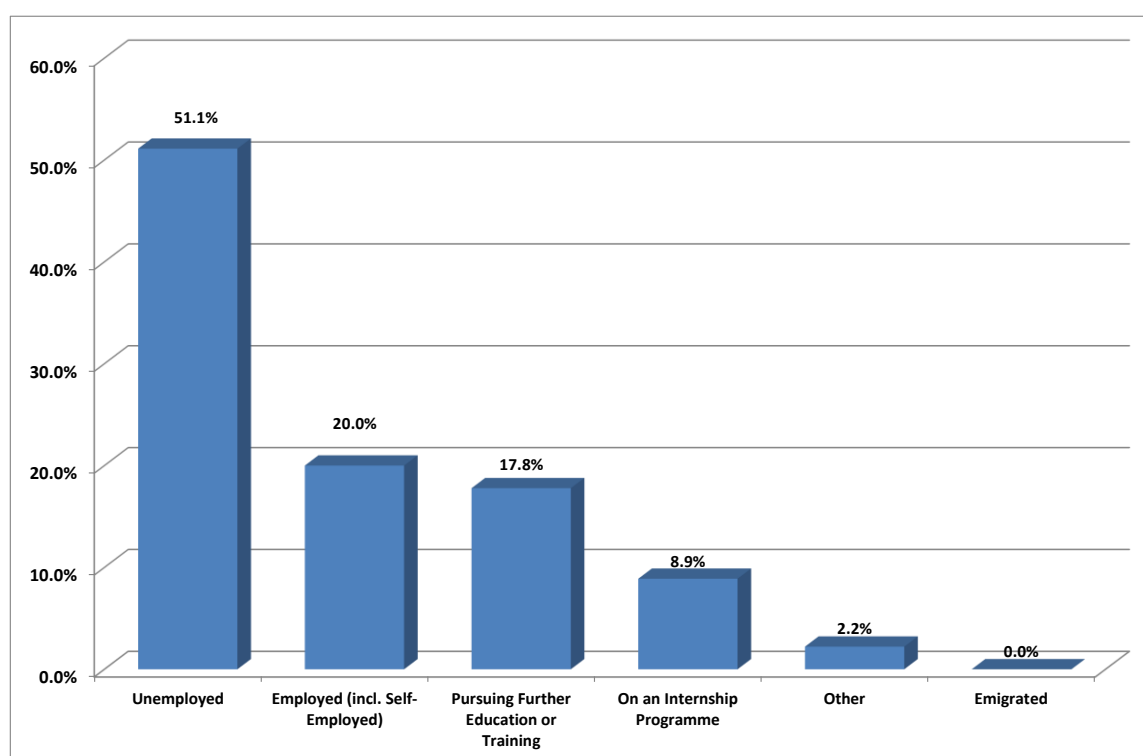
The previous unemployment experience of Finuas main programme jobseekers is described below, again based on Indecon's survey of Finuas jobseeker trainees. This indicates that 52.6% of trainees had previously been unemployed for up to a year prior to undertaking their Finuas training, while 47.5% were unemployed for more than a year and 21.1% for more than three years.

Table 5.11: Finuas Unemployed Trainees - Overview of Prior Unemployment of Trainees		
How long had you been unemployed before you commenced your Skillnets Jobseeker training?	Number of Responses	%
Less than 3 months	7	18.4%
3 to 6 months	4	10.5%
More than 6 months and up to 12 months	9	23.7%
More than 12 months and up to 2 years	8	21.1%
More than 2 years and up to 3 years	2	5.3%
More than 3 years	8	21.1%
Total	38	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Unemployed Trainee Survey		

Progression Outcomes of Jobseeker Trainees

In terms of progression outcomes, our research among Finuas jobseekers trainees indicates that 20% of trainees have found employment since completing their training (see figure overleaf).

Figure 5.3: FinuasTraining Outcomes–Current Status of Jobseeker Trainees



Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Unemployed Trainee Survey

In addition, 23.5% of Finuas jobseeker trainees indicated that they held paid employment at some stage since completing their training (see table below).

Table 5.12: Finuas Unemployed Trainees - Paid Employment Since Completion of Training

If you have completed/finished your Skillnets training, have you been in paid employment at any stage since you completed/finished the training?	Number of Responses	%
Yes	8	23.5%
No	26	76.5%
Total	34	100%

Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Unemployed Trainee Survey

When we asked Finuas jobseekers if they had increased their qualification level through Skillnets training, a higher percentage than reported by other cohorts of trainees responded positively. What we find here is that 56.4% of trainees gained a qualification through their Finuas training with 30.8% of these in the Level 6 – 10 range, again re-enforcing the higher levels of education evident with Finuas trainees in general.

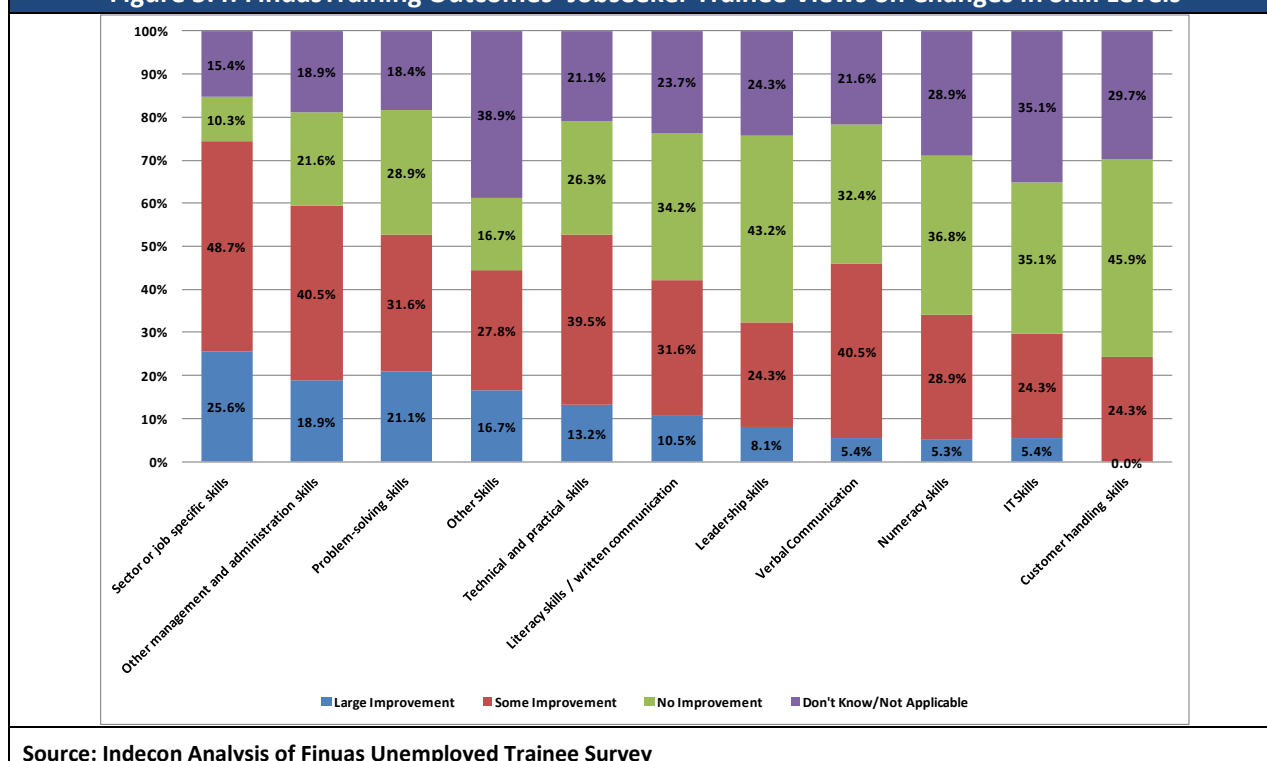
Table 5.13: Finuas Training Outcomes—Overview of Qualifications Attained by Jobseeker Trainees

Has (or will) this Skillnets training result in any qualifications?	% of Total
No awards or qualifications	28.2%
HETAC Accredited (Higher Education Levels 6-10)	30.8%
FETAC Accredited (Further Education – Levels 1-5)	5.1%
Accredited by industry-recognised professional body/institute	20.5%
Don't know	15.4%
Total	100%

Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Unemployed Trainee Survey

Again, in attempting to comprehensively assess the skills-related progression outcomes of Finuas trainees, we included a question in our survey of jobseekers designed to gain an understanding of trainee views on changes in skill levels related to their training activity. Trainees indicated that they experienced the most significant improvements in terms of skills related to sector and job-specific skills, other administrative and management skills and problem solving skills. The highest levels of non-improvement were reported in customer handling skills (45.9%).

Figure 5.4: Finuas Training Outcomes—Jobseeker Trainee Views on Changes in Skill Levels



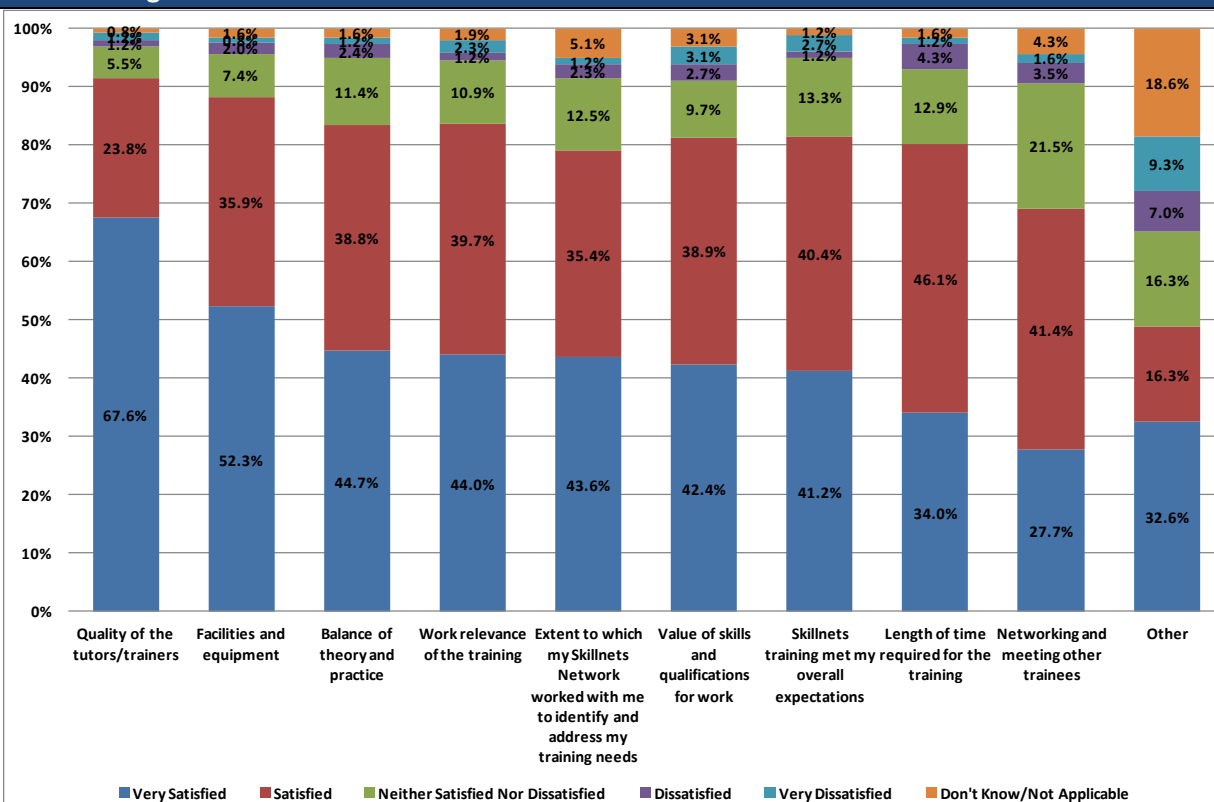
5.4 Views of Trainees and Member Companies

Benefits that can be transmitted in labour market programmes/interventions are not easily quantified. In order to meet the challenge of measuring the extent of other softer benefits, we asked jobseekers in both TNP and Finuas programmes about their views across a range of indicators.

5.4.1 Views of TNP Jobseeker Trainees

In this respect, we are interested in gaining understanding of whether jobseekers were satisfied with their training. TNP jobseekers indicated broadly that they were indeed satisfied. This was especially the case for aspects such as the quality of tutor/trainers (67.6% report being Very Satisfied, 23.8% report being Satisfied) and the quality of facilities and equipment (52.3% report being Very Satisfied, 35.9% report being Satisfied).

Figure 5.5: Further Views on TNP –Views on Jobseeker Trainee Satisfaction Levels



Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Unemployed Trainee Survey

Other areas of benefit and impacts associated with training as experienced by TNP jobseekers include the following aspects:

- ❑ Helped trainees to find employment, with 43.1% indicating that TNP jobseeker training during 2012 had helped them to find a job;
- ❑ Assisted learning development in other new areas (38.7% report training fully contributed to this and 40.7% report training partially contributed to this);
- ❑ Helped trainee to achieve a qualification (38.5% report training fully contributed to this and 20.5% report training partially contributed to this); and
- ❑ Improved trainees' motivation and confidence (33.6% report training fully contributed to this and 45.1% report training partially contributed to this).

Table 5.14: Further Views on TNP –Views on Additional Benefits/Impacts of Skillnets Training

Did (does) the Skillnets training contribute to any of the following additional benefits/impacts?	Fully Contributed	Partially Contributed	Did Not Contribute	Don't Know
Has helped me to find a job	13.2%	29.9%	42.7%	14.1%
Increases my chances of getting a job	27.2%	52.4%	11.4%	8.9%
Has helped me develop contacts or networks that will assist me in getting a job	19.2%	42.0%	33.1%	5.7%
Has made me more aware of employment opportunities	24.1%	43.6%	28.6%	3.7%
Has developed skills to help me set up my own business	14.6%	27.5%	44.6%	13.3%
Has helped me to achieve a qualification	38.5%	20.5%	32.5%	8.5%
Has developed my learning in other new areas	38.7%	40.7%	18.1%	2.5%
Has helped me to make decisions about my career	28.4%	38.3%	27.6%	5.8%
Has improved my team-working ability	20.3%	41.5%	31.4%	6.8%
Has improved my motivation and self-confidence	33.6%	45.1%	18.0%	3.3%
Other	18.8%	10.4%	16.7%	54.2%

Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Unemployed Trainee Survey

5.4.2 Views of TNP Member Companies

Member companies also contributed their thoughts on Skillnets training as it related to jobseeker trainees. Companies generally Strongly Agreed or Agreed that Skillnets training has led to a number of positive impacts. These include:

- ❑ Improved employability and job prospects for unemployed trainees (19.6% Strongly Agreed and 53.8% Agreed); and
- ❑ That training supported the up-skilling of unemployed trainees for the sector/region (20.9% Strongly Agreed and 50.9% Agreed).

Table 5.15: Further Views on TNP –Member Companies Views on Supporting Jobseekers and Other Training Benefits

In supporting unemployed people, to what extent has your Skillnet led to the following impacts	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Provided access to a new pool of potential staff	13.1%	48.5%	28.5%	9.9%
Supported the up-skilling of unemployed trainees for the sector/region	20.9%	50.9%	19.4%	8.8%
Supported the up-skilling of unemployed trainees to the level required by our business	14.3%	51.3%	24.9%	9.5%
Improved employability and job prospects for unemployed trainees	19.6%	53.8%	18.2%	8.4%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Member Companies Survey				

Member companies are also of the opinion that certification assists jobseeker trainees to secure jobs. Over one quarter (26.4%) of Member Companies Strongly Agreed with this while a further 65.3% Agreed with this statement.

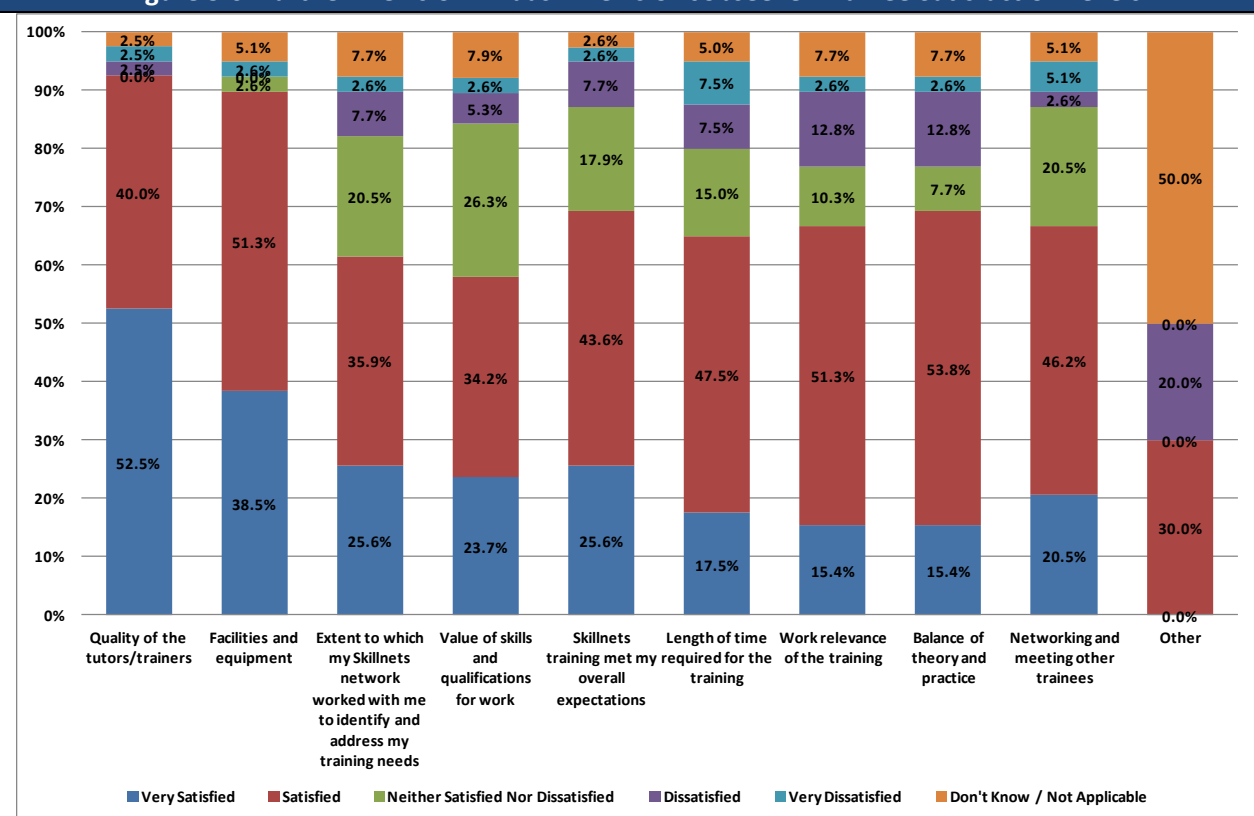
Table 5.16: Further Views on TNP –Member Companies Views on Supporting Jobseekers and Other Training Benefits

To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the benefits of certified training/qualifications available through your Skillnet?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Availability of certification is an important deciding factor on whether our company takes part	32.9%	39.1%	26.2%	1.8%
Availability of certification encourages more staff to participate in training	32.5%	54.0%	11.7%	1.8%
Availability of training certification is important to our staff retention rates	17.4%	43.2%	33.5%	5.9%
Availability of certification could increase staff attrition rates	13.5%	39.3%	40.9%	6.3%
Certification assists unemployed trainees to secure jobs	26.4%	65.3%	7.0%	1.3%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Member Companies Survey				

5.4.3 Views of Finuas Jobseeker Trainees

The level of satisfaction with Skillnets training as expressed by Finuas jobseekers was very similar to those indicated by TNP jobseekers. Here, we see that the trainees are most satisfied with the quality of tutors/trainers (52.5% Very Satisfied and 40% Satisfied) as well as the quality of facilities and equipment provided for them to assist their training (38.5% Very Satisfied and 51.3% Satisfied).

