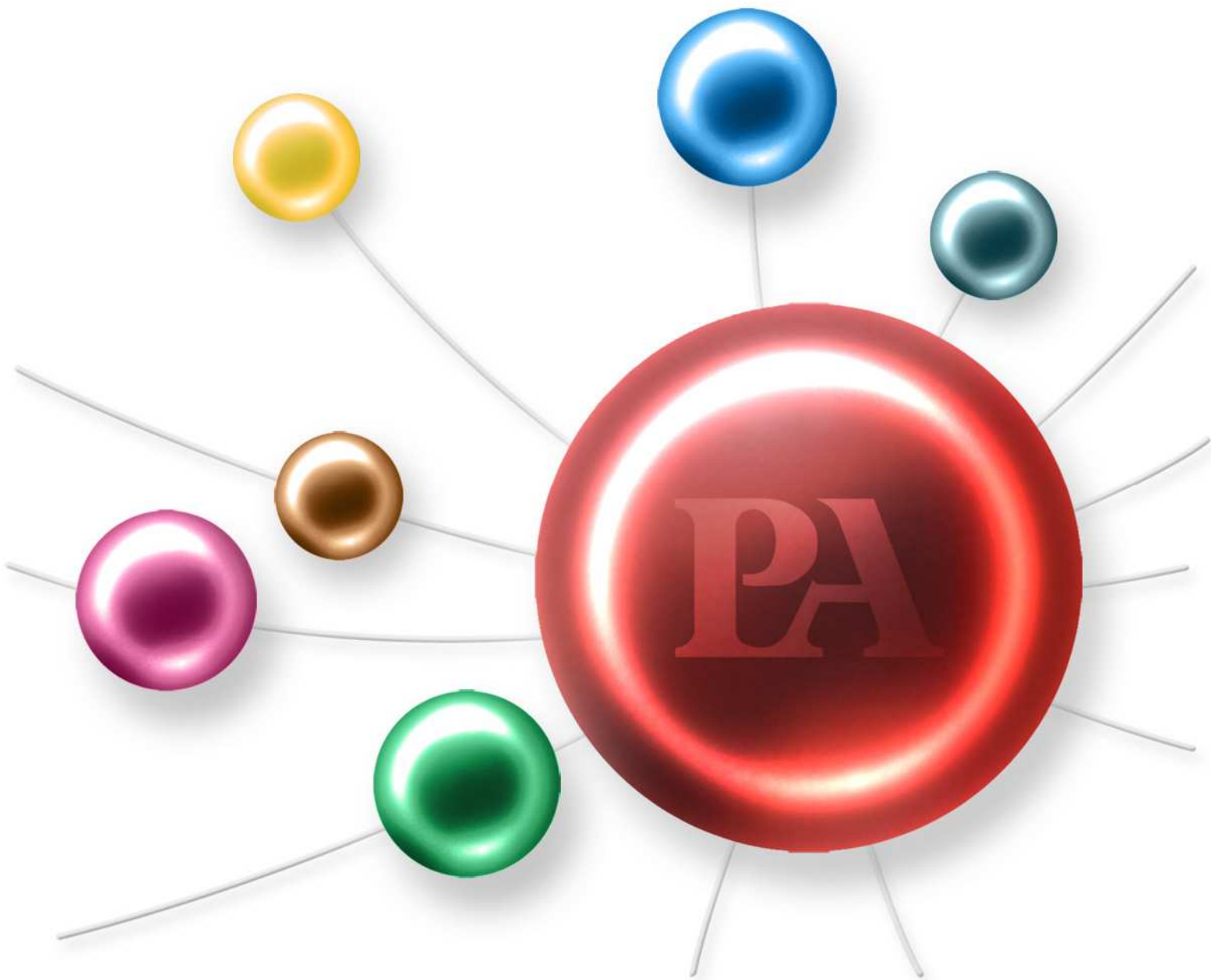


Evaluation of the Labour Market Activation Fund (LMAF) 2010

Final Report

Prepared for the Department of Education and Skills

November 2011



Executive Summary

The LMAF was introduced in response to a period of unprecedented social and economic change...

The Labour Market Activation Fund was launched in March 2010 in the midst of a period of unprecedented social and economic change. While the issues faced by those experiencing long-term unemployment were exacerbated, there were also new cohorts which found themselves on the live register for the first time. Existing public investment in training and activation measures was already under the spotlight with scrutiny on its value for money, efficiency and effectiveness and it was acknowledged that a 'one size fits all' approach was no longer appropriate to deal with the rapidly evolving labour market environment. It was recognised that there was a need for much more flexible, tailored and responsive measures to address activation issues and LMAF 2010 was established to provide training and education places for specific priority groups. The programme was targeted specifically at the low-skilled and those formerly employed in declining sectors such as construction, retail and manufacturing services with a particular emphasis on the under 35s and the long-term unemployed. The focus of the LMAF was on support for innovative, market-led **activation** measures aimed at improving the employability of unemployed persons by providing 'progression pathways' and for **up-skilling and re-skilling** measures which boost human capital by enhancing education and skills levels in line with the National Skills Strategy and the needs of the Smart Economy. It targeted the submission of proposals on participant-centred activation solutions from third level educational institutions, the VECs, community and voluntary organisations and private sector providers in an effort to maximise the potential for an efficient and value-for-money driven approach to provision. A request for tender to provide education and training was launched by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Responsibility for LMAF 2010 was subsequently transferred to the Department of Education and Skills in a re-organisation of Ministerial responsibilities.

