



TRAINING  
NETWORKS  
PROGRAMME

**TNP  
2013**

Skillnets  
**-OPEN**  
for business

New Funding  
to Grow Skills  
and Sustain Jobs



# Training Needs Analysis (TNA) Guide



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# **Developing a Training Plan for the Network**

## **Training Needs Analysis (TNA)**

A professional, comprehensive Training Needs Analysis (TNA) must be carried out in order to provide your new network with concrete data and information to make informed decisions on the direction and activities of the network.

A TNA is the systematic investigation of training needs within an organisation. It is part of a process which integrates training with the business or development plans of an organization.

As high quality, relevant training is the central purpose of a network, it is essential that sufficient time is allowed for this critical task. It should also be noted that the TNA should be revisited on a regular basis during the life of the network to ensure that training provision remains relevant.

## **Why do a Training Needs Analysis?**

A TNA provides information on the training and skills development requirements of all members of your network. It 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 for 2013.

It enables you to:

- Identify the gap between current and required levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude
- 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
- Maximise use of scarce resources

The experience of Skillnets training networks demonstrates that making assumptions about the training needs of members can be misleading and that a genuine and thorough TNA

adds considerable value to outcomes and is a useful tool in terms of achieving member commitment to the network and its aims and objectives.

### **Benefits of a Training Needs Analysis?**

- Identifies performance goals and the knowledge, skills and abilities needed by a company's workforce to achieve those goals
- Identifies gaps in training provision in sectors and or regions
- Helps direct resources to areas of greatest priority
- Addresses resources needed to fulfil the organisational mission, improve productivity, and provide quality products and services

Training must be relevant to member companies and meet their needs while simultaneously enhancing the staff's existing skills levels. By conducting an extensive TNA for your network and delivering training to meet the requirements of member companies, companies can experience a variety of benefits such as improved profitability, lower staffing costs, production improvements and staff development. The focus should be placed on the collective needs identified by member companies that add value and impact to their competitiveness while also developing the employability of the workforce.

A good TNA will address some of the following questions (this list is not exhaustive):

- What are the current external factors affecting how the companies in the sector/region operate (political, economic, social and technological concerns)?
- What are the most important competitive issues facing the member companies?
- How will training impact on the productivity, competitiveness and long term sustainability of member companies?
- What level and type of training are member companies currently participating in?
- What are the specific training needs in each company?
- What are member companies' average annual training budgets?
- Does the company have a dedicated training manager/ HR function?
- Who is the target participant group/s?
- Which training programmes should be given priority?
- How important member companies think certified training is in the sector/region?

- What length of courses should be offered – how much time will staff be released for?
- What method/s of delivery should be used (classroom based/onsite location; online; project based; recognition of prior learning)?

The TNA would provide answers to the following for each company:

- What is the problem? Is it a training problem? (Training is not always the solution)
- What are the key roles/areas in the company?
- What are the key skills linked with each of these roles/areas?
- What are the key skills gaps?
- How many people need to be trained?
- What is the time frame/critical milestone dates?
- What is the best time of the day to release staff?
- Do we need additional tutor support for some learners?

Care should be taken when conducting the TNA to ensure that as wide an input as possible from the member companies is secured. Consideration should be given, where appropriate, to capturing the views of different company stakeholders (e.g. the owners, employees, training managers etc).

### **What are the key steps in conducting an effective Training Needs Analysis for training networks?**

Planning is integral to a successful TNA and it is important to ensure that a consistent approach is followed when liaising with all potential members of the network. Before you start:

- Prepare thoroughly
- Follow a structured methodology
- Link training needs with the objectives of the network
- Gain commitment from members to participate in the TNA
- Communicate with all those involved
- Ensure you have the skills to conduct the TNA (analytical and communication)
- Collate the results gathered

- Prioritise the identified training needs and group them into training categories

### **Collecting information for a Training Needs Analysis**

There are various methods to collect information for your TNA which can be utilised individually or in combination with each other. It is advisable to use more than one method to get a comprehensive overview of the needs of the sector/region. It should also be noted that it may be necessary to work with only a sample of the planned member companies. In this case, care should be taken to ensure that the sample is representative of the wider membership (e.g. if most members will be SMEs, do not rely on a TNA of larger companies only).

Typical methods of collecting information for your TNA include:

- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Individual interviews
- Reviewing existing documents
- Discussions with steering group
- Discussions with relevant bodies (trade associations, Chambers of Commerce, universities, unemployment services)

The following is an example of how you might use more than one method:

- Consult with an industry professional body to ascertain their views of the training needs
- Discuss this with the network steering group
- Use the outputs of those discussions to design an online survey
- Use a focus group to confirm or “sense-check” the survey results

The choice of methods to be employed in the TNA will vary depending on the circumstances of the individual network. A plan should be developed for the TNA process which considers the information available and the accessibility of various groups or member companies. In the pre-application phase, it will be possible to discuss this plan with Skillnets support staff.

## Surveys

Surveys have advantages and disadvantages and TNAs based solely on these could be questionable. Surveys are beneficial because many people can be polled in a short period of time. They can be easily analysed and be quite cheap to administer. Surveys can provide first level data which can then be explored deeper with focus groups.

You can use websites like [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) to create your questionnaire and send the finished product to potential members of your proposed network. [surveymonky.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) also captures responses in an easy to read format. However, survey return rates can be low, it is difficult to design a good questionnaire and many people do not like completing them.