Figure 5.6: Further Views on Finuas –Views on Jobseeker Trainee Satisfaction Levels



Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Unemployed Trainee Survey

Additional benefits accrued to Finuas trainees in the form of:

- ☐ Developed learning in other new areas;
- ☐ Increased awareness of employment opportunities; and
- ☐ Improved motivation and self-confidence.

In terms of the latter, one Finuas jobseeker trainee indicated that:

“The fact that I met other trainees who were in the same situation as me and one does not feel so isolated and despondent.” –Finuas Jobseeker Trainee

The table below summarises the findings from our research among Finuas jobseeker trainees in relation to trainees' views on specific benefits/impacts of training undertaken. Overall, 28.9% of Finuas jobseekers indicated that their training had helped them to find a job, while 72.5% considered that their training had increased their chances of finding employment. In terms of learning benefits, 87.2% of Finuas jobseeker trainees indicated that their training had helped to develop learning in new areas, while 71.8% stated that their training had contributed to improving their motivation and self-confidence.

Table 5.17: Further Views on Finuas –Jobseeker Views on Additional Benefits/Impacts of Skill-nets Training

Did (does) the Skillnets training contribute to any of the following additional benefits / impacts?	Fully Contributed	Partially Contributed	Did Not Contribute	Don't Know
Has helped me to find a job	2.6%	26.3%	42.1%	28.9%
Increases my chances of getting a job	22.5%	50.0%	15.0%	12.5%
Has helped me develop contacts or networks that will assist me in getting a job	22.5%	57.5%	12.5%	7.5%
Has made me more aware of employment opportunities	35.0%	45.0%	15.0%	5.0%
Has developed skills to help me set up my own business	0.0%	23.7%	52.6%	23.7%
Has helped me to achieve a qualification	26.3%	39.5%	23.7%	10.5%
Has developed my learning in other new areas	38.5%	48.7%	10.3%	2.6%
Has helped me to make decisions about my career	25.0%	57.5%	15.0%	2.5%
Has improved my team-working ability	12.8%	43.6%	30.8%	12.8%
Has improved my motivation and self-confidence	33.3%	38.5%	23.1%	5.1%
Other	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	62.5%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Unemployed Trainee Survey				

5.4.4 Views of Finuas Member Companies

The views of Finuas Member Companies on supporting jobseekers and other training benefits indicate that companies generally agree that the Finuas programme led to a number of benefits. These included:

- ☐ Supported the up-skilling of unemployed trainees to the level required by our business (63.6% agreed);
- ☐ Provided access to a new pool of potential staff (61.8% agreed);
- ☐ Improved employability and job prospects for unemployed trainees (61.8% agreed); and
- ☐ Supported the up-skilling of unemployed trainees for the sector/region (60% agreed).

Table 5.18: Further Views on Finuas – Member Companies Views on Supporting Jobseekers and Other Training Benefits				
In supporting unemployed people, to what extent has your Finuas network led to the following impacts	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Provided access to a new pool of potential staff	5.9%	61.8%	20.6%	11.8%
Supported the up-skilling of unemployed trainees for the sector/region	8.6%	60.0%	20.0%	11.4%
Supported the up-skilling of unemployed trainees to the level required by our business	9.1%	63.6%	15.2%	12.1%
Improved employability and job prospects for unemployed trainees	14.7%	61.8%	11.8%	11.8%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Member Companies Survey				

A further 26.3% of Finuas Member Companies Strongly Agreed that certification assists unemployed trainees to secure jobs. The majority (63.2%) of companies Agreed with this statement.

Table 5.19: Further Views on Finuas –Member Companies Views on Supporting Jobseekers and Other Training Benefits				
To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the benefits of certified training / qualifications available through your Finuas network?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Availability of certification is an important deciding factor on whether our company takes part	28.9%	39.5%	26.3%	5.3%
Availability of certification encourages more staff to participate in training	33.3%	43.6%	17.9%	5.1%
Availability of training certification is important to our staff retention rates	23.1%	33.3%	33.3%	10.3%
Availability of certification could increase staff attrition rates	13.2%	31.6%	42.1%	13.2%
Certification assists unemployed trainees to secure jobs	26.3%	63.2%	7.9%	2.6%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Member Companies Survey				

5.5 Summary of Findings

Skillnets has been active in providing training for jobseekers since 2010 and this takes place through the provision of training to up-skill the unemployed via the main TNP and Finuas programmes. Assisting jobseekers remains a challenge, however, and a mixed picture emerges in relation to performance of the networks during 2012.

- ❑ The overall number of jobseekers assisted through the main TNP and Finuas programmes (outside of the JSSP) totalled 4,074 during 2012. Recruiting suitable jobseekers has been challenging for many networks and is often dependent on networks developing close relationships with local employment services, while encouraging participants to commence and fully complete their training is also an issue. Furthermore, networks must release places on the main training programmes to facilitate jobseekers and this can be difficult, particularly on more expensive courses.
- ❑ It is clear based on our research and consultations that some networks have been more active than others in relation to recruiting and assisting jobseekers. While in some cases this reflects particular resourcing and other constraints at network level, we believe there is scope to increase existing levels of jobseeker training in many networks, through greater focus on developing relationships and working with local employment services and Member Companies in recruiting and training participants. Indecon however note in this context the recent agreement reached with the Department of Social Protection, which is designed to facilitate greater integration including formalized linkages between networks, local employment offices and Intreo (the Department's new single point of contact for all employment and income supports).
- ❑ Our research on the current status of individuals who undertook jobseeker training indicates that 35% of TNP jobseeker trainees are currently in employment, while 40.2% held employment at some stage since completing their training. 43.1% of trainees indicated that their training had fully or partially contributed to them finding employment, while 73.4% of TNP Member Companies considered that training improved employability and job prospects for unemployed trainees.
- ❑ TNP jobseekers indicated broad satisfaction with the quality and relevance of the training they received under the programme. This was most notable in relation to aspects such as the quality of tutor/trainers (with over 91% of trainees indicating that they were satisfied) and the quality of facilities and equipment (where 88.2% of trainees were satisfied). 78.7% of trainees also indicated that their participation in TNP jobseeker training had improved their motivation and self-confidence.
- ❑ Finuas jobseeker trainees also indicate high levels of satisfaction with the quality of training provided, with 92.5% satisfied with the quality of tutors/trainers and 89.8% satisfied with the quality of facilities and equipment provided. 28.9% of Finuas jobseekers indicated that their training had helped them to find a job, while 72.5% considered that their training had increased their chances of finding employment. 76.5% of Finuas Member Companies indicated that jobseeker training under the programme led to improved employability and job prospects for unemployed trainees. In terms of learning benefits, 87.2% of Finuas jobseeker trainees indicated that their training had helped to develop learning in new areas, while 71.8% stated that their training had contributed to improving their motivation and self-confidence.

6 Evaluation of Jobseekers Support Programme (JSSP)

6.1 Introduction

This section evaluates the Job Seekers Support Programme (JSSP), which is the dedicated programme operated by Skillnets since 2010 to assist unemployed jobseekers. The analysis in this section includes a detailed value-for-money assessment of the programme.

6.2 Context and Objectives of Programme

The JSSP is Skillnets' enterprise-led training programme exclusively for unemployed people. The programme, which was first piloted by Skillnets during the last quarter of 2010, was developed within the context of Ireland's current unemployment crisis, with the aim of upskilling jobseekers in an enterprise based environment in order to increase their chances of finding employment. While Skillnets was already providing for jobseekers prior to the introduction of the JSSP, through integrated learning with employees on the TNP and Finuas programmes, what makes the JSSP unique is that only jobseekers are involved in this programme, and thus training programmes and informal events can be specifically tailored to the needs of this group of trainees. Importantly, the JSSP includes formal industry-specific training as well as a work placement component.

The main aims and objectives of the JSSP are displayed in Table 6.1 below:

Table 6.1: Jobseekers Support Programme – Aims and Objectives of JSSP in 2012	
The key objectives of the JSSP are as follows:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist Member Companies, particularly SMEs, to develop a talent pool of skilled people for the purposes of recruitment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Increase employability by training the unemployed to re-enter their previous sector of employment or transfer into alternative sectors.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Boost employment opportunities by providing unemployed people with accredited training wherever possible.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Blend training with workplace experience so as to embed the learning and give the unemployed access to employers.
Source: Skillnets Website	

Jobseekers are eligible to participate in courses run under the JSSP if they are unemployed and fulfil any one of the criteria set out below, as well as meeting the general eligibility for jobseekers criteria set by Skillnets:

- ☐ Participants must have been unemployed for more than 12 months, OR
- ☐ Participants are at Level 5 or lower on the National Framework of Qualifications, OR
- ☐ Participants are under the age of 35, OR
- ☐ Participants were formerly employed in the construction, manufacturing and retail sectors, OR
- ☐ Participants wish to enter the ICT sector.

6.3 Assessment of Programme Inputs

6.3.1 Analysis of Financial Inputs

The JSSP was operated throughout 43 networks in 2012. This was a large increase on the previous year's 24. Accordingly, the financial input to the programme dramatically increased in the year to €3,392,877. This represented a 20.7% increase on 2011, the first full year of the programme.

Table 6.2: Financial Overview – JSSP Expenditure in 2011 and 2012

Programme	No of Networks - 2011	Actual Expenditure - 2011	No of Networks - 2012	Actual Expenditure - 2012	% Change in Expenditure 2011 - 2012
JSSP	24	€2,810,561	43	€3,392,877	20.7%

Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database

Actual JSSP expenditure amounted to €3,392,877 in 2012 which was 13% above budget. However, this was not caused by over-spending of State finances attributable to the programme, but was due to increased matched funding by companies in the programme. Companies have the option of increasing the level of funding that they can put towards JSSP programmes, and thus the 13% expenditure over budget is explained by this increased funding from companies.

Table 6.3: Financial Overview – Breakdown of JSSP Expenditure in 2011 and 2012

Category	Budgeted Expenditure (€)	Actual Expenditure (€)	Actual as a % of Budgeted
Total Expenditure in 2011	€2,849,359	€2,810,561	98%
Total Expenditure in 2012	€2,989,116	€3,392,877	113%

Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database

6.4 Assessment of Programme Outputs and Outcomes

JSSP outcomes from the point of view of jobseeker trainees may be viewed somewhat differently in comparison to employed trainees. For the latter we have analysed outcomes such as employment sustained and changing skill levels. However, for the jobseekers cohort, analysing the creation of new employment is very important and the degree to which Skillnets training is facilitating this.

6.4.1 Analysis of Training Outputs

Commencing this analysis, we look at training outputs in terms of the number of events held in 2012. Within this we find that there were 357 training courses in 2012 with a further 20 networking events.

Table 6.4: JSSP Training Outputs - Number of Events in 2012	
Event	No of Events/Courses
Training Courses	357
Networking Events	20
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database	

Current Stage of Jobseeker

In terms of the current stage at which jobseekers are now, the table below indicates that 19.7% of trainees were still on their JSSP training course at the time of the survey. Over 40% had fully completed their training. While 9.4% of respondents indicated that they were currently on placement, a further 27.5% had fully completed a work placement.

Table 6.5: JSSP Profile of Trainees - Stage of Job Seekers Programme		
Please select the stage of the Job Seekers Support Programme you are now at	Number of Responses	% of Total
Currently attending my JSSP training	32	13.1%
Started, but did not fully complete my JSSP training	16	6.6%
Have fully completed my JSSP training	106	43.4%
Currently attending my JSSP work placement	12	4.9%
Started, but did not fully complete my JSSP work placement	11	4.5%
Have fully completed my JSSP work placement	67	27.5%
Total	244	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of JSSP Trainee Survey		

6.4.2 Analysis of Training Outcomes

The success or otherwise of training activities for JSSP trainees revolves around the outcomes that are achieved through the training process and subsequent work placements. These outcomes are varied and relate to specific indicators for different participants. For example, employment and skills creation are important outcomes for trainees. The performance of the JSSP in 2012, as indicated by the high level numbers in the table below, has improved on the previous year. The actual number of trainees was 11% ahead of target and while the actual number of training day was below the Skillnets target, it has improved on 2011 by 7%. However, we point out that while this indicator is below the Skillnets target, the Department of Education and Skills target was exceeded. Skillnets' internal network targets differ from the high-level targets for trainees and training days set by the Department of Education and Skills due to annual budget processes.

Table 6.6: JSSP Training Outcomes– JSSP Trainees and Training Days in 2011 and 2012		
Indicator	Jobseeker Trainees - 2011	Jobseeker Trainees - 2012
Programme	JSSP	JSSP
Actual Trainees	1,875	2,938
Target Trainees	2,018	2,638
<i>Actual Trainees as a % of Target Trainees</i>	<i>92%</i>	<i>111%</i>
Actual Training Days	27,065	39,695
Target Training Days	33,334	44,925
<i>Actual Training Days as a % of Target Training Days</i>	<i>81%</i>	<i>88%</i>
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		
Notes: Targets shown relate to Skillnets internal figures set across the networks during the annual budgeting process. These differ from the high-level targets for trainees and training days set by the Department of Education and Skills		

At the network level, 30 out of 43 JSSP networks (or 70%) achieved their annual target for number of Jobseeker trainees during 2012 and 38 out of 43 JSSP networks (or 88%) achieved their annual target for number of Jobseeker training days during 2012.

Progression Outcomes of JSSP Trainees

Prior to outlining the progression outcomes of trainees it is useful to indicate the structure of these trainees in terms of their age. We find that the JSSP trainees are more similar to TNP trainees than they are to Finuas trainees (see table below).

Table 6.7: JSSP Training Outcomes- Age Profile of Trainees		
Age	Number of JSSP Trainees	% of Total
Under 20	103	3.7%
20 - 24	432	15.6%
25 - 29	399	14.4%
30 - 34	416	15.0%
35 - 39	361	13.0%
40 - 49	585	21.1%
50 - 59	405	14.6%
60 and Over	68	2.5%
Total	2,769	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis Skillnets Activity Management System		
Notes: 190 trainees did not report an age and thus are not included in the calculations. Some trainees may be counted multiple times due to their undertaking multiple courses.		

In relation to prior unemployment history, our research found that 55.6% of JSSP trainees had been unemployed for one year or more prior to undertaking their training.

Table 6.8: JSSP Trainees - Overview of Prior Unemployment of Trainees		
How long had you been unemployed before you commenced your Skillnets Jobseeker training?	Number of Responses	%
Less than 3 months	31	13.4%
3 to 6 months	31	13.4%
More than 6 months and up to 12 months	41	17.7%
More than 12 months and up to 2 years	56	24.1%
More than 2 years and up to 3 years	32	13.8%
More than 3 years	41	17.7%
Total	232	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of JSSP Trainee Survey		

In terms of prior educational profile, our research also indicates that 48.3% of JSSP trainees were educated to below primary degree level, while 51.6% held primary degree or postgraduate qualifications (see table below).

