

Skillnet Ireland Customer Action Plan 2021-2023

Introduction

Skillnet Ireland is a business support agency of the Government of Ireland. Our mandate is to advance the competitiveness, productivity and innovation of businesses operating in Ireland through enterprise-led workforce development.

Skillnet Ireland's clients are members of the public with whom we interact with at different levels. This includes a wide variety of stakeholders such as our Skillnet Business Networks and their contracting organisations.

Skillnet Ireland aims, as a priority, to deliver effective and high-quality customer service in all areas of our work. The purpose of this Customer Action Plan, together with the Customer Charter which it supplements, is to set out the high standards of customer service which we aim to achieve and the means by which we intend to reach these high standards.

What we do

Skillnet Ireland actively supports and works with businesses in Ireland to address their current and future skills needs across the following areas:

Funding Support:

Through our Skillnet Business Networks, Skillnet Ireland allocates funding to groups of businesses in the same industry sector (or region) and with similar training needs, so they can deliver subsidised training for their teams. Skillnet Ireland also plays a key role in supporting and enabling Skillnet funded groups to reach their full potential.

Promoting Upskilling:

Skillnet Ireland plays an important role in contributing to the national conversation on workforce development and in promoting the value of upskilling for those in employment and those seeking employment.

Business Networking:

Great synergies are derived from clusters of businesses with similar challenges (and opportunities) working together. Participating in a Skillnet Business Network creates these valuable business networking opportunities for businesses.

Career Development:

Skillnet Ireland enhances the general competency and employability of learners, leading to increased career mobility and greater life opportunities.

Developing Future Skills:

Skillnet Ireland plays a key role in supplying skills to the Irish workforce by collaborating with enterprise and agencies to develop new innovative programmes to address both current and future skill needs.

Policy:

Skillnet Ireland supports the development of national policy in relation to workforce development by using our voice and enterprise insights to help shape national responses in an ever-changing skills and talent landscape.

Skillnet Ireland's Commitment to Quality Customer Service

Skillnet Ireland is committed to providing all our clients with a high standard of service in accordance with the 12 Principles of Quality Customer Service for Customers and Clients of the Public Service approved by Government and set out below, and in accordance with our Quality of Service Statement which may be found by clicking [here](#).

12 Principles of Quality Customer Service

1. Quality Service Standards

"Publish a statement that outlines the nature and quality of service which the customer can expect, and display it prominently at the point of service delivery."

Skillnet Ireland will aim to:

- Ensure that the Customer Charter 2021 – 2023, this Customer Action Plan 2021 – 2023 and the current Quality of Service Statement are made available on the Skillnet Ireland website and in print on request.
- Review and revise these documents where necessary in line with feedback received from stakeholders.

2. Equality/Diversity

"Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, and accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (under the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community)."

Identify and work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and for those facing geographic barriers to services."

Skillnet Ireland will aim to:

- Comply with all equality legislation including the Employment Equality Acts 1998 – 2015, the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018, the Equality Act 2004 and the National Disability Authority Act 1999.
- Provide training for staff on equality and diversity issues.
- Ensure that our services and facilities are accessible to all our customers, including those with special needs.
- Ensure that all customers are treated equally and in accordance with relevant legislation.

- Provide application forms in alternative formats such as audio, Braille or other languages (as far as practicable) on request.
- Provide interpretation and translation services where necessary.

3. Physical Access

“Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.”

Skillnet Ireland will aim to:

- Keep our offices clean and tidy and ensure that they meet occupational and safety standards.
- Ensure that appropriate facilities are available for customers with disabilities and other specific needs.
- Provide appropriate and accessible facilities for meetings where customers have made an appointment and ensure that the customer’s privacy is respected.

4. Information

“Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact, and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by information technology is fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication. Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.”