Surveys should take the form of a questionnaire and should include close-ended or open-ended questions, or a series of both. Close-ended questions require the respondent stay within certain parameters set by the person who created the survey. As the answers are limited, tabulating the data is quite simple. Open-ended questions allow the respondent to provide more feedback and introduce new ideas that may not have been considered initially, although tallying the results may be more difficult. A good option during the creation of a survey would be to include a combination of both close-ended and open-ended questions. [Appendix 1](#) includes a short guide to creating good surveys.

## Focus Groups

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

- Business challenges faced by members and sector/region
- Company training needs and skills deficiencies
- Common training and 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 either locally or at all
- Identify new training the network could develop

- Members view of certified training and willingness to participate
- Any regulatory requirements for training or changes in this arena

Focus groups should also enable you to develop your training plan for the 2013 application.

Utilise the focus group to:

- Review what training needs identified are to be prioritised
- Identify the most suitable methods of delivery (classroom, online, blended etc.)
- Assess what resources are available within network e.g. training venues, training materials, training facilities, online forums to share learning materials etc.

Focus group meetings should be at least ninety minutes long to initially break the ice and for participants to become comfortable enough to express their thoughts. Depending on time limits, focus groups can be held once or repeated.

### Individual Interviews

These can be an efficient, flexible and rewarding way of gathering information on each member company. Interviews must be conducted in a consistent manner and be conducted with precision and accuracy. A comparison should be made of what employees are currently doing and what will be expected of them as the company continues to grow diversify and/or expand/downsize. Follow an agreed interview format with each company to ensure a common approach and for ease of collation and subsequent analysis.

### Reviewing Existing Documents

This involves researching and noting what is going on – ‘getting the feel’ of the needs of the sector/region. This may include reviews of sector specific reports, national plans, reviews of member company business plans or policy statements.

## Discussions with relevant Stakeholders

A number of key stakeholders should be consulted where appropriate.

### **Meetings with Steering Group**

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

### **Discussions with relevant Bodies**

It is often beneficial to consult with professional bodies of the particular sector who have a high level view of the needs and upcoming skills deficits of that sector.

### **Discussions with stakeholders operating in employment services**

As part of Skillnets' commitment to the jobs challenge, free training places for job-seekers are provided via the Skillnets networks. This allows job-seekers to up-skill in skills that are currently demanded by industry and enables them to network with companies. As a new applicant it is important that the proposed network has considered the training needs of job-seekers in the chosen sector/region and how they may fit with the training needs of the member companies identified during the TNA.

In order to research the needs of job-seekers in your sector/region you should develop relationships with:

- Your Local Employment Services & Jobs Clubs
- Intreo offices / Department of Social Protection
- Organisations which are comprised of unemployed members e.g. the Dublin-based Innovation Enterprise Network (IEN)

### **Setting Training Objectives**

Upon analysis and review of the comprehensive TNA findings the network can then develop the Training Plan. Assess the needs of the member companies and see what training can



be achieved and how it 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 from member companies, as the training proposed in the Skillnets application form will inform the targets set for the 6 month period from June to December 2013.

Set SMART targets – ensure they are stretching yet realistic:

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

When developing your six month 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 are the average costs for certification of training?
- What are the average costs for renting a venue for training delivery; catering etc?
- What courses are currently on the market?
- What do online learning platforms cost?

### **Prioritising Training Needs**

Once you have identified training needs across the network, they need to be analysed and prioritised. It may not be possible to deliver all of the identified needs through the network. Care should also be taken to ensure that the training plan reflects the priorities of as wide a range of member companies as possible and that one or two companies' needs are not allowed to dominate the plan. The requirement for this prioritisation should be discussed with member companies during the TNA so that false expectations are not set in relation to all needs necessarily being met.

Appendix 2 contains a sample form which may assist in ranking the priorities of identified training needs.

Areas to consider when prioritising:

- What impact will developing these skills have on competitiveness?
- What would be the cost/benefit of investing in developing these skills?
- Which skills needs are the most important to our long-term success?
- Which skills needs are the most urgent?

### **Preparing a Summary Report of the Training Needs Analysis**

When preparing a network training plan, ample time must be given to collate the member company results and present them in an overall summary format as part of the application form. The use of pie charts can be an effective way to present the summary findings.

## **Appendix One**

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

### **1. Don't write a book.**

Keep it brief. More member companies will be willing to complete them and tallying the results will be more manageable. Brainstorm and write and down all the questions you might want to ask, then review the list and go with only the absolutely 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 participants' attention and create a bigger chance of causing confusion.

### **4. Avoid leading questions.**

Write the question in such a way that your client will be free to answer what they truly FEEL rather than forcing them to provide what you THINK they need.

e.g. What types of computer training will your staff benefit from?

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

To get good results, don't just assume the person filling out the survey knows what you are looking for. They may perceive things differently or may try to fill out your survey based on the format of other surveys they've taken. Request that the person completing the survey on behalf of a company consults others within their organisation to ensure that all training needs are identified. 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 that allow the participants to fill in one to two sentences.

### **7. Provide the survey in a way that is most convenient to your member.**

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

### **8. Ensure respondents are assured of confidentiality**

The survey should be used only for the purpose intended.

You could consider building an on-line survey. There are many survey sites on the web that help you easily create surveys. For a small fee, you can set up an account, create the survey and send a link to your client inviting them to fill out the survey online. This creates freedom to do it from their work office or even their home at a time that suits them. Many survey companies even tally up results, allowing you to analyse and export various types of data. For example, Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)).

## Appendix Two

### SAMPLE - COMPANY TRAINING 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 in Area/Job Role	Key Skills Gaps Required in this Area/ Job role	Priority Ranking	Number of staff in role/area	Number to be trained	Proposed Dates