

# COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

## Skillnet Ireland Response Plan for Enterprise Partners

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# Foreword

We are currently experiencing a global pandemic outbreak with the spread of the Coronavirus, COVID-19. Ireland's *National Action Plan on COVID-19* focuses on minimising risk of illness for all, minimising risk of exposure of vulnerable groups and minimising social and economic disruption.

Skillnet Ireland has developed a range of measures for our Ireland enterprise partners, and for their member businesses, to assist in responding to COVID-19

Our shared message to the business community at this time is clear:

**We are here to help. We will assist you through this crisis and we will help prepare you for the recovery.**

We urge businesses to reach out to their trade associations, industry representative bodies, local Chambers or rural enterprise groups. Many of these organisations can help businesses access Skillnet Ireland supports directly or refer businesses to a Skillnet Network that can assist.

For those businesses that do not participate in Skillnet Networks, there has never been a better time to get involved. You can benefit from industry-led and Government subsidised programmes that speak directly to the needs of your business and your team.

There is also an ever expanding range of leading-edge eLearning and distance learning services that can be readily accessed through Skillnet Networks.

Skillnet Ireland are also facilitating opportunities for our enterprise partners to engage with one another to explore collaborative and cross sectoral approaches to address the challenges presented by COVID-19.

The full list of Skillnet Ireland Networks can be viewed [here](#).

# Our Focus

1

Assisting businesses through the COVID-19 crisis and preparing business owners, managers and teams for the recovery.

2

Providing our enterprise partners with additional funding, together with a range of targeted support measures, so they can assist their member businesses through the crisis and beyond.

3

Supporting the Government response to the COVID-19 outbreak.



# Importance of Workforce Development and Upskilling



The impact of COVID-19 on businesses has been swift and severe. By now most businesses have instigated **Business Continuity Plans** and are scenario planning for the evolving situation. However, in many ways these are the 'level 1' crisis responses. COVID-19 will change the way we do business and will significantly alter the operating models of many organisations.

It is also likely that consumer habits will evolve in new ways over the months to come. Products and services, and the ways in which they are delivered to customers, will need to adjust to these new trends.

Businesses will need to ensure their workforce is skilled in the best practices of the digital age. To stay competitive, it is important that businesses further adopt the benefits available from digitalisation and eCommerce.

All of this has implications for management development, for talent management and for employee upskilling.

## eLearning and Distance Learning

Remote working is likely to be with us for some time to come. Employers and workers must adapt to this new reality by embracing the many benefits and opportunities that learning technologies present.

Skillnet Networks offer a range of leading-edge, digital learning solutions for businesses that are heavily subsidised. We have also introduced new measures to develop agile and cost-effective remote learning solutions to support businesses in the immediate phase of this crisis.

## Management Development

In the immediate term, Skillnet Ireland is rolling out plans to boost management capacity in areas such as business continuity, cashflow management, financial planning, eCommerce, supply chain management, employee relations, and in the longer term, in business remodelling, product/service innovation and preparing for the recovery. Over the coming weeks, Skillnet Ireland will also introduce a Virtual SME Mentoring Scheme for business owners and leaders.

## Specialist Learning and Development

Skillnet Ireland delivers a wide range of specialist programmes using eLearning and other virtual methods across many sectors with new programmes available in retail, ICT, green technology, agriculture, food and beverage, the plastics sector, animation and many more. Over the coming weeks Skillnet Networks will broaden its offering of enterprise-driven specialist eLearning programmes. Over the medium term, we will also develop and promote the uptake of advanced learning technologies including AR/VR immersive learning technologies, AI based learning and virtual/robotic learning solutions.

## Supporting Workers


Already many thousands of workers have been laid off as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 crisis. Over the coming weeks Skillnet Ireland will increase its number of conversion and upskilling programmes for affected workers to assist with redeployment to sectors of higher employment potential (i.e. to other industry sectors that require resources and talent at this time).

Together with our industry partners, we are analysing what post COVID-19 jobs will look like and how we can assist workers in preparing for them.

## A Time for Creativity and Innovation

Innovation provides the foundation for new businesses, new jobs and productivity, and is a key driver of economic development. Innovative businesses are more productive, more resilient and more adaptable to crises such as COVID-19. Innovation is the key to how businesses will adapt to the challenges presented by COVID-19, but also how they will thrive and prosper in its aftermath.

