

Open Call for Funding New Networks

Learning Needs
Analysis Guide

Skillnet Ireland Open Call for funding New Networks Learning Needs Analysis Guide

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1. Learning Needs Analysis

The Learning Needs Analysis (LNA) provides information on the skills development requirements of all members of your network. A comprehensive LNA is required in order to make informed decisions about the direction of the Network, based on concrete data and information. It is also a requirement for the Skillnet Ireland Application. If you are using a Consultant ensure they are experienced at conducting LNAs, are well briefed on the Skillnet Ireland Training Networks Model, and have clear objectives and timeframes agreed at the outset.

2. Why do a Learning Needs Analysis (LNA)?

An LNA is one of the key steps in preparing a training plan and will provide you with information on which to base your Network's training plan. It enables you to;

- identify gaps between current and required levels of knowledge, skills and abilities
- identify what the general content of training should be
- form the foundation of a training plan
- provide a baseline for the evaluation of a training plan
- ensure that appropriate and relevant training is delivered
- determine the most effective learning methodologies
- maximise use of scarce resources
- ensure the continuing motivation, interest and satisfaction levels of network members

3. What is a Learning Needs Analysis (LNA)?

An LNA is the analysis of gaps in knowledge/skills/abilities and identifies what member company employees will need to learn in order to be fully competent in the jobs they are doing now and will be doing in the future.

An LNA is the systematic investigation of learning needs within an organisation or group of organisations. It is part of a process which integrates training with the business plans of such organisations. There is no point in training for training's sake. It must be relevant to Network Members and meet their needs and build on their existing skills levels. It is a tool utilized to identify what training courses or activities should be undertaken to enhance management and staff capacity. The focus should be placed on the common needs identified by member companies that add value and impact on their competitiveness.

The LNA will demonstrate the learning needs of your member companies, gaps in provision in the Sector/Region and areas in which to develop new training. A good LNA will address the following questions:

- What are the key business needs in this sector/region?
- What are the competitive issues facing the companies?
- What impact will training have on the productivity and competitiveness of member companies?
- What level and type of training are member companies currently delivering?
- What are the specific training needs in each company?
- What are member companies training budgets?
- Does the company have a dedicated training manager/function?
- Who are our target participant group/s?
- Which training programmes should be given priority?
- What is our member's level of demand for certified training?
- What length of courses should we offer – how much time will staff be released for?
- What method/s of delivery shall we use?
- What new courses will the Network develop?

The LNA would provide answers to the following for each company

- What are the key roles/areas in the Company?
- What are the key skills linked with each of these roles/areas?
- What are key skills gaps?
- How many people need to be trained?
- What is the time frame/critical milestone dates?
- Has the company the financial capacity and willingness to invest in training?

4. What are the key steps in conducting an effective LNA for learning Network?

Planning is integral to a successful LNA. Before you start:

- Prepare thoroughly
- Follow a structured methodology
- Link enterprise learning and development needs with the objectives of the network
- Gain commitment from members to participate in the LNA
- Communicate with all those involved

5. Collecting information for a Learning Needs Analysis

There are various ways to collect information which can be utilized individually or in combination with each other. It is advisable to use more than one tool in order to enhance the validity of the results. Typical methods include:

- Surveys
- Focus group meetings
- Individual interviews
- Reviewing existing publications
- Meetings with Steering Group
- Discussions with relevant bodies

5.1 Surveys

Surveys are beneficial because many people can be polled in a short period of time. Electronic surveys are cost effective and can be easily analysed. However, response rates may be low, as it can be difficult to strike the balance between gleaning sufficient information without making the length of the survey a deterrent.

Things to consider:

- Keep surveys brief. More member companies will be willing to complete them and tallying the results will be more manageable.
- Inform members about when they will receive the survey, so that they do not dismiss the survey communication as spam.
- Surveys can provide first level data which can then be explored in-depth with focus groups.
- Ensure respondents are assured of confidentiality
- Include a realistic deadline for completion, in order to encourage members to respond promptly to the survey.
- Request that the person completing the survey on behalf of a company consults others within their organization to ensure that all learning and development needs are identified.