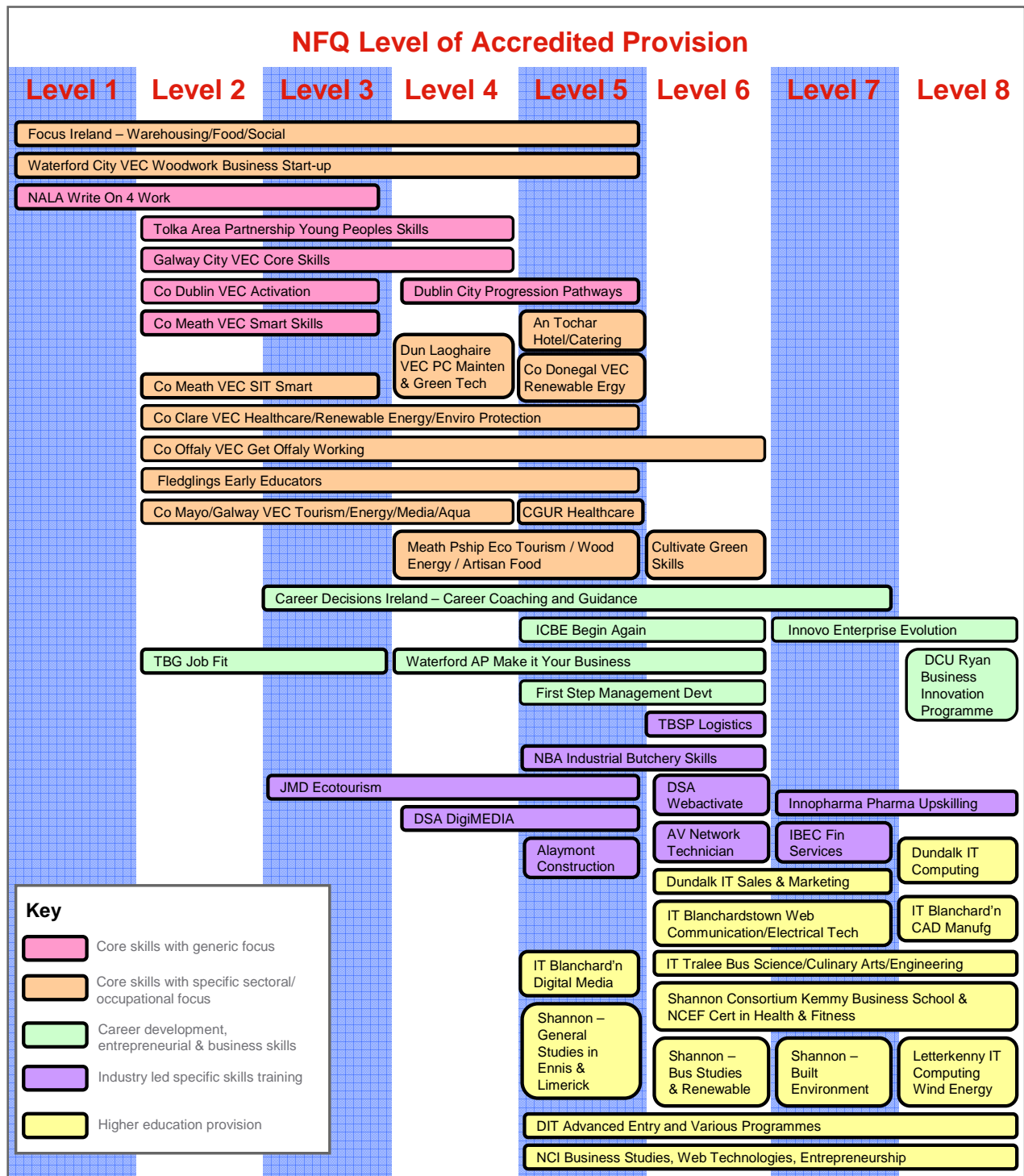
A robust evaluation of performance was required to assess performance and identify learning for future policy...

The Department of Education and Skills commissioned PA Consulting to undertake an evaluation of LMAF 2010. The evaluation was to focus upon describing the nature, extent and costs of programme activity supported by the fund; assessing how, and to what extent, project outputs and outcomes met the goals and objectives of the Fund; and providing conclusions on the fitness for purpose of this funding model in the context of Government policies, and mainstream activation measures, to assist the unemployed. An intensive programme of research and consultation has been undertaken, including discussions with all 42 project providers. Consultations were also undertaken with employers, participants and wider stakeholders with an interest in labour activation issues, including representatives from the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Social Protection, the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, FÁS, ISME, Qualifax and the Higher Education Authority.

LMAF 2010 supported a wide range of programmes designed to facilitate a progression pathway to labour market activation...