Table 6.9: JSSP Training Outcomes– Prior Educational Profile of JSSP Trainees		
Education Level	Number of Responses	% of Total
Completed education before Junior Certificate	8	3.4%
Junior Certificate	12	5.1%
Leaving Certificate or equivalent	40	16.9%
Higher Education Certificate or Diploma	54	22.9%
Primary (e.g. Bachelors) Degree	65	27.5%
Master's Degree or Higher	48	20.3%
Other	9	3.8%
Total	236	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of JSSP Trainee Survey		

Progression outcomes

Current status

When surveying JSSP trainees, we asked them to indicate their current status. We find the following:

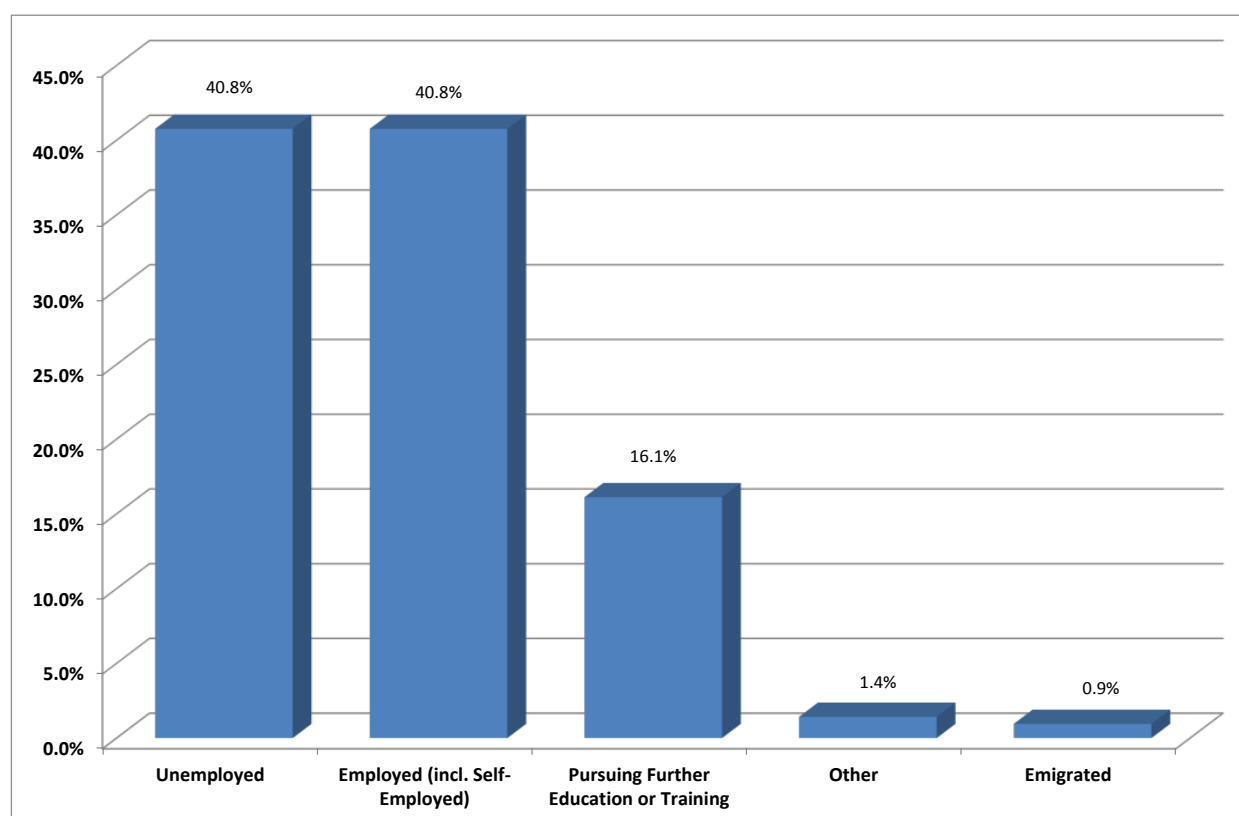
- ❑ 40.8% of trainees are employed; 14.7% with the company with which they did their training, 16.6% with another company and a further 9.5% report being self-employed.
- ❑ 40.8% of trainees report being unemployed. This is broadly consistent with the finding from the SAM data. We also find that 16.1% of trainees are pursuing further training (see figure overleaf).

These findings are very positive in terms of employment progression especially given the relatively short duration of JSSP courses. The 40.8% figure is the strongest across all jobseekers who have trained with Skillnets.

These figures compare favourably with international internship programmes. For example, in a survey of interns across Europe undertaken by the European Youth Forum (EYF)⁴, it was found that 34% of all respondents got a job with either their host or another employer following their internship.

⁴ European Youth Forum (2011) 'Interns Revealed; A survey on internship quality in Europe'.

Figure 6.1: JSSP Training Outcomes– Current Status of Trainees



Source: Indecon Analysis of JSSP Trainee Survey

As a result of training, 31.7% of participant gained a qualification in the Level 1 to 5 range with a further 20.4% gaining qualifications ranging from Level 6 to Level 10 (see table below). This, similar to the results from the TNP trainees, is positive in that we are seeing positive educational attainment across all levels. What this means is that the JSSP works for a variety of type of people in terms of their educational status.

Table 6.10: JSSP Training Outcomes– Profile of Qualifications Attained by JSSP Trainees

Has (or will) this Skillnets training result in any qualifications?	Number of Responses	% of Total
No awards or qualifications	46	20.8%
HETAC Accredited (Higher Education Levels 6-10)	45	20.4%
FETAC Accredited (Further Education – Levels 1-5)	70	31.7%
Accredited by industry-recognised professional body/institute	32	14.5%
Don't know	28	12.7%
Total	221	100%

Source: Indecon Analysis of JSSP Trainee Survey

The table below provides more in depth information from the SAM database on post training qualification levels. This is useful in outlining qualifications at all levels.

Table 6.11: JSSP Training Outcomes– Post Training Qualification Levels of Participants		
Level of Award on NFQ	Number of JSSP Participants	% of Total
Level 2	34	1%
Level 3	36	1%
Level 4	159	6%
Level 5	1,058	40%
Level 6	777	29%
Level 7	289	11%
Level 8	144	5%
Level 9	151	6%
Total	2,648	100%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		
Notes: Data relates to individual participants. As some participants undertake multiple training courses, there may be some double counting of participants in the above data. Furthermore, this data relates only to formal events.		

In terms of educational progression, we can see how participants moved between qualification levels in the table overleaf. For interpretation purposes, take the first two columns as an example (i.e. those participants who began with a Level 1 qualifications). Here we find that 14 individuals who began their training with a Level 1 qualification, increased their accreditation to Level 5, with a further 23 participants going from Level 1 to Level 6 upon completion of their training.

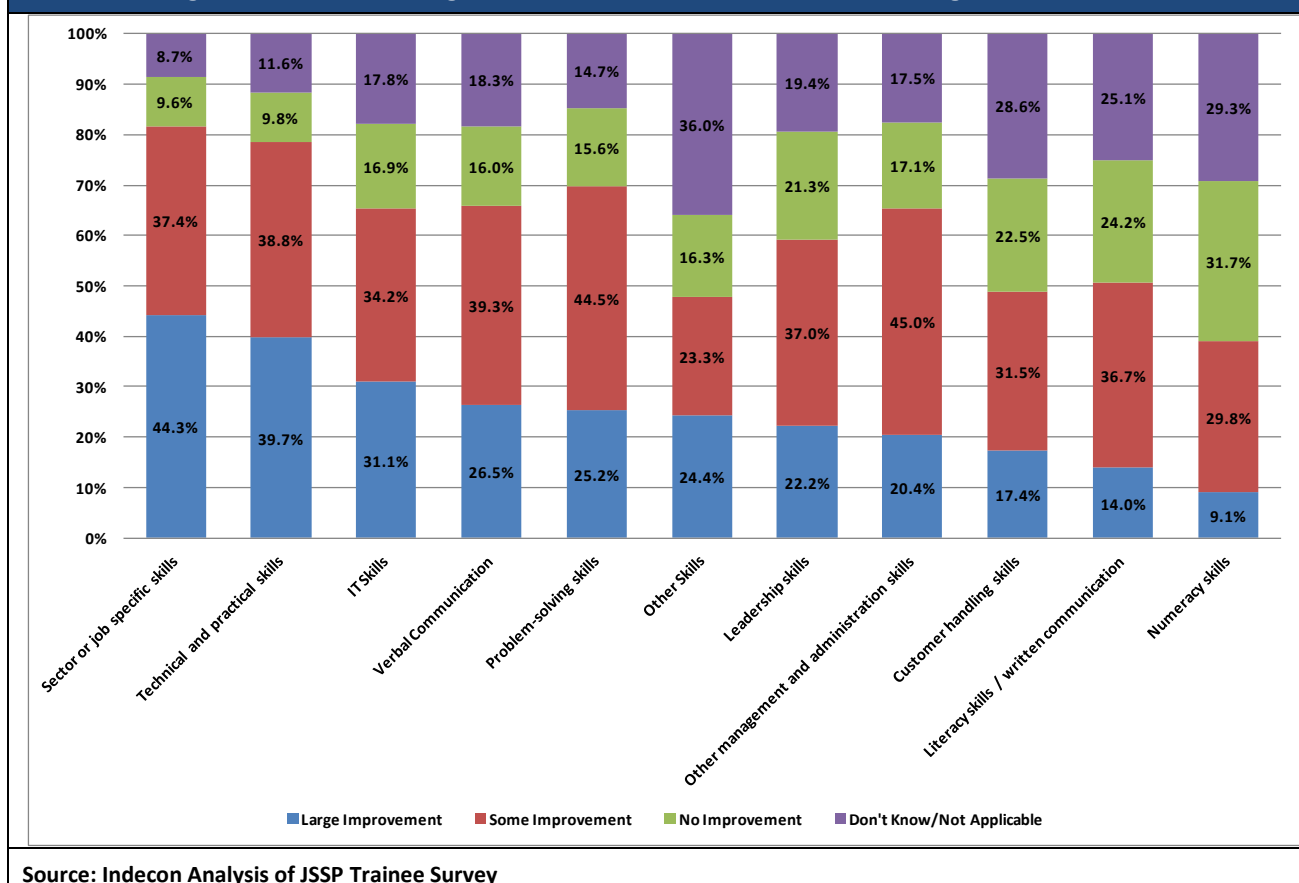
Table 6.12: Overview of Up-skilling–Number and Percentage of JSSP Trainees Increasing Qualifications at Various Levels				
Pre Training NFQ Level of Trainees	Number of Trainees at NFQ Level	Post Training NFQ Level of Trainees	Number of Trainees at NFQ Level	% of Trainees Increasing Qualification Level
Level 1	54	Level 5	14	26% of 54
		Level 6	23	43% of 54
Level 2	50	Level 5	23	46% of 50
		Level 6	5	10% of 50
Level 3	404	Level 5	137	34% of 404
		Level 6	66	16% of 404
		Level 7	1	0% of 404
Level 4	241	Level 5	106	44% of 241
		Level 6	69	29% of 241
		Level 7	2	1% of 241
Level 5	1,118	Level 6	233	21% of 1,118
		Level 7	4	0% of 1,118
		Level 8	29	3% of 1,118
		Level 9	1	0% of 1,118
Level 6	735	Level 7	16	2% of 735
		Level 8	60	8% of 735
		Level 9	8	1% of 735
Level 7	472	Level 8	2	0% of 472
		Level 9	10	2% of 472
Level 8	880	Level 9	90	10% of 472
Total (All Levels)	3,954	All Levels	899	22.7% of 3,954
Source: Skillnets Activity Management Database				
Notes: Data relates to individual participants. As some participants undertake multiple training courses, there may be some double counting of participants in the above data.				

JSSP trainees saw significant improvements in their skill levels generally, as can be seen from the graphic overleaf. The largest improvements were seen in the following skills:

- ❑ Sector and job-specific skills (44.3% report large improvement and 37.4% report some improvement);
- ❑ Technical and practical skills (39.7% report large improvement and 38.8% report some improvement); and
- ❑ IT skills (31.1% report large improvement and 34.2% report some improvement).

A proportion of trainees suggested that they experienced no improvement in skills such as consumer handling skills (28.6%) and numeracy skills (29.3%).

Figure 6.2: JSSP Training Outcomes– JSSP Trainee Views on Changes in Skill Levels



6.4.3 JSSP Training Outcomes – Taste4Success Skillnet Case Study

We also undertook a case study on an example of how the JSSP is operating at network level. The box overleaf considers the example of the Taste4Success Skillnet.

Box 6-1: Case Study – Taste4Success Skillnet

Network Name	Taste4Success Skillnet
Background	<p>Taste4Success Skillnet is a national network dedicated to skills development within the Food and Beverage Sector. Membership is comprised of established micro, medium and large indigenous and multinational members, as well as what are now a growing number of new businesses emerging from the artisan food and drink sub-sectors.</p> <p>The food and drink sector is one of the major growth areas of the economy. The seafood sector makes a significant contribution to the economy and employs 11,000 people, mainly in coastal counties from Donegal to Louth, in the areas of fishing, fish farming, and fish processing.</p>
Course Title	Introduction to Fish Handling Skills
Programme	Job Seekers Support Programme (JSSP)
Key Features	The part-time course was delivered over five days. Contents included hygiene and safety, Workstation preparation, Species identification, Causes and control of fish spoilage, Filleting techniques and Handling and packaging procedures
Start-End	April 2012 - May 2012
Accreditation	Bord Iascaigh Mhara Industry-approved
Placement	Five days' work placement at Nicky's Plaice, West Pier, Howth. The trainee went on to complete a six-month JobBridge Internship within the company, and then successfully secured full-time employment with this family-run business.
Company feedback	<p>"People with good fish filleting skills are very thin on the ground. For me it was a lifesaver to build-up Participant in fish filleting skills. In fact, since Participant was taken on full-time, we have another individual undertaking a JobBridge Internship with us. He has begun his fish filleting training, and I'm very optimistic that we'll be able to offer him a job once his placement is complete."</p> <p>-Martin McLoughlin, Nicky's Plaice, Howth.</p>
Source: Skillnets and Taste4Success Skillnet	

6.5 Programme Cost-Effectiveness and Value for Money

The series of tables below provide us with an indication of the effectiveness of the JSSP in 2012. It is important that labour market programmes are run effectively. While it is important to see strong progression outcomes, it is even more important that these are achieved in a way that makes sense in terms of cost.

6.5.1 Cost per Training Day

In this regard, the figures indicate a positive return in terms of cost per training day at €85.50. This is down from €103.80 in 2011.

Table 6.13: JSSP Programme Effectiveness - Costs Per Training Day in 2011 and 2012

Year	Total Training Days	Total Expenditure	Cost Per Training Day
2012	39,695	€3,392,877	€85.50
2011	27,065	€2,810,561	€103.80
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			
Notes: Data includes all training days			

6.5.2 Cost per Trainee

Cost per trainee in the JSSP is significantly higher than in the case of the TNP and Finuas programmes at €1,154.80 in 2012. This is partly explained by longer course duration for JSSP programmes. While this is true, it is also the case that this figure has declined a good deal since 2011 where cost per trainee was €1,499.00.

This raises the issue of whether achievements in the JSSP could be achieved through the TNP or Finuas given the significant cost per trainee reduction that would be associated with this.

Table 6.14: JSSP Programme Effectiveness - Costs Per Trainee in 2011 and 2012

Year	Total Number of Trainees	Total Expenditure (Incl. State Grant and Matched Company Expenditure)	Cost Per Trainee
2012	2,938	€3,392,877	€1,154.80
2011	1,875	€2,810,561	€1,499.00
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			
Notes: Data includes all trainees			

6.5.3 State Funding Costs per Trainee

Another important factor here is the degree to which the cost of the JSSP is being borne by the State. This is seen in the costs per trainees for the State. In 2012, this was €949.40.

Table 6.15: JSSP Programme Effectiveness - State Costs Per Trainee in 2011 and 2012

Year	Total Number of Trainees	Total State Grant Funding	Cost Per Trainee
2012	2,938	€2,789,432	€949.40
2011	1,875	€2,608,047	€1391.00
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			
Notes: Data includes all trainees			

6.5.4 Member Company Costs per Trainee

The corresponding figure for Member Companies is €205.40, which increased substantially on 2011.

Table 6.16: JSSP Programme Effectiveness - Member Company Costs Per Trainee in 2011 and 2012			
Year	Total Number of Trainees	Total Member Company Matched Funding	Cost Per Trainee
2012	2,938	€603,445	€205.40
2011	1,875	€202,514	€108.00
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			
Notes: Data includes all trainees			

The degree to which this represents value for money is analysed further below.

6.5.5 Value for Money Assessment

An important issue concerns the extent of value for money achieved in the operation of Skillnets training programmes. As part of the evaluation process, Indecon has developed an estimated value-for-money assessment focussing on the JSSP programme. This is set out below and takes into account the likely deadweight through considering what would happen in terms of trainee progression outcomes in the absence of the programme. In this section we outline our approach to this assessment.

Basis for assessment

The approach applied in assessing the value for money achieved by JSSP is similar to that applied by Indecon in its recent evaluation of the JobBridge National Internship Scheme. This assesses the extent to which the programme increases the likelihood that participants will secure employment. The key issue here is that not all (or perhaps even most) of the beneficial impacts of the programme should be taken into account as a net benefit. This is because for many unemployed people, unemployment is short-term in duration, and we take this into account in our estimates.

The overall value for money from the scheme is estimated by reference to the potential net savings to the Exchequer in the form of reduced social welfare payments through removing individuals from unemployment and the additional tax revenues generated from employment, adjusted to reflect estimated deadweight. These adjusted benefits are then related to the costs of operating the JSSP programme. Our analysis focuses on the cohort of scheme participants who undertook training and a work placement under JSSP during 2012.

Assumptions

A number of assumptions are applied in modelling the value for money achieved by the JSSP. These assumptions are set out in the table overleaf and relate to the following dimensions:

- ☐ Programme activity, including the numbers of JSSP trainees and the proportion that have completed their training and work placement;
- ☐ The estimated exit rate from the Live Register among JSSP trainees who have completed their training and work placement;
- ☐ Average duration of a work placement;
- ☐ Cost of weekly social welfare ‘top-up’ payment (for work placements undertaken via JobBridge);
- ☐ Cost of social welfare unemployment benefit/assistance;
- ☐ State-funded part of JSSP programme expenditure;
- ☐ Current income levels among programme finishers; and
- ☐ Extent of programme deadweight.