See Appendix One for Tips on Developing an Effective Survey See Appendix Two for a Sample template of a Survey

5.2 Focus Group Meetings

Focus groups allow for small group interaction, allowing the Network to uncover details about their target audience and their requirements. Brainstorming is encouraged as it allows for an exchange of new ideas. Focus Groups need to be carefully planned, facilitated discussions that obtain views from participants on areas such as:

Focus Groups to identify needs:

- Business challenges faced by members and the sector/region
- Company learning and development needs and skills deficiencies
- Common training & development needs
- Current training approaches and providers
- Review of what types of training work best for this target group/sector
- Gaps in current training provision
- Identify new training the network could develop
- Members view of certified training and willingness to participate

Focus Groups to develop training plan:

- Review what learning and development needs identified are to be prioritized
- Identify the most suitable methods of delivery
- Assess what resources are available within the Network e.g. training materials, training facilities, trainers, etc.

5.3 Individual Interviews

These can be an efficient, flexible and rewarding way of gathering information on each member company. The most valuable interviews are those held with senior decision-makers who understand key business requirements and challenges faced. A brief review of the company's past performance and future plans may reveal valuable information for training. A comparison should be made of what employees are currently doing and what will be expected of them in future. Follow an agreed interview format with each company to ensure a common approach and for ease of collation and subsequent analysis.

5.4 Reviewing existing publications

By researching the needs of the sector/region, Networks can gain an insight into emerging trends and policies which will have an impact on member companies in future. This research may include reviews of sector -specific reports, national skills and employment plans, and Government policies relevant to the sector or region.

5.5 Meetings with Steering Group

These meetings shall be vital in determining the strategy employed in conducting your LNA, in determining the core objectives of the Network and ensuring that the LNA captures as much information as possible. Steering Group meetings also play a key role in reviewing the results of the LNA and determining what learning and development needs will be prioritised and presented in the Training Plan.

5.6 Discussions with relevant bodies

It is often beneficial to consult with industry bodies which have a high-level view of the industry and future skills needs.

6. Setting Training Objectives & Goals

Upon analysis and review of the comprehensive LNA findings the Network can then develop the training plan.

Assess the needs of the member companies and see what training can be achieved and fits within the overall vision of the Network. Ensure that the training proposed in the Training Plan can be delivered and will attract match funding as the training proposed in the Skillnet Ireland Application Form informs the targets set for the Programme.

Set SMART targets – ensure they are stretching yet realistic:

- | | | |
|----------|---|--------------------------|
| S | - | specific |
| M | - | measurable |
| A | - | achievable |
| R | - | realistic |
| T | - | timed (defined deadline) |

When developing the training budget, conduct research in the training market to ensure that your budget is also realistic and achievable e.g.

- How much does training delivery cost?
- What courses are out there already?
- What are consultants charging?
- Are there costs associated with certification?

7. Preparing a Summary Report of the LNA

When preparing a Network Training Plan, added care and time must be taken to collate the member company results and present in an overall summary format as part of the Application Form.

APPENDIX 1

How do you create a good survey to generate the results you are looking for?

1. Be concise.

Keep it brief. Brainstorm and write and down all the questions you might want to ask, then review the list and go with only the most important.

2. Avoid two-part questions.

When creating a question, include only one topic at a time and split the question into two separate questions if necessary.

3. Keep each question as brief as possible.

Long sentences run the risk of losing your respondent's attention and potentially cause confusion.

4. Avoid leading questions.

Construct the question in such a way that the member company will be free to answer honestly.

5. Provide clear, to the point, instructions at the top of the survey.

Don't assume that the people filling out the survey know exactly what you are looking for. Make it clear from the beginning otherwise your results may not be accurate.

6. Do not limit yourself to one type of question throughout the entire survey.

Utilise varying formats to extract the appropriate information. Types of popular survey questions include:

- a) Rate the topic on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the least likely and 5 being the most likely.
- b) Tick all that apply
- c) Choose one of the following
- d) Open-ended questions

7. Provide the survey in a way that is most convenient to your members.

There are several ways to have a survey completed. You can mail members hard copies or attach them in an email for them to download and print out at their convenience.

You should consider building an on-line survey. There are many survey sites on the web that help you to create surveys easily. For a small fee, you can set up an account, create the survey and send a link to your clients inviting them to fill out the survey online from whatever location they choose. One of the primary benefits of using Survey Monkey, for example, is that the software automatically tallies results, making data analysis a much more straight-forward exercise.



APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE: Company Learning Needs Analysis Template

Company Name:

No. of Employees:

Rank the Skills Required as follows: 1 = Essential, 2 = Required, 3 = Nice to Have

Area / Department / Job Role	Employee Type	Key Skills Gaps Required	Priority Ranking	Number of staff	Number to be trained in 2020	Proposed Dates