Skillnet Ireland will aim to:

- Provide information that is accessible, appropriate, comprehensive and accurate.
- Keep policies and statements on the website up to date and accurate and ensure that these are clear and simple to understand.
- Answer all queries received from customers, whether by telephone or in writing, fully and as soon as possible, ensuring that the person who will be of most help to the customer is placed in charge of providing them with the relevant information.
- Make information available in alternative formats such as audio, Braille or other languages (as far as practicable) on request.
- Ensure that contact details for Skillnet Ireland are always accurate and easily accessible.
- Ensure that all material on the Skillnet Ireland website follows all web publication guidelines.

5. Timeliness and Courtesy

“Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer. Provide contact details in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.”

Skillnet Ireland will aim to:

- Treat you with courtesy, respect your privacy and be fair in our dealings with you.
- Meet you at the agreed time if you have made an appointment with us.
- Respond to all written correspondence with 5 working days.
- Answer all telephone calls as promptly as possible and endeavour to provide an answer immediately. If we cannot answer immediately, we will take your details and call you back as soon as possible.
- Ensure that all voicemail messages are responded to promptly.
- If, for any reason, there is a delay in responding to your query, we will inform you of the delay and keep you informed of the progress of your query.
- Deal with complaints and appeals within the timeframes set out in our [Complaints Procedure](#) and [Appeals Procedure](#).
- Ensure that staff are provided with adequate training to ensure that they are able to meet with these standards.

6. Complaints

“Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.”

Skillnet Ireland will aim to:

- Maintain and publish on its website a clear and easy to follow Complaints Procedure.
- Treat all complaints promptly, fairly, impartially and in accordance with the Complaints Procedure.
- Ensure that all complaints are acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt.
- Resolve all complaints within 20 working days where possible and where, due to the complexity of the matter, more time is required, issue a revised response time and a progress report to the customer.
- Consider customer feedback on the operation of the procedure and make improvements to the procedure as necessary and appropriate.

7. Appeals

“Similarly, maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.”

Skillnet Ireland will aim to:

- Maintain and publish on its website a clear and easy to follow Appeals Procedure.
- Acknowledge receipt of a request for an appeal and inform the applicant of the decision as to validity of the appeal within 10 working days of receipt.
- Provide a substantive decision within 10 working days from the date of acknowledgment of your request for appeal and where the complexity of the matter requires more time, issue a revised response time and a progress report to the customer.
- Inform customers of their right to appeal to the Office of the Ombudsman in the event that the customer is still unhappy with the decision having exhausted the internal review process.

8. Consultation and Evaluation

“Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.”

Skillnet Ireland will aim to:

- Continue to pursue our policy of stakeholder engagement through public consultation, focus groups and bilateral consultation and to use feedback from this engagement in planning for the development and improvement of Skillnet Ireland services.
- Review feedback given through the complaints and appeals processes to make improvements to our services.
- Encourage customers to provide feedback at any time regarding any of our services and policies and actively review such feedback in developing and improving the services.

9. Choice

“Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contactpoints, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.”

Skillnet Ireland will aim to:

- Provide for contact by telephone, email, letter, in person and through our website.
- Provide information on our services and policies on our website and in our offices.
- Make electronic payment facilities available where appropriate.

10. Official Languages Equality

“Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.”

Skillnet Ireland is not obliged to comply with any obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003.

11. Better Co-ordination

“Foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.”

Skillnet Ireland will aim to:

- Ensure a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to the delivery of its services as described above.

12. Internal Customer

“Ensure staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.”

Skillnet Ireland will aim to:

- Provide training in customer service, requirements under the equality legislation to staff who are in regular contact with members of the public.
- Keep staff informed of developments within Skillnet Ireland, the services we provide and the standards we uphold.

Additional Information

The following documents, among others, are available on our website at www.skillnetireland.ie:

- Customer Charter
- Quality of Service Statement
- Complaints Procedure
- Appeals Procedure
- Code of Business Conduct for Employees and Board Members of Skillnet Ireland

Our contact details are as follows:

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