The estimated annual net benefits to the Exchequer arising from the operation of the JSSP during 2012 are shown in the table overleaf. We estimate that annual savings in social welfare (Jobseekers Benefit/Assistance) payments of €10.4 million could arise as a result of exits from the Live Register among JSSP participants who undertook their training during 2012. This is based on an estimated of 1,842 JSSP completions during 2012 (who fully completed their training and work placements) and assuming that 57.8% of these completions exit from the Live Register, based on analysis of Indecon’s survey research among trainees.

In addition to social welfare savings, to the extent that scheme finishers secure employment, this would also generate benefits for the Exchequer in the form of income tax payments. We assume that average gross income among JSSP participants is similar to that among JobBridge participants, which from our recent evaluation of JobBridge, equated to €24,523 per annum. If one assumes that all JSSP participants who secure employment are single person taxpayers, this would indicate an average tax deduction/contribution of €3,621 per person per annum at current (2013) tax credits and rates (this includes PAYE, PRSI and USC deductions).

These figures would suggest an estimated total income tax contribution among employed JSSP participants of €2.7 million annually. Adding the estimated savings in unemployment-related welfare payments would indicate total exchequer benefits (savings + income tax) arising from the removal of programme finishers from the Live Register and the employment of a proportion of these individuals amounting to an estimated €13.1 million on an annual basis.

Table 6.17: Value for Money Assessment of Job Seekers Support Programme (JSSP)	
Number of JSSP Completions in 2012 (= 2,938 JSSP trainees * estimated 62.7% completion rate (full completions of training and/or work placement)) ⁵	1,842
Assumed exit rate from Live Register post-JSSP (based on Indecon survey of JSSP Trainees)	57.8%
Estimated Number of JSSP Exits from Live Register (No. of Completions * Assumed Exit Rate)	1,065
Estimated Annual Savings in Jobseeker Benefit/Assistance Payments (assuming weekly rate of UB/UA of €188 * 52 weeks)	€10,413,386
<i>Estimated Tax Revenues from Employment Income</i>	
Assumed gross hourly pay - € per hour	€13.10
Assumed weekly hours worked - Hours	36
Estimated annualised gross pay - € (hourly pay * no. of hours * 52 weeks)	€24,523
Estimated Average Annual Income Tax per JSSP Participant Employed - Single Person Tax-payer	€3,621
Estimated Additional Annual Tax Revenues (Estimated No. of JSSP Exits from Live Register * % Exit-to-Employment Rate(70.5%) * Average Annual Income Tax)	€2,718,929
Estimated Total Gross Annual Exchequer Benefits (Benefit Savings + Tax Revenues)	€13,132,315
<i>Estimated Scheme Deadweight</i>	
Overall estimated Deadweight	62.5%
Estimated Annual Exchequer Benefits adjusted for Deadweight (Gross Annual Exchequer benefits * (100% - Assumed Deadweight %))	€4,923,091
Source: Indecon analysis	

Programme deadweight

The above estimate represents the *gross* exchequer benefit and it is necessary to factor in the deadweight associated with the programme, i.e., the extent to which some of these benefits would be realised in the absence of the JSSP.

When dealing with a large cohort in the labour force who are participating in a labour market programme it is possible to compare exit rates for such a group with exit rates for the overall Live Register to obtain a measure of deadweight taking account of differences between the groups such as age, duration of unemployment etc. However, this is much more difficult for a relatively small programme such as the JSSP. In order to estimate deadweight arising in the JSSP, we

⁵The 62.7% completed rate assumed for this analysis is estimated based on the findings from Indecon's survey of JSSP trainees in relation to the completion status of training. As this research was conducted during April 2013, it reflects the completion status of trainees at this time and this rate of completion is likely to increase as trainees who commenced training in late 2012 conclude their programmes.

examined two approaches. One was to compare exit-to-employment rates among participants on the JSSP with exit rates for similar groups on the Live Register.

Our research indicates an average exit-to-employment rate among JSSP participants of 70.5%.⁶ This compares with an average exit-to-employment rate across the Live Register as a whole of 33.5% during 2012. Combining these two figures suggests a deadweight estimate of 47.5%.⁷ We are assuming in this analysis that the relevant comparator is the standard exit-to-employment rate from the Live Register.

It is possible that this may result in an underestimation of deadweight to the extent that there are differences in the profile of JSSP participants and those on the Live Register. While JSSP participants appear to have fairly high proportions of those unemployed for more than one year, it has not been feasible given the sample sizes to match the different durations of unemployment, or to take account of other factors such as educational attainment (in this context we note that 47.8% of JSSP participants during 2012 held primary degree or post-graduate qualifications). We are also assuming similar levels of deadweight for other benefits of the programme.

The second approach we examined was to use a measure of deadweight based on participants' own assessment of the additional benefits that the programme provided in helping them to find a job. Our research with JSSP trainees indicates that 22.5% of trainees believed that the JSSP had fully contributed to helping them find a job (see Table 6.20 below). Utilising the proportion of trainees who stated that the programme fully contributed to helping them find a job suggests an estimate for deadweight of 77.5%.

Given the above factors, we believe the most appropriate assumption is to assume an average of the two estimates, i.e., an average of 47.5% and 77.5%, equating to 62.5%. Applying this estimate for programme deadweight to our estimate of gross Exchequer benefits implies an estimate for net Exchequer benefits amounting to €4.9 million in annual terms (see Table 6.17 above).

Programme costs

To assess the overall value for money to the State associated with the JSSP programme, it is necessary to also factor in the publicly funded costs of operating the programme. The primary cost element relates to the State-funded element of total expenditure on the JSSP, which during 2012 amounted to €2.85 million. In addition, it is also necessary to factor in the costs associated with JSSP participants who transferred to the JobBridge scheme. A total of 151 JSSP participants transferred to JobBridge during 2012. Once on JobBridge, in addition to their normal social welfare jobseeker benefits each participant is entitled to receive a weekly 'top-up' payment of €50 while they undertake their internship/work placement. Across the JSSP transferees to JobBridge during 2012, these 'top-up' payments would have amounted to an estimated €181,200 (assuming average internship duration of 24 weeks/six months). A breakdown of these cost elements is presented in the table overleaf.

⁶Where 70.5% is estimated from Indecon's survey of JSSP trainees (40.8% in employment / (total exits to employment, further education and training and emigration)).

⁷47.5% = (33.5% / 70.5%).

Table 6.18: Value for Money Assessment - Estimated Scheme Costs

	€
<i>Scheme Costs</i>	
JSSP Programme Expenditure - 2012 (State-funded part)	€2,815,034
Cost of Weekly 'Top-Up' Payments - JobBridge transferees (151 transferees)	€181,200
Total Costs - 2012 JSSP Participants	€2,996,234
Source: Indecon analysis	

Estimated scheme overall net benefit/cost

The overall net benefit/cost, and therefore value for money to the Exchequer associated with the JSSP is a function of the estimated savings in unemployment-related social welfare payments plus the additional tax revenues from employment relative to the costs of operating the programme. The potential benefits will, however, depend on how long individuals who find work remain in employment and off the Live Register. To account for this in our modelling, we analyse the estimated net benefits/costs of the scheme under alternative assumptions regarding the length of time JSSP participants who secure employment remain off the Live Register. The findings, based on the 2012 cohort of JSSP completions, are presented in the table below by reference to the estimated net benefit/cost of the programme, if participants remain off the Live Register for three months, six months, 12 months, 18 months or two years.

Table 6.19: Value for Money Assessment –Estimated Net Benefit/Cost of JSSP

Table 5.11: Costs for money, participants' estimated net benefit, cost of loss					
	If Participants Remain Off Live Register for up to:				
	3 Months	6 Months	12 Months	18 Months	24 Months
Estimated Net Benefit/Cost of Programme	-€1,765,461	-€534,688	€1,926,857	€4,388,403	€6,849,948
Minimum No. of Months to Achieve Positive Net Return to Exchequer	7.3				
Source: Indecon analysis					

The results of the value-for-money assessment of the JSSP suggest that under the progression outcomes and conservative estimates of deadweight levels assumed, the programme would achieve a positive net benefit to the Exchequer if participants secure employment and remain off the Live Register for a minimum period of about seven months. The results also suggest that if on average participants stay in employment for more than a year, the net benefits increase significantly. The findings highlight the importance of on-going monitoring of the scheme, however, as if employment outcomes are not monitored after a short period, the impact and value for money achieved by the scheme could be reduced.

6.6 Trainee and Member Company Views on JSSP

Through our primary research and stakeholder consultations, Indecon gathered together a range of views on the operation and performance of the JSSP. These views are analysed in the following series of tables and figures.

6.6.1 Views of JSSP Trainees

We asked JSSP trainees whether, and to what extent, they were satisfied with their training experience. What we found was that participants reported very high satisfaction levels across a range of indicators but as we have seen with other trainees, a number of factors are prevalent.

JSSP trainees were most satisfied with the following:

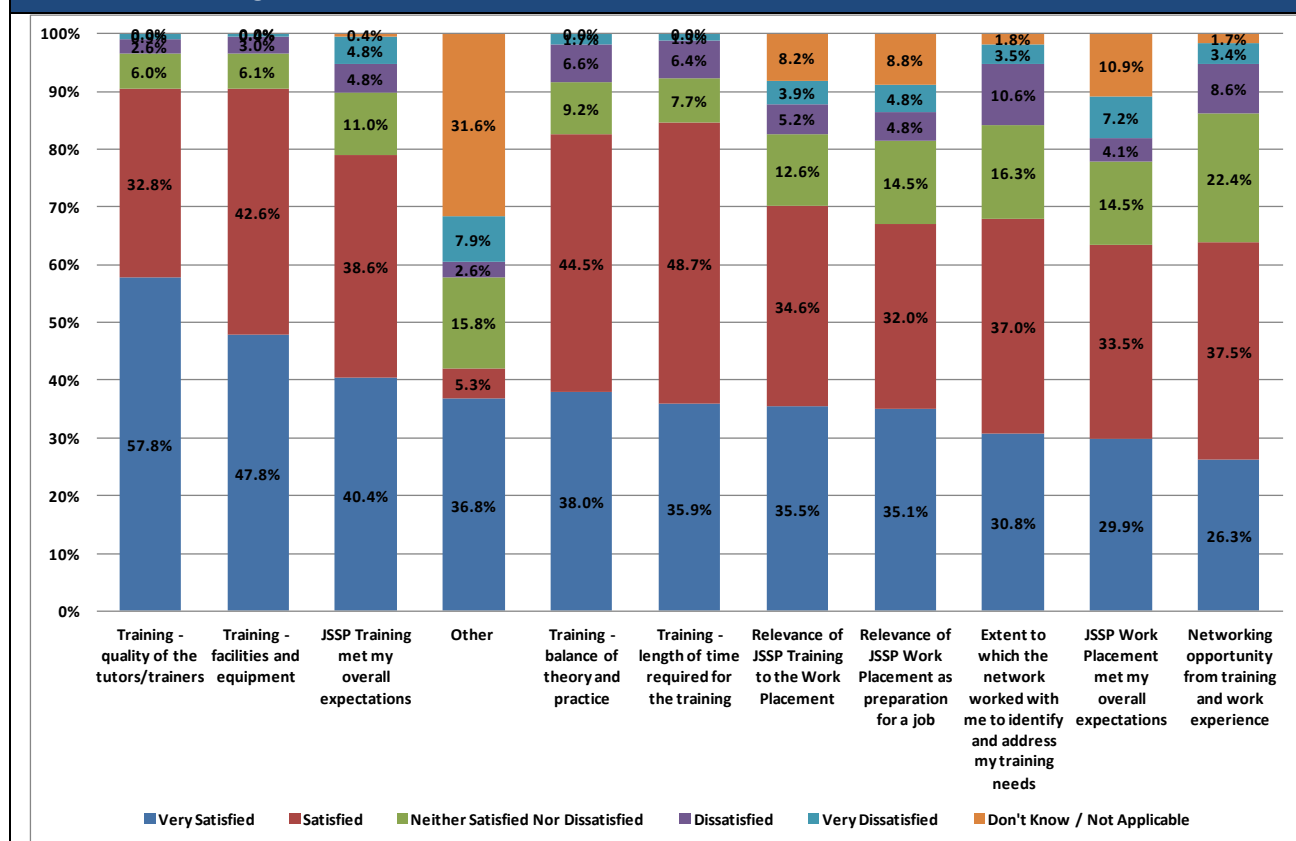
- ☐ Training - quality of the tutors/trainers (57.8% Very Satisfied);
- ☐ Training - facilities and equipment (47.8% Very Satisfied); and
- ☐ JSSP Training met my overall expectations (40.4% Very Satisfied).

While general dissatisfaction was very low, JSSP trainees did highlight dissatisfaction with the extent to which the network worked with them to identify and address their training needs (10.6% Dissatisfied and 3.5% Very Dissatisfied).

Another aspect that JSSP trainees highlight is the lack of certainty in relation to work placements. One trainee suggested that:

“The concept of JSSP Training with a work placement seemed ideal as it has been difficult getting back into the workforce given the current economic conditions. Unfortunately I have mixed views as I feel a little let down in that the college were not up to speed in sourcing work placements quick enough or providing assistance once course was completed.” – JSSP Trainee.

Figure 6.3: Further Views on JSSP - Views on Trainee Satisfaction Levels



Source: Indecon Analysis of JSSP Trainee Survey

We also asked trainees about if and how their training had additional benefits for them. Trainee responses indicate that positive responses in the following areas:

- ☐ Has enhanced my CV (61.3% said training Fully Contributed to this);
- ☐ Has developed my learning in other new areas (57.4% said training Fully Contributed to this); and
- ☐ Has helped me to achieve a qualification (52.1% said training Fully Contributed to this).

Table 6.20: Further Views on JSSP –Trainee Views on Additional Benefits/Impacts of Skillnets Training

Did (does) the Skillnets training contribute to any of the following additional benefits / impacts?	Fully Contributed	Partially Contributed	Did Not Contribute	Don't Know
Has helped me to find a job	22.5%	24.8%	38.1%	14.7%
Has increased my chances of finding a job	37.9%	40.2%	12.3%	9.6%
Has helped me develop contacts or networks that will assist me in getting a job	24.2%	43.5%	25.6%	6.7%
Has helped me gain insights into the company and sector/industry	41.4%	45.9%	10.4%	2.3%
Has made me more aware of employment opportunities	35.7%	43.4%	18.1%	2.7%
Has developed skills to help me set up my own business	17.2%	26.2%	43.9%	12.7%
Has helped me to achieve a qualification	52.1%	22.4%	20.5%	5.0%
Has enhanced my CV	61.3%	30.2%	7.2%	1.4%
Has developed my learning in other new areas	57.4%	36.3%	5.8%	0.4%
Has helped me to make decisions about my career	42.8%	38.7%	14.4%	4.1%
Has improved my team-working ability	37.8%	36.5%	22.5%	3.2%
Has improved my people and communication skills	35.5%	36.4%	23.5%	4.6%
Has improved my motivation and self-confidence	41.6%	37.1%	19.0%	2.3%
Other	27.6%	6.9%	17.2%	48.3%
Source: Indecon Analysis of JSSP Trainee Survey				

6.6.2 Views of Network Managers

The degree to which network managers reported challenges in their participation within the JSSP was also analysed. Indecon found that matching unemployed trainees with appropriate work placement/employment was the most significant challenge for managers (28.6% reported this). Tracking the subsequent progression of trainees that undertake work placements was also reported as a very significant challenge in 23.8% of cases. Significant challenges as reported by network managers included:

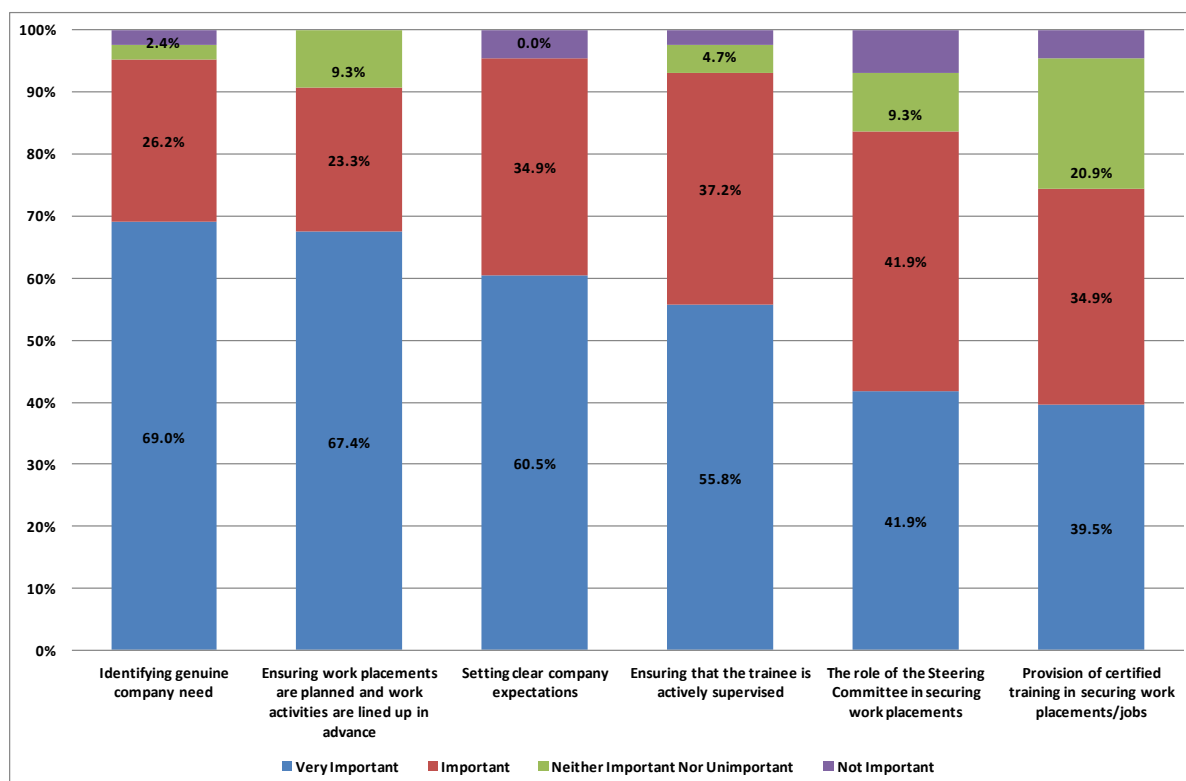
- ☐ Finding suitable unemployed trainees (41.5% reporting this as a significant challenge);
- ☐ Recruiting members/companies to participate in JSSP (40.5% reporting this as a significant challenge); and
- ☐ Matching unemployed trainees with appropriate work placement/employment (38.1% reporting this as a significant challenge).