There are a variety of innovation themed learning and development solutions available from Skillnet Networks to businesses. Collaboration and shared learning is at the core of the Skillnet Ireland model and now is a great time for businesses to tap into this resource by reaching out to a Skillnet Network.



Skillnet Ireland enables businesses to prepare for the short and long-term implications of the future of work by placing talent at the forefront.



# Additional Skillnet Ireland Measures

## COVID-19 Response Fund

This measure has been rapidly developed for our Skillnet Networks. The fund is targeted at enabling our 70 Skillnet Networks to deliver the responses to businesses that are outlined in this plan and to provide free, or highly subsidised solutions, to businesses nationally. We have designed an agile application process so that these supports can be speedily channelled to the businesses that need them at this time.

## Expanding our Future Skills Programme

Skillnet Ireland is providing additional resources for the development of new industry led programmes and research that take account of the new COVID-19 reality and its implications for talent, skills and employee relations. This measure includes an expansion in industry-academic collaborations supported through the Skillnet Ireland's *Future Skills Programme*.

## Driving Strategic Collaborations

Skillnet Ireland will facilitate opportunities for our enterprise partners to engage with one another, and other stakeholders, to explore collaborative and cross sectoral approaches to address the challenges presented by COVID-19.

## Providing Industry Insights on the COVID-19 Impact

Skillnet Ireland will engage with its stakeholders to curate and share information and intelligence with respect to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on enterprise and workers.



“Over the coming months businesses will grapple with tough questions relating to sustainability, the need for **increased use of technology in their business models** and preparing their workforce for a new business reality.

Skillnet Ireland will champion and invest in initiatives which support businesses in Ireland to **overcome these complex challenges** and get ready for the recovery.

Working with our enterprise partners and our other stakeholders, we have an **opportunity to make an enduring contribution** on behalf of businesses, workers and our country at this important time”.

Paul Healy, Chief Executive Skillnet Ireland

# Other Government and Upskilling Supports for Business

## **Gov.ie COVID-19 (Coronavirus)**

<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/>

## **Regional Skills – COVID-19 Government Supports**

<https://www.regionalskills.ie/covid-19-government-supports/>

## **IBEC COVID-19 Hub**

<https://www.ibec.ie/employer-hub/covid-19>

## **Chambers Ireland – COVID-19 Resources for Business**

<https://www.chambers.ie/media/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-business/8947-2/>

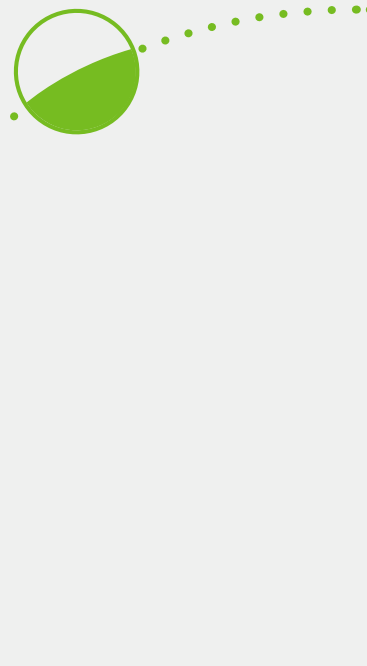
# Health advice

## **Department of Health**

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html>

## **World Health Organisation**

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>





## About Skillnet Ireland

Skillnet Ireland is a business support agency of the Government of Ireland. Our purpose is to advance the competitiveness, productivity and innovation of businesses operating in Ireland through enterprise-led workforce development. We support over 15,000 businesses and 60,000 workers every year.

We partner with 70 enterprise bodies that are either sectoral or geographically based, promoting a networked and partnership-based approach amongst businesses. Skillnet Ireland operates on a joint investment basis where Government investment is combined with contributions from enterprise, thus reducing cost and other barriers for businesses.

Skillnet Ireland is funded from the National Training Fund through the Department of Education and Skills. To learn more about Skillnet Ireland please visit [www.skillnetireland.ie](http://www.skillnetireland.ie)

**Disclaimer:** Skillnet Ireland has made efforts to ensure the information presented in this COVID-19 Response Plan is accurate at the time of publication. Skillnet Ireland will not be liable for actions taken by others on the basis of this document.