Table 6.21: Network Managers - Views on Significance of Challenges Associated with Undertaking JSSP						
Please indicate the level of significance you would attach to each of the following challenges involved in undertaking the JSSP in your network and achieving its objectives during 2012.	Very Significant Challenge	Significant Challenge	Neither Significant Nor Insignificant Challenge	Insignificant Challenge/Constraint	Not at all a Challenge	Don't Know / Not Applicable
Recruiting members/companies to participate in JSSP	21.4%	40.5%	11.9%	11.9%	11.9%	2.4%
Finding suitable unemployed trainees	22.0%	41.5%	19.5%	4.9%	9.8%	2.4%
Designing training that meets the employability and skills needs of companies in the sector/region	9.5%	33.3%	21.4%	14.3%	19.0%	2.4%
Matching unemployed trainees with relevant courses	16.7%	35.7%	16.7%	14.3%	14.3%	2.4%
Matching unemployed trainees with appropriate work place-ment/employment	28.6%	38.1%	19.0%	7.1%	4.8%	2.4%
Achieving successful balance between duration of training and job placement	21.4%	35.7%	16.7%	14.3%	9.5%	2.4%
Maximising attendance of trainees at training	19.0%	31.0%	21.4%	9.5%	16.7%	2.4%
Managing work placements once they commence	19.0%	31.0%	26.2%	11.9%	9.5%	2.4%
Tracking the subsequent progression of trainees that undertake work placements	23.8%	38.1%	16.7%	11.9%	7.1%	2.4%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Managers Survey						

There were a number of issues identified by network managers that would, if acted upon, improve the delivery of the JSSP. Displayed below, these include:

- ☐ Identifying genuine company need (69% report this as Very Important);
- ☐ Ensuring work placements are planned and work activities are lined up in advance (67.4% report this as Very Important); and
- ☐ Setting clear company expectations (60.5% report this as Very Important).

Figure 6.4: Network Managers –Views on the Importance of Various Factors



Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Managers Survey

6.7 Summary of Findings

Our analysis of the JSSP suggests that the programme is having a broadly positive impact on participants. Our findings, however, are not without a number of concerns relating to the programmes operation. These are outlined below:

- ❑ The main aim of the JSSP in 2012 was to assist jobseekers in finding training relevant to their sector in order to facilitate an increase in their general skill levels and in turn influence their employment prospects. A number of other aims centred on assisting Member Companies, particularly SMEs, to develop a talent pool of skilled people for the purposes of recruitment and to blend training with workplace experience so as to embed trainee learning and give jobseekers access to employers.
- ❑ The JSSP has developed a successful interaction with other agencies and programmes, including facilitation of work placements through the government's national internship programme, JobBridge.
- ❑ The JSSP was operated throughout 43 networks in 2012 (versus 24 networks in 2011), with the level of financial input to the programme increasing to €3.4 million in 2012.

- ❑ The type of training activities undertaken by JSSP trainees in 2012 was highly varied. The main categories were management development skills (18%), Information technology (17%), communication skills (11%) and technical skills (11%).
- ❑ The performance of the JSSP in 2012 improved on the previous year, with the number of trainees assisted being 11% ahead of Skillnets' budgeted level for the year. However, performance varied noticeably across networks, with 30 out of 43 JSSP networks achieving their annual target for JSSP trainees.
- ❑ A key issue concerns the progression outcomes for trainees, particularly in terms of the extent to which trainees find employment. Indecon's survey of JSSP trainees found that the programme has a positive outcome in this regard, with 40.8% of trainees having found employment since they completed their training.
- ❑ As a result of JSSP training, 20.4% of participant gained a qualification in the Level 1 to 5 range of the NFQ with a further 31.7% gaining qualifications at Level 6 and above. Trainees also report significant improvements in their skill levels generally, particularly in relation to sector- and job-specific skills, technical and practical skills, and IT skills.
- ❑ In terms of costs, cost per training day provided under the JSSP amounted to €85.50 per day on average during 2012, down from €103.80 in 2011.
- ❑ An important issue concerns the extent of value for money achieved in the operation of the JSSP. Focussing on the cohort of scheme participants who undertook training and a work placement under JSSP during 2012, Indecon's assessment suggests that even under conservative assumptions for deadweight, based on the progression outcomes examined the programme would achieve a positive net benefit to the Exchequer if participants secure employment and remain off the Live Register for about seven months. The results also suggest that if on average participants stay in employment for more than a year, the net benefits could increase significantly.
- ❑ Notwithstanding the positive progression benefits and value for money evident in the programme, managing the JSSP has also presented certain challenges for networks. Particular challenges highlighted by network managers include matching unemployed trainees with appropriate training and work placements, and tracking the subsequent progression of trainees.

7 Review of Networks Model

7.1 Introduction

This section of the evaluation builds upon aspects discussed previously throughout the document related to the overall effectiveness of the Skillnets network model. It incorporates views on network performance and quality as well as views on the suitability of the network model for a range of stakeholders including Member Companies, network managers and network promoters.

7.2 Overview of Network Model

7.2.1 Skillnets Ltd

Skillnets is a state funded, enterprise-led support body dedicated to the promotion and facilitation of training and up-skilling as key elements in sustaining Ireland's national competitiveness.

Skillnets supports and funds networks of enterprises to engage in training under the Training Networks Programme (TNP), Finuas, JSSP, NCPD and FSNP. 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.

The enterprise-led aspect to Skillnets training is a central component to the network model. Companies and their employees are directly involved in the identification, design, delivery and evaluation of training processes, either as lead bodies or in partnership with other organisations. Such other organisations may include state agencies, advisory groups, certifying bodies, educational establishments and training providers. The main features of Skillnets' unique enterprise-led approach are as follows:

- ☐ Industry specific - training is designed to meet business needs;
- ☐ Flexible - allows companies to identify their own needs;
- ☐ Co-funded - enterprises contribute financially both in terms of cash and resources;
- ☐ Innovative - new concepts and ideas adding to the body of knowledge, bringing new ideas to enterprise;
- ☐ Partnership - wide range of potential partners and owners/managers and employees coming together; and
- ☐ Knowledge transfer - large companies transfer knowledge to small and medium-sized enterprise (SMEs) and professional inputs from trainers, academia and other advisors.

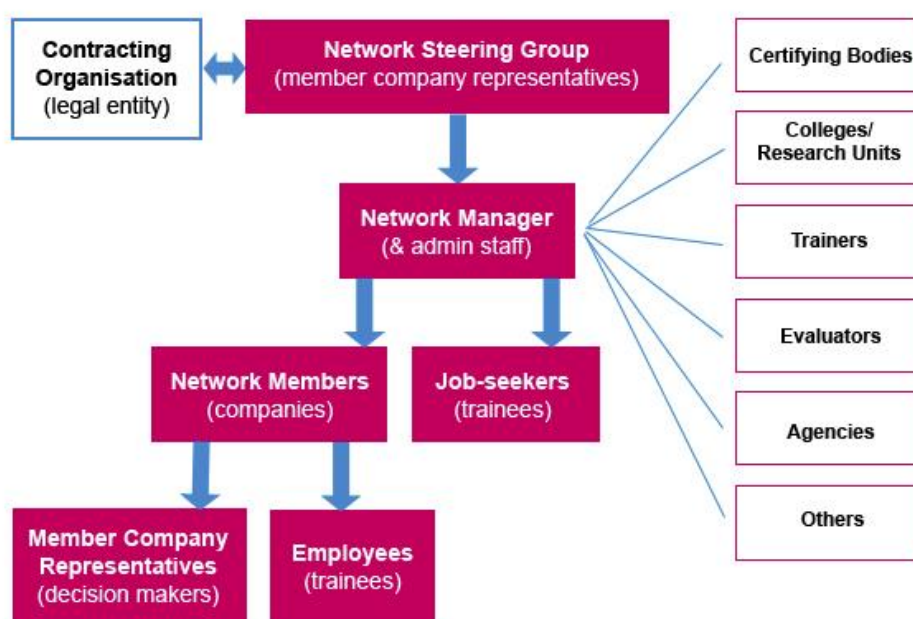
The features of this approach lend themselves to the formation of a network model within which Skillnets operates. We discuss this model in more detail below.

7.2.2 The Network Model

The Skillnets approach to the provision of training is based on the use of networks. Networks are complex systems that link connections, known as nodes, to one another. The theory of networks has been applied across many fields and social science is one such field where explaining various phenomenon through networks has been and continues to be very useful. Ultimately, networks are very useful for making sense of complex connections that may otherwise not be directly observable.

Networks then are applied to many practical situations. We see this in business in term of clusters of businesses within a sector or geographically and also in terms of social networks. The Skillnets approach is particularly suited to the adoption of networks because there are a multitude of actors/nodes involved in the training process at various stages. In this regard, the figure below depicts the Skillnets network structure:

Figure 7.1: The Skillnets Network Structure



Source: Skillnets.ie

The core of a network is the Member Companies. Companies which are members of networks span the full range of industry sectors and can be enterprises of any size. The network trainee profile can include any employee groups as well as jobseekers that satisfy Skillnets eligibility criteria.

There are a range of interactions which occur within and between Skillnets networks on a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis and managing these interactions can be quite challenging. We discuss this further below.

7.2.3 Network Management

Each network, of which there were 56 in 2012, has a contracting organisation that manages the activities of the network and receives the funds from Skillnets on behalf of the network group. Representatives of the Member Companies form a steering or management group to oversee and direct the network. This group meets on a regular basis and makes management decisions.

The network managers, whose views are analysed below, are the key coordinators, providing the professional and developmental inputs. Others who provide services to the network include trainers, business advisors and academics.

Indecon's evaluation indicates that Skillnets networks are managed efficiently. Our research suggests that the network model continues to make sense and this is indicated by promoters and Member Companies. Various views on this aspect include:

"Over all our experience is very positive and the support and guidance from Support Manager has been significant in the smooth running of the network." (Network Promoter)

"Excellent network management. Very organised and professional. I recommend this network highly." (TNP Member Company)

"We receive good support from Skillnets and in particular our PSM (Programme Support Manager). The support for ICT training is much needed and appreciated." (Network Promoter)

However, managing this complex system is not without its difficulties and in this regard there were some reported challenges in 2012. These centred on the issue of funding mechanism for assisting both employed trainees and jobseekers. While there is funding provided to train jobseekers through the Jobseeker Support Programme, there is no additional funding provided to networks for the training of jobseekers in the TNP and Finuas. This is presenting challenges for networks. Various views on this include:

"More weighting should be given to JSSP in terms of funding and targets, as a lot of time is required to be inputted to achieve targets." (Network Promoter)

"Skillnets Limited should not lose focus on the importance of enterprise-led training and should continue with assisting in bridging the gap, in funding terms, between the employed and unemployed [trainees]." (Network Promoter)

In spite of these comments, we find that overall, the management of Skillnets networks is effective and responsive to the needs of both trainees and companies. We present further views on this throughout sections 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5.

Allied to the management of Skillnets is the collection of data at the trainee, company and event levels. Such data collection allows Skillnets to monitor ongoing interventions in the form of training activities. In order to facilitate this monitoring, Skillnets utilises its Skillnets Activity Management database.

7.2.4 Monitoring the Network Model – Skillnets Activity Management (SAM)

Another important feature of Skillnets relates to the monitoring and evaluation of networks. In order to facilitate this monitoring effort, Skillnets collects a range of information through its SAM database. The SAM database contains a host of data relating to trainees, Member Companies, events that occur throughout the year as well as other important indicators that allow for an analysis of network performance.

While the SAM database is a very important resource with a lot of useful data collected, there are a number of issues apparent with the system that are causing difficulties at the network level. Networks have highlighted particular issues relating to time required to upload data, reporting and general administration.

Indecon is aware that an external review of SAM has just been completed. We would concur with the broad finding of this review that issues with the SAM impact significantly on the utilisation of both Skillnets personnel as well as network administration, which add to the indirect costs of using and administering the system. We believe there would be a strong argument, subject to rigorous appraisal of costs and benefits, that appropriately targeted investment to address these issues could, among other positive impacts, have particular benefits in releasing valuable time for networks as well as Skillnets personnel to allocate to network development and promotion activities.

7.3 Member Companies Views

The following sections provide detail on the views of a number of stakeholders involved in the Skillnets process. We begin by analysing the views of Member Companies on their Skillnets membership.

7.3.1 TNP Member Companies Views

As part of our survey of TNP Member Companies, we asked them for their views on Skillnets membership and how their membership has impacted on a range of factors related to their operation. Companies strongly agreed to a number of statements:

- ☐ 49.7% Strongly Agree that they would recommend becoming part of a Skillnet to other companies;
- ☐ 41.9% Strongly Agree that their investment in Skillnets training represents value for money; and
- ☐ 37.3% Strongly Agree that Skillnets training has reduced their training costs compared to sourcing from non-Skillnets providers.

In terms of their Skillnets membership, companies broadly agree that a range of factors have positively influenced their training experience. However, there are a percentage of respondents who also disagree with a number of statements. These include:

- ☐ 20.1% of companies Disagreed with the statement that Skillnets membership improved their networking with other businesses and organizations; and
- ☐ 17.8% Disagreed with the statement that Skillnets membership fostered greater collaboration with staff in identifying and addressing training.

Table 7.1: TNP Member Companies Views on Skillnets Membership

To what extent would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements as a result of being a member of a Skillnet during 2012?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
An increased number of people are now offered training at our organisation	27.3%	56.7%	14.5%	1.5%
We are now more likely to invest in training and staff development	26.4%	60.0%	13.0%	0.6%
Has enabled some staff to be trained for the first time	25.2%	44.9%	26.5%	3.4%
Has reduced our training costs compared to sourcing from non-Skillnets providers	37.3%	53.9%	7.9%	0.9%
Has enhanced the promotional and career prospects of staff	24.5%	65.4%	9.8%	0.3%
Our training needs were considered in forming the network training schedule	26.6%	59.9%	12.8%	0.6%
We received timely and/or sufficient information on the training available	37.3%	58.2%	4.2%	0.3%
Has fostered greater collaboration with staff in identifying and addressing training needs	19.4%	62.2%	17.8%	0.6%
Improved our networking with other businesses and organisations	23.1%	55.9%	20.1%	0.9%
Enabled sharing of up-to-date industry knowledge/market developments	22.0%	58.7%	19.0%	0.3%
Facilitated learning of best practice approaches to our sector	27.3%	58.9%	13.2%	0.6%
Helped us to develop new partnerships or joint projects	14.5%	44.9%	37.5%	3.1%
Our investment in Skillnets training represents value for money	41.9%	56.6%	1.5%	0.0%
We would recommend becoming part of a Skillnet to other companies	49.7%	48.5%	1.8%	0.0%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Member Companies Survey				

7.3.2 Finuas Member Companies Views

Finuas Member Companies respond in a similar fashion to TNP companies on these topics. They Strongly Agree that Skillnets is cost competitive in the provision of training (46.3%) and companies, in 53.7% of cases, would recommend becoming part of a Skillnet to other companies.

There is a higher level of disagreement with the statement that Skillnets training helped companies to develop new partnerships or joint projects (47.5%). This may have implications in terms of the aims and structure of networking events and whether these need to be adjusted to facilitate the development of stronger links between businesses.

However, realistically, this aspect of the Skillnets model does not appear to be that central a concern. The main aims and objective centre around training, up-skilling and employment creation and the degree to which increased joint projects between companies will facilitate this is questionable.

Table 7.2: Finuas Member Companies Views on Skillnets Membership				
To what extent would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements as a result of being a member of a Skillnet during 2012?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
An increased number of people are now offered training at our organisation	26.8%	48.8%	22.0%	2.4%
We are now more likely to invest in training and staff development	15.0%	60.0%	22.5%	2.5%
Has enabled some staff to be trained for the first time	10.0%	57.5%	25.0%	7.5%
Has reduced our training costs compared to sourcing from non-Skillnets providers	46.3%	48.8%	4.9%	0.0%
Has enhanced the promotional and career prospects of staff	24.4%	61.0%	12.2%	2.4%
Our training needs were considered in forming the network training schedule	30.0%	52.5%	17.5%	0.0%
We received timely and/or sufficient information on the training available	34.1%	65.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Has fostered greater collaboration with staff in identifying and addressing training needs	22.0%	58.5%	19.5%	0.0%
Improved our networking with other businesses and organisations	30.0%	45.0%	22.5%	2.5%
Enabled sharing of up-to-date industry knowledge/market developments	22.0%	58.5%	19.5%	0.0%
Facilitated learning of best practice approaches to our sector	34.1%	51.2%	14.6%	0.0%
Helped us to develop new partnerships or joint projects	12.5%	37.5%	47.5%	2.5%
Our investment in Skillnets training represents value for money	48.8%	51.2%	0.0%	0.0%
We would recommend becoming part of a Skillnet to other companies	53.7%	46.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Member Companies Survey				

7.4 Views of Network Managers

Below we incorporate the views of network managers on a range of issues related to network structure, network performance and overall network effectiveness. We do this in order to assess whether the network model is functioning appropriately. We begin by analysing the views related to manager satisfaction.

7.4.1 Satisfaction levels of Network Managers

Network managers generally express satisfaction with the network model. This is especially the case in relation to the quality of training. Interestingly, managers indicate that they are more satisfied with the quality of training for employed trainees than they are with the quality of training for jobseeker trainees.

The effectiveness of the management/steering group is also seen as something the managers are either Very Satisfied with (46.4%) or Satisfied with (39.3%).

The highest levels of dissatisfaction are displayed in terms of monitoring and reporting requirements (14.3% Very Dissatisfied). This indicates that there may be an administrative burden on managers which may be something Skillnets could seek to minimise.

Table 7.3: Network Managers - Views on Satisfaction Levels of Skillnets Model						
Please indicate your level of satisfaction with each of the following aspects of the Skillnets network model.	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Don't Know / Not Applicable
The effectiveness of your steering/management group	46.4%	39.3%	12.5%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%
The quality of training for employed trainees	69.6%	28.6%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
The quality of training for unemployed/jobseeker trainees	53.6%	30.4%	10.7%	3.6%	1.8%	0.0%
The relationships that have been established between employers in the network	44.6%	42.9%	8.9%	1.8%	0.0%	1.8%
The level of financial support available to networks	5.4%	44.6%	16.1%	30.4%	3.6%	0.0%
The application procedure	1.8%	45.5%	27.3%	18.2%	7.3%	0.0%
Monitoring and reporting requirements	0.0%	30.4%	32.1%	23.2%	14.3%	0.0%
Information, communication and support from Skillnets	14.5%	61.8%	16.4%	3.6%	3.6%	0.0%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Managers Survey						

7.4.2 Views on Network Activity Changes in 2012

Network managers indicate a general increase in their activity levels in 2012. Such activity level increases include:

- ❑ Training being delivered (No. of Training Days) (83.9%);
- ❑ Training being delivered (No. of Trainees) (76.8%);
- ❑ Network Membership levels (71.4%); and
- ❑ Employers cooperating to identify training needs (57.1%).

Network managers felt that the extent to which employers cooperated on non-training issues as a result of the network Stayed the Same (52.7%) while there were limited views on the extent to which these changes were decreases.

Table 7.4: Network Managers - Views on the Extent of Changes in Activities in 2012			
In relation to activity levels in your network, please indicate the extent to which the following activities changed during 2012.	Increased	Stayed the Same	Decreased
Training being delivered (number of training days)	83.9%	8.9%	7.1%
Training being delivered (number of people trained)	76.8%	16.1%	7.1%
Network membership levels	71.4%	21.4%	7.1%
Employers cooperating to identify training needs	57.1%	41.1%	1.8%
Employers cooperating on non-training issues as a result of the network	45.5%	52.7%	1.8%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Managers Survey			

Over half of managers expect an increase in activity levels in 2013 compared to 2012, however, fewer managers expect Increases in training being delivered as we see in the table for 2012 above. This also related to a higher percentage of managers reporting that they expect things to Stay the Same in 2013.

Over one-third of managers in all cases expect various factors, as indicated in the table, to Stay the Same. Consequently, a very small proportion of managers expect activity levels to Decrease.

Table 7.5: Network Managers - Views on the Extent of Anticipated Changes in Activities in 2013			
In relation to activity levels in your network, please provide your view on what you would anticipate is likely to happen in the following areas during 2013.	Increased	Stayed the Same	Decreased
Employers cooperating to identify training needs	66.1%	30.4%	3.6%
Network membership levels	58.9%	37.5%	3.6%
Training being delivered (number of training days)	57.1%	39.3%	3.6%
Training being delivered (number of people trained)	57.1%	39.3%	3.6%
Employers cooperating on non-training issues as a result of the network	55.4%	39.3%	5.4%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Managers Survey			

With these reported increases in network activity, managers are also reporting, in some instances, challenges in network development and operation. Specific areas where managers report significant challenges/constraints include:

- ☐ Procurement/tendering (44.6% report as a significant challenge); and
- ☐ Recruiting unemployed/jobseeker trainees (37.5% report as a significant challenge).

A high percentage of responses in the category for Neither Significant nor Insignificant challenge/constraint seems to indicate that managers are dealing with a range of factors effectively such as:

- ☐ Recruitment of new company members – SMEs and Larger Companies;
- ☐ Retention of existing company members in the network;
- ☐ Securing financial investment and matching funds from companies;
- ☐ Overall participation levels of Member Companies on training events;
- ☐ Sourcing of high-quality trainers;
- ☐ Network monitoring, recordkeeping and financial control;
- ☐ Managing working relationships (with promoter, steering group, active companies, trainees, trainers, and Skillnets PSM); and
- ☐ Other network-building activities (e.g. non-formal activities and networking events).

Table 7.6: Network Managers - Views on Levels of Significance of Challenges/Constraints in Network Development and Operation in 2012

Please indicate the level of Significance you would attach to each of the following challenges or constraints involved in operating and developing your network during 2012.	Very Significant Challenge/Constraint	Significant Challenge/Constraint	Neither Significant Nor Insignificant Challenge/Constraint	Insignificant Challenge/Constraint	Not at all a Challenge/Constraint	Don't Know / Not Applicable
Recruitment of new company members – SMEs	1.8%	32.1%	35.7%	16.1%	10.7%	3.6%
Recruitment of new company members – Larger firms	8.9%	26.8%	32.1%	19.6%	7.1%	5.4%
Retention of existing company members in the network	0.0%	10.7%	41.1%	26.8%	19.6%	1.8%
Securing financial investment and matching funds from companies	7.1%	21.4%	26.8%	19.6%	23.2%	1.8%
Achieving participation of Companies in Training Needs Analysis and responding quickly to changing training needs	5.5%	29.1%	25.5%	18.2%	20.0%	1.8%
Overall participation levels of Member Companies on training events	1.8%	19.6%	33.9%	25.0%	17.9%	1.8%
Sourcing of high-quality trainers	1.8%	7.1%	32.1%	25.0%	32.1%	1.8%
Procurement/tendering	8.9%	44.6%	26.8%	8.9%	8.9%	1.8%
Recruiting unemployed/jobseeker trainees	21.4%	37.5%	17.9%	1.8%	19.6%	1.8%
Working with jobseekers to guide and match them to appropriate training	30.9%	36.4%	12.7%	9.1%	9.1%	1.8%
Follow-up with and assessing progression outcomes of jobseeker trainees	34.5%	34.5%	14.5%	7.3%	5.5%	3.6%
Network monitoring, record keeping and financial control	14.3%	30.4%	33.9%	8.9%	10.7%	1.8%
Managing working relationships (with promoter, steering group, active companies, trainees, trainers, and Skillnets PSM)	7.1%	21.4%	32.1%	14.3%	23.2%	1.8%
Other network-building activities (e.g. non-formal activities and networking events)	1.8%	26.8%	37.5%	12.5%	19.6%	1.8%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Managers Survey						

The findings indicate that managers are generally continuing to succeed in administering and developing their networks. However, particular issues remain in relation to the challenges involved in recruiting and managing unemployed/jobseeker trainees and in respect of the administrative/compliance burdens placed on networks.

7.4.3 Views on Impact of Network Activities

In order to further analyse what challenges managers face, we sought their views on the significance or otherwise of a range of impacts of network activities. The most significant impacts are reported as:

- ☐ Providing tailored training that would not be available elsewhere (50% Very Significant);
- ☐ Meeting employers' workforce development needs (48.2% Very Significant); and
- ☐ Enabling training to be company driven rather than provider driven (46.4% Very Significant).

These aspects indicate that the success of Skillnets is related to the provision of company driven training that is not readily available elsewhere.

Table 7.7: Network Managers - Views on Levels of Significance of Impact of Network Activities						
Please indicate the level of significance you would attach to each of the following areas of impact of your Network's activities in 2012.	Very Significant Impact	Significant Impact	Neither Significant Nor Insignificant Impact	Insignificant Impact	No Impact	Don't Know / Not Applicable
Meeting employers' workforce development needs	48.2%	42.9%	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%
Enabling companies to engage in planned training activity for the first time	19.6%	53.6%	19.6%	1.8%	1.8%	3.6%
Enabling employees with low basic skills to access training	16.1%	42.9%	19.6%	3.6%	8.9%	8.9%
Enabling employees to participate in certified training activity that they would otherwise not have done	17.9%	58.9%	16.1%	5.4%	0.0%	1.8%
Enhancing future career prospects (including promotion potential) for employed trainees	21.8%	63.6%	12.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%
Assisting jobseekers and improving employability and job prospects for unemployed trainees	37.5%	46.4%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%
Providing tailored training that would not be available elsewhere	50.0%	37.5%	10.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%
Contributing to the enhancement of Member Companies' competitiveness and performance	30.4%	66.1%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%
Enabling training to be company driven rather than provider driven	46.4%	48.2%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%
Overcoming barriers to training/making training more accessible	33.9%	50.0%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Managers Survey						

7.4.4 Views on Balance Between Employed and Jobseeker Trainees

An important aspect of the evaluation which became apparent to Indecon through our consultation was the balance of employed and jobseeker trainees within the networks. We surveyed network managers for their views on this aspect and found that nearly three quarters of managers felt that their network was achieving a successful balance between training those who are employed and those who are unemployed.

Table 7.8: Network Managers - Views on Balance between Training Employed and Unemployed People		
Do you think your network is able to achieve a successful balance between training those who are employed and those who are unemployed?	Number of Responses	% of Total
Yes	41	73.2%
No	15	26.8%
Total	56	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Managers Survey		

We asked those managers that said 'no' to the above question whether they felt that their network should expand the range of course offerings for unemployed trainees or expand the range of course offerings for employed trainees. We found that nine out of the 12 respondent managers felt that their network should expand the range of course offerings for unemployed trainees (75%) while another three managers or 25% felt their network should expand the range of course offerings for employed trainees. Ultimately what we see here is a view that where networks think there is a balance issue, it related to not enough provision for jobseeker trainees. However, those indicating unsuccessful balance are in the minority.

Table 7.9: Network Managers - Views on Range of Courses from Employed and Unemployed People		
If you answered 'No' to the previous question, do you think your network should do any of the following?	Number of Responses	% of Total
Expand the range of course offerings for unemployed trainees	9	75.0%
Expand the range of course offerings for employed trainees	3	25.0%
Total	12	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Managers Survey		

In our survey of network managers, we facilitated an open comment in relation to the achievements of their network, the challenges or constraints faced in operating their network, including in assisting unemployed/jobseekers, and on the network model or Skillnets more generally. A number of comments raised issues of concern in terms of the balance between employed trainees and jobseekers. One of the responses indicated that:

“The over emphasis by Skillnets on the unemployed in recent years is a problem. In its need to encourage networks to do some work with the unemployed, Skillnets no longer talk to networks about the core business of the initiative - i.e. up-skilling employees and increasing competitiveness.”(Network Manager)

7.4.5 Overall Effectiveness of the Skillnets Model

In relation to the overall effectiveness of the network model, we find that managers generally agree that it is effective as is consistent with the analysis above and as is indicated in the table below:

Table 7.10: Network Managers - Views on Skillnets Effectiveness		
Overall, how effective do you consider the current Skillnets network model to be? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'Not at all effective' and 5 is 'Very effective'.	Number of Responses	% of Total
1	1	1.8%
2	3	5.5%
3	13	23.6%
4	24	43.6%
5	14	25.5%
Total	55	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Managers Survey		

7.5 Views of Network Promoters

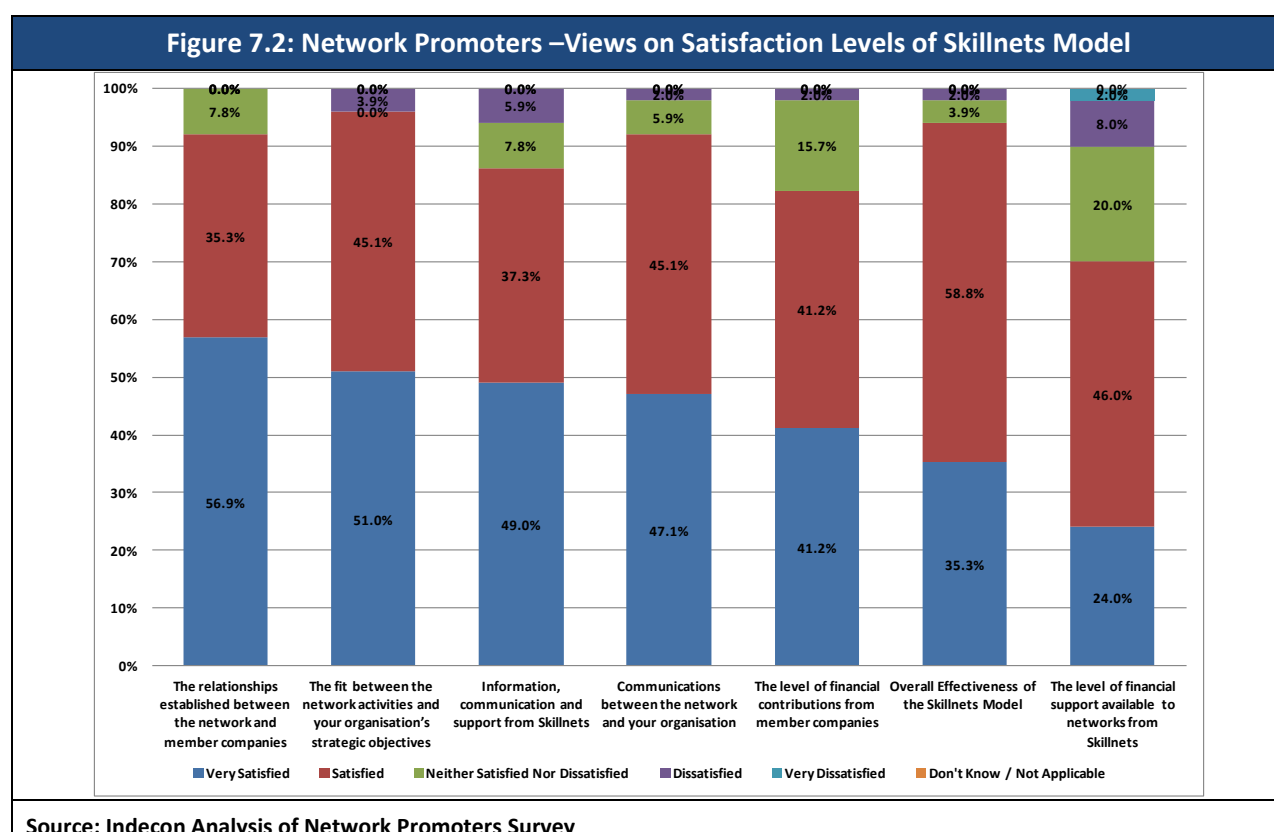
Below we incorporate the views of network promoters on a range of issues related to network structure, network performance and overall network effectiveness. We do this in order to assess whether the network model is functioning appropriately. We begin by analysing the views related to promoter satisfaction.

7.5.1 Satisfaction Levels of Network Promoters

Satisfaction levels related to various aspects of Skillnets network model are reported as being very high by network promoters. The categories that promoters report to be most satisfied with include:

- The relationships established between the network and Member Companies (56.9% Very Satisfied and 35.3% Satisfied);
- The fit between the network activities and your organisation's strategic objectives (51% Very Satisfied and 45.1% Satisfied); and
- Information, communication and support from Skillnets (49% Very Satisfied and 37.3% Satisfied).

The only area where there is a level of dissatisfaction relates to the level of financial support available to networks from Skillnets where 8% of promoters are dissatisfied with this. However, this is not an unexpected finding.



7.5.2 Views on Aims, Objectives and Relationship with Network

Promoters continue to express positive opinions in terms of their relationship with their network. Indecon find that 54.9% of promoters think this relationship is Excellent, with no significant room for improvement. A further 43.1% see the relationship as Good, but still see areas for improvement.

Table 7.11: Network Promoters - Views on Relationship with Network		
How would you describe the relationship between your organisation and your network during 2012?	Number of Responses	% of Total
Excellent, with no significant room for improvement	28	54.9%
Good, but still some areas we could improve	22	43.1%
Ok	1	2.0%
Poor, was hoping for a better working relationship	0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%
Total	51	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Promoters Survey		

Nearly 100% of all promoters either Strongly Agree or Agree that the aims and objectives of their network and the TNP are clear and well defined.

Table 7.12: Network Promoters - Views on Clarity of Aims and Objectives					
To what extent do you agree that the aims and objectives of (a) your Network and (b) the Training Networks Programme are clear and well defined?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Your Network (a)	60.4%	39.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
The Training Networks Programme (b)	46.0%	50.0%	2.0%	0.0%	2.0%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Promoters Survey					

In terms of network engagement, again nearly 100% of promoters Agree that their network successfully engages with and represents their target employers' sector/sub-sector, geographic coverage and thematic area.

Table 7.13: Network Promoters - Views on Network Engagement

To what extent would you agree that the network successfully engages with and represents your target employers (with regard to sector, thematic or geographic coverage)?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
By Sector/Sub-sector	62.7%	35.3%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%
By Geographic coverage	41.2%	54.9%	3.9%	0.0%	0.0%
By Thematic Area	44.0%	54.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Promoters Survey					

7.5.3 Views on Network Expectations

When we asked promoters about the extent to which their network met their expectations, we found a very high percentage of promoters who said that it Fully Met, Mostly Met or Partially Met their expectations.

The highest levels were found in factors such as:

- ☐ Enabling training to be company driven rather than provider driven;
- ☐ Overall Level of Activity undertaken by the network; and
- ☐ Providing tailored training that would not be available elsewhere.

These aspects are broadly similar to what we found in relation to network managers' views on perceived challenges/constraints in that these aspects were neither significant nor insignificant challenges/constraints.

Table 7.14: Network Promoters - Views on Expectations of Network

Please indicate the extent to which the network has met your expectations during 2012.	Fully Met	Mostly Met	Partially Met	Not Met at All	Don't Know
Overall Level of Activity undertaken by the network	60.0%	32.0%	8.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Meeting employers' workforce development needs	51.0%	43.1%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Enabling companies to engage in planned training activity for the first time	52.0%	38.0%	8.0%	0.0%	2.0%
Enabling employees with low basic skills to access training	40.0%	36.0%	12.0%	2.0%	10.0%
Enabling employees to participate in certified training activity that they would otherwise not have done	50.0%	42.0%	6.0%	2.0%	0.0%
Improving future career prospects for employed trainees (e.g. promotional possibilities)	44.0%	42.0%	10.0%	0.0%	4.0%
Assisting jobseekers and improving employability and job prospects for unemployed trainees	40.0%	40.0%	18.0%	2.0%	0.0%
Providing tailored training that wouldn't be available elsewhere	58.0%	42.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Contributing to the enhancement of Member Companies' competitiveness and performance	40.0%	56.0%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Enabling training to be company driven rather than provider driven	60.0%	38.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Overcoming barriers to training/making training more accessible	56.0%	38.0%	6.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Promoters Survey					

7.5.4 Views on Network Effectiveness and Future Performance

In terms of overall effectiveness, promoters, in line with their other responses, feel that the network governance structure is effective. Over 93% of respondents report this as Excellent or Good.

Table 7.15: Network Promoters - Views on the Effectiveness of Network Governance

How would you describe the overall effectiveness of the network's governance structure?	Number of Responses	%
Excellent, with no significant room for improvement	17	33.3%
Good, but still some areas we could improve	31	60.8%
Ok	2	3.9%
Poor, was hoping for better involvement and/or direction	1	2.0%
Other	0	0.0%
Total	51	100%

Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Promoters Survey

The majority Strongly Agree that their network and the TNP in general will continue effectively into the future.

Table 7.16: Network Promoters - Views on Continuation into the Future

Please indicate below whether you agree or disagree that there is a sufficiently strong reason for (a) your Network and (b) the Training Networks Programme to continue in the future?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Your Network (a)	93.8%	4.2%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%
The Training Networks Programme (b)	93.9%	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%

Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Promoters Survey

Finally, we sought promoters' views on how the macroeconomic climate is impacting on Skillnets operation and whether certain aspects should be changed in light of this. We found that 72.5% of promoters think the target groups for the TNP should not be changed. We also found that nearly half of promoters (47.1%) believe that the way networks are funded should be changed. A further 66.7% think that the way the network model operates should not be changed.

Table 7.17: Network Promoters - Views on Macroeconomic Climate

Do you think given the current economic, labour market and government budgetary climate that any of the following should be changed?	Yes	No	Total
The target groups for the Skillnets Training Networks Programme	14	37	51
How the network model operates	17	34	51
How the networks are funded	24	27	51
<i>The target groups for the Skillnets Training Networks Programme</i>	<i>27.5%</i>	<i>72.5%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>How the network model operates</i>	<i>33.3%</i>	<i>66.7%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>How the networks are funded</i>	<i>47.1%</i>	<i>52.9%</i>	<i>100%</i>

Source: Indecon Analysis of Network Promoters Survey

8 Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

This section integrates the detailed analysis and assessment conducted in the preceding sections to deliver our overall conclusions on the evaluation of the TNP and Finuas programmes during 2012.

8.1 Summary of Conclusions

Funding and expenditures

Skillnets supported a total of 56 operational networks – 53 within the TNP and three under the Finuas programme – during 2012. These networks were broadly spread at regional and thematic levels, supporting activities across a diverse geographic and sectoral basis.

In terms of expenditures, overall, Skillnets remained within its budget. Across the main TNP, Finuas and constituent JSSP, FSNP and NCPD programmes, network expenditure totalled €22.8 million during 2012 across 56 networks. The majority of network expenditure arises within the 53 networks in the TNP Main Programme (€17.3 million or 75.8%) while the three Finuas networks account for €1.7 million or 7.3% of total spend (see below). Skillnets assists unemployed jobseekers via its main programmes (TNP and Finuas) and through the JSSP. A total of €3.4 million of expenditure took place through the JSSP during 2012, with 82% of this funded by the State.

The enterprise-led approach to Skillnets facilitated an increase in network funding, as matching funding increased by 1.7% from 2011 to 2012. This increased funding leverage had the overall effect of increasing total network funding by just less than 1% in 2012.

Table 8.1: Financial Overview - Expenditure by Source and Programme in 2012

Programme	No of Networks	Actual Expenditure	Grant Funding	Matched By Companies	% Matched
TNP	53	€17,295,009	€8,242,102	€9,052,907	52%
FINUAS	3	€1,656,270	€807,412	€848,858	51%
JSSP	43	€3,392,877	€2,789,432	€603,455	18%
NCPD	18	€266,535	€193,704	€72,831	27%
FSNP	4	€207,730	€158,716	€49,014	24%
Total	56	€22,818,421	€12,191,366	€10,627,055	47%

Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database

Notes: The JSSP programme operates within the same networks as the TNP and Finuas programmes thus the number of networks as outlined in the table do not sum.

Achievement of high-level targets

In terms of achievement of overall targets set by the Department of Education and Skills, across all the networks in operation the Department set an overall target of 40,000 trainees to be assisted by Skillnets programmes during 2012, comprising 32,000 employed trainees and 8,000 unemployed trainees. Overall the figures indicate that Skillnets achieved or exceeded its activity goals during 2012, accommodating a total of 43,974 trainees, which was 10% ahead of the Department's high-level target, while networks provided a total of 233,068 training days, which was 16.5% above the target set. Networks also assisted a total of 7,012 unemployed jobseekers. The target for jobseeker training days was surpassed by 12.4% (see table below).

Table 8.2: Programme Overview – Number of Trainees and Training Days – All Programmes

Trainee	Department of Education and Skills Targets - 2012	Skillnets End of Year Total - 2012	End of Year Total as % of Target
Employed Trainees	32,000	36,962	116%
Unemployed Trainees	8,000	7,012	88%
Total Trainees	40,000	43,974	110%
Employed Trainees – Training Days	152,500	179,687	117.8%
Unemployed Trainees – Training Days	47,500	53,381	112.4%
Total Training Days	200,000	233,068	116.5%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database			

Training Networks Programme (TNP)

At the programme-specific level, the aims of the TNP are centred on four themes. These relate to training that influences the transferability of skills, fosters company diversification or transferability with a sector or to another sector, facilitates increased performance and growth in priority sector and enhances the general competency skills of lifelong learners. Indecon's assessment of the TNP indicates that overall during 2012 the programme had a successful year, achieving its objectives and also improving on a number of aspects relative to 2011. We highlight below a number of salient findings from our assessment of the TNP:

- ❑ TNP networks spent a total of €17.3 million during 2012, while average expenditure per network has increased from €249,793 in 2011 to €326,321 in 2012. In relation to training activity levels, the TNP substantially exceeded its target for the number of trainees, assisting a total of 35,829 trainees (19% above target), while it also surpassed by 3% the target set for the number of training days delivered across the networks.
- ❑ The scale of TNP networks increased during 2012 to 196 companies per network, compared to 150 companies per network during 2011. This is a positive development in terms of expanding the reach and coverage of networks while also enabling networks to benefit from economies of scale in their operations.

- ❑ Another important feature in relation to Member Companies is that networks under the TNP work primarily with SMEs (employing up to 250 persons), which represented 94% of Member Companies during 2012, while 58% of companies employed fewer than 10 persons.
- ❑ The 2011 evaluation of the TNP indicated that there was a need for networks to spend more time and resources on non-training activities. It appears that TNP networks have responded in this area, with an increase in the number of networking events evident, from 92 in 2011 to 232 during 2012.
- ❑ TNP training caters to individuals across the education spectrum, and not only to graduates. Our research among trainees found that 44.3% of employed trainees were previously educated to below primary degree level, while 55% were graduates. This is positive in terms of up-skilling in general and reflecting the poor employment prospects of certain categories within the labour force.
- ❑ In relation to the current status of trainees, it is notable that despite the present very challenging labour market and high level of unemployment across the Irish economy, over 95% of individuals who undertook employee training under the TNP during 2012 are currently in employment (either with the same or different employer, or self-employed).
- ❑ In terms of the impact of training on skills, our research found that the main impact of TNP training for employed trainees was in relation to acquiring sector- or job-specific skills, with 74.2% of trainees indicating a large or some improvement in this area. This was followed by technical and practical skills, where 71.5% of trainees attributed a large or some improvement as a result of their participation in training under TNP. Other areas where a majority of trainees cited positive impacts in terms of skills include problem-solving skills, leadership skills, verbal communication and other management and administrative skills. Trainees in general also expressed high levels of satisfaction with the quality of training received.
- ❑ A number of benefits of training received under TNP have been highlighted by trainees, with 87% indicating that training would assist them in their jobs while 75.2% state that their training under TNP has fully or partially contributed to learning in new areas.
- ❑ As part of our research, Indecon also sought the views of network members companies regarding the overall effectiveness of TNP networks. On a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being very effective, we found that 75.2% of companies indicated their opinion that their network was either very effective or effective in meeting their training needs.
- ❑ When asked to assess the extent to which Skillnets has helped in overcome specific barriers, we find that that TNP networks have the most impact in providing training at a satisfactory cost, with over 88% of Member Companies stated that their networks have partially or fully overcome this as a barrier to providing training for their staff. In addition, 86% of companies consider that their networks are fully or partially addressing the barrier of how to access training that is of sufficient quality. Other barriers or issues which a majority of Member Companies believe are being successfully addressed within their networks include finding training at convenient dates/ times, finding training that is relevant to their needs, finding training providers that are based locally, and convincing their organisation to participate in Skillnets training programmes following poor experience of training in the past.

Finuas Networks Programme

The Finuas Networks Programme is dedicated to specialised training within the international financial services sector. The programme was established in 2009 and is currently in its fifth year of operation. Finuas comprises three networks, namely the Law Society Finuas Network, the Summit Finuas Network, and the Aviation Finance Finuas Network. Finuas' objectives during 2012 were focussed on developing skills for existing and potential staff, increasing the supply and mix of training, provisions for industry-specific courses, provisions for high level education, the promotion of a responsive training system, the promotion of best international practice in training, and the support of jobseekers in updating their skills and increasing their chances of employment.

- ❑ The Finuas networks continued to provide for the training needs of their clients while remaining under budget in terms of expenditures in 2012. Overall expenditure across the three networks totalled €1.7 million, which represented a small decline of 2.76% on the previous year, while being 2% below budget for 2012.
- ❑ In relation to activity levels, Finuas networks provided training to 1,133 individual trainees during 2012, which was slightly (4%) below target. However, Finuas exceeded the overall target for the number of training days by 20%, providing a total of 12,567 training days in 2012. In addition to delivering a total of 166 training courses during 2012, Finuas networks also held 12 networking events to assist in promoting and developing networks.
- ❑ Finuas networks have continued to expand their membership, with the number of active Member Companies increasing by almost 10% to 259 in 2012 from 236 in 2011. 89% of these companies are SMEs, while 48% are small businesses employing fewer than 10 persons.
- ❑ We found that compared to the TNP, Finuas employed training has a comparatively greater focus on graduates, with 80.7% of those responding to Indecon's survey being educated to primary degree level and higher. This, however, reflects the more specialised focus of Finuas in areas such as legal services, international finance and aviation finance.
- ❑ The majority (over 81%) of programmes provided under Finuas are based on existing off-the-shelf courses. However, 2012 saw a noticeable increase in new course innovation, with 16.3% of participants attending new courses developed by Finuas networks, versus 8.8% in 2011.
- ❑ Indecon's research among Finuas trainees who undertook training as employed trainees during 2012 indicates that despite the challenging labour market environment, 98% of individuals are currently employed, with 96% employed in the same organisation in which they undertook their Finuas training.
- ❑ In terms of the skills impacts of Finuas employed training, 79.6% of trainees responding to Indecon's survey indicated that their training led to a large or some improvement in providing sector- and job-specific skills, while 69.6% saw improved skills in relation to technical and practical skills, and 52.9% stated that Finuas training improved their problem-solving skills.
- ❑ Trainees also generally show high levels of satisfaction with their Finuas training, particularly in relation to the quality of tutors/trainers (with 87% of trainees being either very satisfied or satisfied), the work relevance of the training (with 91.7% being very satisfied or satisfied), and the value of skills and qualifications attained for their work

(86.5% very satisfied or satisfied). Overall, 83.3% of trainees indicated that Finuas training met their expectations.

- ❑ Finuas Member Companies indicate very high levels of satisfaction in relation to the cost of training, the relevance of training to meeting business and staff development needs, and the quality of training in terms of the competence of trainers, with over 97% of companies being either very satisfied or satisfied in each case.
- ❑ One area where a noticeably higher proportion of Member Companies (17.5%) indicated 'average' levels of satisfaction was in relation to the level of accreditation provided with training, although 80% of companies were still satisfied overall on this factor. This aspect was also seen in the findings from our research among Finuas employed trainees, where 49.7% of trainees indicated that their Finuas training did not result in any qualification or award. This proportion, which was similar to that found among TNP trainees, reflects the greater focus on in-company training, where certified training is less common. Overall, however, 92.7% of Member Companies responding to Indecon's research stated that Finuas had met their expectations during 2012.

Overall, Finuas has been successful in meeting its objectives and a particular achievement since its establishment in 2009 has been the collaborative development of innovative new training programmes in emerging growth areas. These have included postgraduate diplomas and certificates in International Financial Services Law (with UCD) Sustainable Finance (with DCU) and Islamic Finance (CIMA).

Assisting Jobseekers

Skillnets has been active in providing training for jobseekers since 2010.

In addition to provision of training to up-skill the unemployed via the main TNP and Finuas programmes (on a cost-neutral basis), Skillnets also assists jobseekers through the dedicated Job Seekers Support Programme (JSSP).

Overall, as noted above, the target for jobseeker training days set by the Department of Education and Skills was surpassed by 12.4% during 2012. In addition, within the TNP and Finuas programmes, the following achievements were evident in relation to assisting jobseekers under the main programmes during 2012, indicating that both programmes broadly met or exceeded the internal targets set by Skillnets across the networks:

- 3,898 TNP jobseeker trainees => 95.3% of Skillnets target.
- 12,973 TNP jobseeker training days => 63.8% of Skillnets target.
- 176 Finuas jobseeker trainees => 25.7% above the Skillnets target.
- 713 Finuas jobseeker training days => 32% below Skillnets target.

JSSP was established in 2010 and incorporates training as well as a work placement component. The programme also interacts with other activation measures including JobBridge. The key achievements of the JSSP during 2012 were as follows:

- ❑ 43 networks participated in the programme, with expenditure of €3.4 million, €2.8 million or 82% of which was publicly funded, with the balance contributed by network Member Companies who participate in JSSP conversion programmes.
- ❑ A total of 385 training courses were delivered to 2,938 trainees (11% ahead of Skillnets target) over a total of 39,695 training days.
- ❑ The typical duration of JSSP training is longer than for jobseekers under TNP: 13.5 days versus 3.3 days average.
- ❑ 55.6% of JSSP trainees during 2012 were previously unemployed for one year or more (compared to 43.1% across Live Register).
- ❑ In terms of progression outcomes, 47.3% of trainees indicated that the programme fully or partially helped them to find a job, while 40.8% of trainees are currently in paid employment and 16.1% are pursuing further education or training.

The training plus work placement model within JSSP would appear to provide additional benefits for trainees over and above the core training-based model under the main programmes, while there have been a number of successes in developing and operating JSSP conversion programmes where companies have worked with networks to re-train jobseekers into new fields.

Value for Money of JSSP

An important issue concerns the extent of value for money achieved in the operation of Skillnets training programmes. As part of the evaluation process, Indecon has developed an estimated value-for-money assessment focussing on the JSSP programme, based on a similar methodology to that applied by Indecon in its recent evaluation of the JobBridge National Internship Scheme. The overall value for money from the scheme is estimated by reference to the potential net savings to the Exchequer in the form of reduced social welfare payments through removing individuals from unemployment and the additional tax revenues generated from employment, adjusted to reflect estimated deadweight. These adjusted benefits are then related to the costs of operating the JSSP programme. Our analysis focused on the cohort of scheme participants who undertook training and a work placement under JSSP during 2012.

The results of the value-for-money assessment of the JSSP suggest that even under conservative assumptions for deadweight, based on the progression outcomes examined the programme would achieve a positive net benefit to the Exchequer if participants secure employment and remain off the Live Register for about seven months. The results also suggest that if on average participants stay in employment for more than a year, the net benefits increase significantly. The findings highlight the importance of on-going monitoring of the scheme, however, as if employment outcomes are not monitored after a short period, the impact and value for money achieved by the scheme could be reduced.

Network-level performance

An important issue in the context of assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the networks model applied by Skillnets concerns the performance of individual networks. Expenditure budgets and targets for training activities are set at network level by Skillnets on an annual basis. Based on data provided confidentially to the evaluation team by Skillnets, Indecon has analysed network-level performance in relation to expenditures and training activities relative to budgets and targets set by Skillnets for 2012. The analysis indicates that while Skillnets overall is performing well and achieving its targets, there are variations in activity levels relative to Skillnets own internal targets across networks. Skillnets maintains strong controls on network-level performance and the key issue in this context concerns the need for on-going focus on ensuring that persistent under- or over-performance at network level is examined within the context of annual planning and budgeting.

Programme Deadweight

We also as part of this evaluation assessed the extent of deadweight present in the Training Networks Programme and Finuas programme. Deadweight pertains to the extent to which the outputs or outcomes observed under a programme would have occurred in the absence of the programme. Any such publicly-funded programmes will inevitably have some element of deadweight, but the extent of such deadweight is important.

We assessed the likely extent to deadweight through our research among TNP and Finuas trainees and Member Companies. In the case of the TNP, we found that 30.7% of trainees indicated that they would have undertaken similar training elsewhere with another, non-Skillnets provider. When a similar question was asked of Member Companies, we found that in 20.4% of cases companies stated that they would have arranged alternative training no different to that received through Skillnets. In relation to Finuas, 31.0% of trainees and 15% of Member Companies indicated that they would have undertaken similar training elsewhere with another provider. While these findings are indicative of the presence of deadweight, from previous evaluations conducted by Indecon this level of deadweight is not excessive compared to some programmes.

Overall efficiency and effectiveness

In relation to cost efficiency, overall TNP networks have demonstrated improved efficiencies during 2012, although the extent of such efficiencies varies significantly across individual networks. Overall, management expenditures across the networks were 5% under budget, while measures such as average cost per trainee and average cost per Member Company also showed a decrease during 2012. Within the Finuas programme, networks experienced a reduction of 15% in the average overall cost per training day in 2012 compared to 2011, although the average cost per trainee increased by 10.7%.

8.2 Recommendations

A number of potential enhancements have been identified by Indecon on foot of the detailed analysis and assessment undertaken in this evaluation. The table below sets out our recommendations, which are designed to further enhance the effectiveness and impacts of the programmes.

Table 8.3: Recommendations from Evaluation

No.	Recommendation
1.	Additional mechanisms are required to facilitate optimal collaboration and enhanced knowledge transfer and coordination between network Member Companies in informing annual and on-going Training Needs Analysis.
2.	Further development of tailored, industry-specific and company-driven conversion programmes should be undertaken within the JSSP to maximise benefits for companies and unemployed trainees, particularly in the construction and other sectors experiencing high levels of unemployment.
3.	More proactive focus is required to securing work placements for JSSP participants, while the duration of these placements should be examined to maximise the benefits for trainees. This should include further development of synergies with other activation programmes including JobBridge.
4.	The application of candidate screening/profiling should be expanded to better match jobseeker attributes with training programmes and work placements.
5.	Enhanced options should be considered to maximise the accessibility of training to companies and employed trainees, and to incentivise attendance and completion of training programmes among jobseekers. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Greater use of eLearning/online platforms; (b) Training delivery for employed trainees should ensure that timing and duration of training, and lead-in times to examinations are consistent with trainees' work commitments and optimal learning approaches; (c) Provision of assistance to jobseekers to meet transport and subsistence costs where such costs are a significant barrier to participation; and (d) Expand the provision of short duration training events on a formalised basis to incentivise greater participation among senior management.
6.	Networks to work with Member Companies to develop longer-term integrated training plans to assist trainees to achieve career progression goals, as well as address companies' shorter-term skills requirements.
7.	Expanded performance indicators should be considered, to include measures on trainee progression outcomes.
8.	Further impetus is needed to minimise the complexity of compliance requirements for networks, while continuing to ensure best practice in network governance. This includes overhaul of SAM, in addition to streamlining of procedures for clearance of grant payments, minimising the extent of on-going reporting and ensuring sufficient prior communication to networks of any changes in procedures.
Source: Indecon	

8.3 Overall Conclusion

Overall, this evaluation indicates that Skillnets' TNP and Finuas programmes continue to meet their broad objectives. Skillnets overall exceeded the targets set by the Department of Education and Skills for 2012, supporting a total of nearly 44,000 trainees and providing over 233,000 training days, including over 53,000 training days provided to jobseekers. Indecon's research also shows that Member Companies and trainees continue to indicate high overall levels of satisfaction with the quality and other attributes of training provided, as well as with the management of the networks. There is also continued unanimous support among Member Companies for the networks model.

The Finuas Programme has been successful in meeting its objectives, and a particular achievement since its establishment in 2009 has been the collaborative development of innovative new training programmes in emerging growth areas such as International Financial Services Law, Sustainable Finance, and Islamic Finance.

This evaluation has also highlighted positive progression outcomes for trainees, including high levels of employment retention and evidence of progression to employment among jobseekers trainees. Over 40% of JSSP trainees have found employment since completing their training, while Indecon's assessment indicates that the programme delivers positive value for money to the Exchequer.

Annex 1 Additional Supporting Data

TNP Employed Trainees

TNP Profile of Trainees - Employed Trainees' Sector of Current Employer		
Sector	Number of Responses	% of Total
Agriculture	83	6.0%
Construction	55	4.0%
Manufacturing - Durable Goods	196	14.2%
Manufacturing - Non-Durable Goods	106	7.7%
Technology	240	17.4%
Retail Trade	84	6.1%
Wholesale trade	27	2.0%
Hospitality	69	5.0%
Transportation	33	2.4%
Services	357	25.9%
Mixed	25	1.8%
Sector Not Known/Not Currently Employed	16	1.2%
Other	87	6.3%
Total	1,378	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Employed Trainee Survey		
Notes: The number of responses to this question is greater than the number of respondents as respondents may select more than one option.		

TNP Profile of Member Companies - Number of Active Companies by Selected Main Sector		
Selected Main Sector	Number of Active Companies	% of Total
Agriculture	2,602	25.0%
Business	324	3.1%
Construction	519	5.0%
Education	31	0.3%
Engineering	74	0.7%
Environmental Goods & Services	48	0.5%
Green Technology	18	0.2%
Food & Drink	295	2.8%
Health	335	3.2%
Hospitality	37	0.4%
ICT Manufacturing & Services	39	0.4%
International Financial Services	32	0.3%
Life Sciences	49	0.5%
Manufacturing	385	3.7%
Media/Audiovisual	63	0.6%
Medical Devices	18	0.2%
Mixed	83	0.8%
Pharmaceutical	103	1.0%
Radio	37	0.4%
Retail	510	4.9%
Services	3,354	32.3%
Technology	519	5.0%
Tourism & Travel	157	1.5%
Transportation	79	0.8%
Veterinary	21	0.2%
Wholesale Trade	130	1.3%
Other	538	5.2%
Total	10,400	100%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		

TNP Profile of Member Companies - Overview of Member Company Employment Levels	
Please provide your best estimate of your current number of full-time and part-time employees	Number of Responses
Full-time	92,833
Part-time	5,617
Total	98,450
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Member Companies Survey	

TNP Profile of Member Companies - Member Companies Experiences on Offers of Work Placements and/or Employment				
To your knowledge, has your company/business provided work placements and/or offered paid employment to unemployed jobseekers who received training through the Skillnet?	Yes	No, But Likely in the Next Year	No	Total
Work Placement	70	63	183	316
Paid Employment	51	43	206	300
Work Placement	22.2%	19.9%	57.9%	100%
Paid Employment	17.0%	14.3%	68.7%	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Member Companies Survey				

Further Views on TNP - Member Companies Views on Benefits of Skillnets Training				
To what extent has staff training with your Skillnet helped achieve the following business benefits	Very High Impact	High Impact	Low Impact	No Impact
Training has addressed Skills Gaps within our organisation	21.0%	64.3%	13.1%	1.5%
Training has increased Staff Retention	8.4%	32.8%	31.6%	27.2%
Training has improved Staff Productivity	15.2%	54.5%	23.2%	7.1%
Has enabled employees with low basic skills to access training	15.9%	43.8%	20.6%	19.7%
Training has contributed to our overall Sales performance	12.5%	29.6%	29.3%	28.7%
Training has helped lower our Business Costs	11.8%	35.9%	34.1%	18.3%
Training has improved our business's Resilience to the Economic Downturn	15.0%	34.4%	29.7%	20.9%
Training has assisted our business in expanding within our Existing Markets	13.4%	31.2%	31.2%	24.3%
Training has assisted our business to develop new Domestic Markets	10.3%	21.6%	34.2%	33.9%
Training has assisted our business to develop new Export Markets	4.2%	10.3%	32.8%	52.7%
Training has improved Staff Morale and team spirit	20.5%	50.6%	20.5%	8.4%
Training has enhanced our Product / Service Quality	20.8%	51.6%	20.1%	7.5%
Training has enhanced our Customer / Client Satisfaction	19.3%	44.1%	23.0%	13.7%
Training is likely to enhance the long-term performance of our business	27.4%	57.8%	10.5%	4.3%
Other Business Benefits	19.6%	32.0%	13.4%	35.1%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Member Companies Survey				

Finuas Employed Trainees

Finuas Profile of Trainees - Employed Trainees' Sector of Current Employer		
In which of the following sectors does your current employer mainly operate?	Number of Responses	% of Total
Banking	51	29.7%
Capital Markets	13	7.6%
Investment Management	49	28.5%
Insurance	14	8.1%
Aviation Leasing/Finance	18	10.5%
Professional Services – Legal	2	1.2%
Professional Services – Accountancy/Tax	11	6.4%
Business/IT Consultancy	1	0.6%
Sector Not Known/Not Currently Employed	0	0.0%
Other	13	7.6%
Total	172	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Employed Trainee Survey		
Notes: The number of responses to this question is greater than the number of respondents as respondents may select more than one option.		

Finuas Profile of Member Companies - Number of Active Companies by Sector		
Sector	Number of Active Companies	% of Total
Air Finance	2	0.8%
Aviation	1	0.4%
Aviation Finance	1	0.4%
Aviation Leasing	1	0.4%
Aviation Management	1	0.4%
Banking	15	5.8%
Banking And Tax	1	0.4%
Banking, Funds, Insurance And Reinsurance	1	0.4%
Banks	7	2.7%
Banks And Regulation	1	0.4%
Financial Services	1	0.4%
Funds	11	4.2%
Funds, Banking, Insurance, Reinsurance, Regulation And Investment Management	1	0.4%
Funds, Insurance & Investment Management	1	0.4%
Funds, Insurance, Banks, Investment Management	1	0.4%
Funds, Insurance, Banks, Reinsurance, Regulation & Investment Management	1	0.4%
Funds, Investment Management	1	0.4%
Funds, Regulation, Investment Management	1	0.4%
Green Enterprise	1	0.4%
Insurance	5	1.9%
Insurance, Funds, Investment Management	1	0.4%
Insurance, Reinsurance And Investment Management	1	0.4%
International Financial Services	32	12.3%
Investment Management	3	1.2%
Investment Management	1	0.4%
Manufacturing	1	0.4%
Mixed	1	0.4%
Professional Legal Services	1	0.4%
Re - Insurance	1	0.4%
Regulation	4	1.5%
Regulation - Green	1	0.4%
Reinsurance	2	0.8%
Services	154	59.2%
Transportation	2	0.8%
Total	260	100%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		

Finuas Profile of Member Companies - Overview of Member Company Employment Levels	
Please provide your best estimate of your current number of full-time and part-time employees	Number of Responses
Full-time	7,619
Part-time	240
Total	7,859
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Member Companies Survey	

Finuas Profile of Member Companies - Member Companies Experiences on Offers of Work Placements and/or Employment				
To your knowledge, has your company/business provided work placements and/or offered paid employment to unemployed jobseekers who received training through the Finuas network?	Yes	No, But Likely in the Next Year	No	Total
Work Placement	4	6	28	38
Paid Employment	3	6	28	37
Work Placement	10.5%	15.8%	73.7%	100%
Paid Employment	8.1%	16.2%	75.7%	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Member Companies Survey				

Further Views on Finuas - Member Company Views on Benefits of Skillnets Training				
To what extent has staff training with your Finuas network helped achieve the following business benefits	Very High Impact	High Impact	Low Impact	No Impact
Training has addressed Skills Gaps within our organisation	30.0%	52.5%	17.5%	0.0%
Training has increased Staff Retention	7.5%	35.0%	30.0%	27.5%
Training has improved Staff Productivity	12.8%	43.6%	30.8%	12.8%
Has enabled employees with low basic skills to access training	10.3%	30.8%	25.6%	33.3%
Training has contributed to our overall Sales performance	5.3%	18.4%	34.2%	42.1%
Training has helped lower our Business Costs	10.0%	35.0%	35.0%	20.0%
Training has improved our business's Resilience to the Economic Downturn	7.7%	30.8%	30.8%	30.8%
Training has assisted our business in expanding within our Existing Markets	7.9%	18.4%	31.6%	42.1%
Training has assisted our business to develop new Domestic Markets	5.3%	15.8%	31.6%	47.4%
Training has assisted our business to develop new Export Markets	5.4%	5.4%	35.1%	54.1%
Training has improved Staff Morale and team spirit	17.5%	52.5%	22.5%	7.5%
Training has enhanced our Product / Service Quality	12.5%	42.5%	22.5%	22.5%
Training has enhanced our Customer / Client Satisfaction	10.5%	28.9%	23.7%	36.8%
Training is likely to enhance the long-term performance of our business	27.5%	45.0%	17.5%	10.0%
Other Business Benefits	14.3%	7.1%	14.3%	64.3%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Member Companies Survey				

TNP Jobseeker Trainees

TNP Training Outputs - Sector of Skillnets Jobseeker Training		
In which of the following sectors did you undertake your Skillnets jobseeker training?	Number of Responses	% of Total
Mixed/Cross-Sectoral Training	90	31.6%
Technology	70	24.6%
Services	49	17.2%
Other	32	11.2%
Construction	22	7.7%
Manufacturing - Durable Goods	6	2.1%
Retail Trade	5	1.8%
Hospitality	4	1.4%
Agriculture	3	1.1%
Manufacturing - Non-Durable Goods	3	1.1%
Wholesale trade	1	0.4%
Transportation	0	0.0%
Total	285	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of TNP Unemployed Trainee Survey		
Notes: The number of responses to this question is greater than the number of respondents as respondents may select more than one option		

Finuas Jobseeker Trainees

Finuas Training Outcomes–Post Training Qualification Levels of Jobseeker Participants		
Level of Award on NFQ	Number of Jobseeker Participants	% of Total
Level 6	0	0%
Level 7	13	7%
Level 8	10	5%
Level 9	5	3%
N/A	168	86%
Total	196	100%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		
Notes: Data relates to individual unemployed participants. As some participants undertake multiple training courses, there may be some double counting of participants in the above data. Furthermore, this data relates only to formal events.		

Finuas Training Outputs - Sector of Skillnets Jobseeker Training		
In which of the following sectors did you undertake your Finuas jobseeker training?	Number of Responses	% of Total
Banking	13	26.5%
Capital Markets	3	6.1%
Investment Management	3	6.1%
Insurance	1	2.0%
Aviation Leasing/Finance	4	8.2%
Professional Services – Legal	5	10.2%
Professional Services – Accountancy/Tax	2	4.1%
Business/IT Consultancy	1	2.0%
Mixed/Cross-Sectoral Training	10	20.4%
Other	7	14.3%
Total	49	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of Finuas Unemployed Trainee Survey		
Notes: The number of responses to this question is greater than the number of respondents as respondents may select more than one option		

JSSP Trainees

JSSP Profile of Trainees - Overview of Prior Unemployment of JSSP Trainees		
How long had you been unemployed before you commenced your Skillnets Jobseeker training?	Number of Responses	% of Total
Less than 3 months	31	13.4%
3 to 6 months	31	13.4%
More than 6 months and up to 12 months	41	17.7%
More than 12 months and up to 2 years	56	24.1%
More than 2 years and up to 3 years	32	13.8%
More than 3 years	41	17.7%
Total	232	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of JSSP Trainee Survey		

JSSP Training Outcomes– Progression to Employment of Trainees		
If you have completed/finished your Skillnets training, have you been in paid employment at any stage since you completed/finished the training?	Number of Responses	% of Total
Yes	64	34.4%
No	122	65.6%
Total	186	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of JSSP Trainee Survey		

JSSP Profile of Trainees - Sector of Skillnets Jobseeker Training		
In which of the following sectors did/does the company/business in which you undertook your JSSP work placement mainly operate?	Number of Responses	% of Total
Agriculture	5	2.1%
Construction	13	5.5%
Manufacturing - Durable Goods	11	4.6%
Manufacturing - Non-Durable Goods	6	2.5%
Technology	41	17.3%
Retail Trade	13	5.5%
Wholesale trade	4	1.7%
Hospitality	15	6.3%
Transportation	6	2.5%
Banking	5	2.1%
Capital Markets	1	0.4%
Investment Management	1	0.4%
Insurance	2	0.8%
Aviation Leasing/Finance	2	0.8%
Professional Services – Legal	9	3.8%
Professional Services – Accountancy/Tax	1	0.4%
Business/IT Consultancy	22	9.3%
Other Services	38	16.0%
Mixed	9	3.8%
Other	33	13.9%
Total	237	100%
Source: Indecon Analysis of JSSP Trainee Survey		
Notes: The number of responses to this question is greater than the number of respondents as respondents may select more than one option		

JSSP Profile of Member Companies - Number of Active Companies by Sector		
Sector	Number of Active Companies	% of Total
Agriculture	3	3%
Business	19	18%
Car Rental	1	1%
Computer Software	1	1%
Construction	2	2%
Employers Confederation	1	1%
Financial	1	1%
Food & Drink	12	12%
Green Technology	1	1%
Health	3	3%
ICT Manufacturing & Services	1	1%
Insurance	1	1%
International Financial Services	1	1%
Manufacturing	4	4%
Media/Audiovisual	1	1%
Pharmaceutical	2	2%
Retail	4	4%
Sector Unknown	3	3%
Services	17	16%
Skillnets Limited	1	1%
Technology	20	19%
Telecommunications	1	1%
Tourism & Travel	1	1%
Transportation	1	1%
University	1	1%
Web/Graphic Designer	1	1%
Total	104	100%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		

JSSP Profile of Member Companies - Number of Companies by Employment Category in 2012		
Average Number of Employees	Number of Companies	% of Total
0 - 9	42	40%
10 - 49	16	15%
250 +	19	18%
50 - 250	27	26%
Total	104	100%
Source: Indecon analysis of Skillnets Activity Management database		