A total of €29.5million was invested via LMAF 2010 supporting 55 projects led by 42 providers. A total of 12,629 participants were supported under the LMAF. Within the projects, there was a focus on capacity building and support; core skills development; providing a formal education platform; building entrepreneurial capability; industry focused up-skilling and re-skilling; and engagement with employers. There was a strong focus on accreditation of skills development, with interventions focused on provision in line with defined NFQ levels. We have mapped the focus of projects in this regard as set out in the diagram below.

Mapping NFQ Level Provision across LMAF Supported Projects



The flexibility of the Department of Education and Skills in supporting different types of intervention in response to need was a key attribute of the LMAF. The evaluation found that the multiple provider model facilitated provision of tailored, responsive and market-focused interventions. The inclusion of providers outside the mainstream delivery agencies (e.g. from the private or community and voluntary sectors) was found to be a key attribute of the LMAF, despite concern among some stakeholders at involving providers who may not necessarily have delivered publicly funded programmes in the past. However, there were certainly notable successes arising from the inclusion of such providers as they often brought a new approach and way of thinking to the table. There is, therefore, a rationale for continuing to allow such open competition for activation funding on the basis of outcomes.

The projects supported by the LMAF were, in general, delivered efficiently and effectively and in line with targets...

Participant recruitment and completion rates suggested that the LMAF 2010 was delivered efficiently and effectively. The role of the Department in managing and operating the Fund, particularly around the flexibility of approach to take account of the characteristics of very different project providers, attracted positive feedback and appeared to offer a good governance model for delivering activation measures. There were initial difficulties in the level of awareness within the Department of Social Protection and the fit with existing welfare criteria when LMAF was launched however. Successful projects often involved good working partnerships between such offices and DSP facilitators and project providers and it is important that both Departments of Education and Skills and Social Protection work together in the development and roll-out of any future interventions.

The number of participants exceeded the original target and the overall completion rate was 80%. There were positive findings on value-for-money across the LMAF 2010 projects. The weekly cost per completion of €115 was below equivalent levels for programmes delivered by FÁS and the VECs (when allowances are taken into account), although this is complicated by the reliance of LMAF on ongoing income support in the absence of such allowances for project participants. Nevertheless the evidence suggests that LMAF facilitated the delivery of more flexible and tailored activation responses without any negative impact on the cost effectiveness of delivery. It should also be noted that, as new and innovative programmes, many LMAF projects also involved development costs which added to cost per completion in 2010, but which would be eliminated on roll-out of the project in future years.

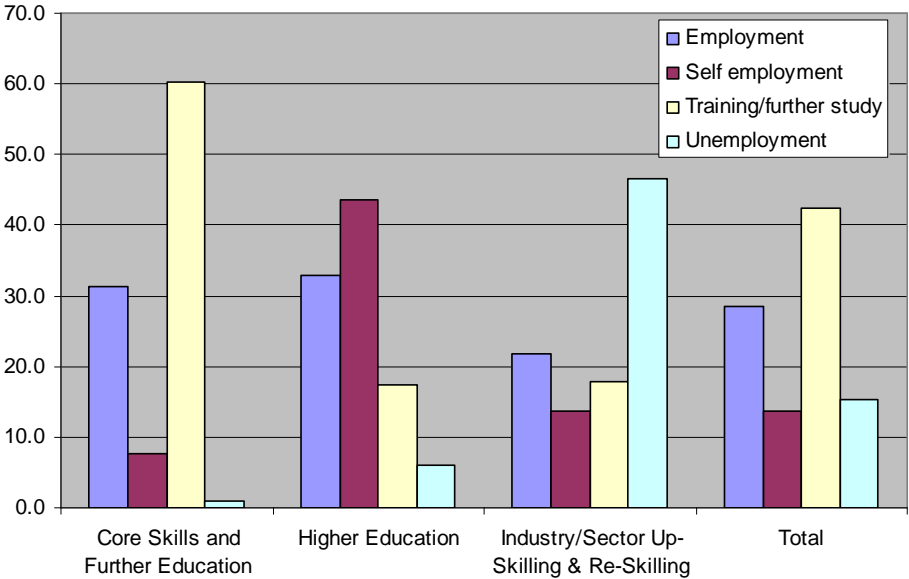
The most successful projects were those which focused on clear progression outcomes. A key characteristic of many of the most effective projects was the existence of a collaborative approach involving education and training providers, the VEC, community organisations, local authorities, the Department of Social Protection and other relevant organisations (e.g. the CEBs). In keeping with the pathway approach, a focus on employability outcomes was also critical, moving on from projects which may have prevailed in the past which purely focused on core skills, without clear consideration of how those skills might support further training and education on the pathway to employment.

There is also emerging evidence of the generation of positive outcomes and impacts ...

The short timeframe since completion of the LMAF supported projects (with many only ceasing in June 2011) and their focus on a progression pathway (which often requires further steps before

securing employment) means that drawing definitive conclusions on impact is premature. There is some encouraging emerging evidence from the initial assessment of outcomes and impacts. This found that of those that completed the LMAF programmes for whom current status is recorded, 29% are in employment, 13% are in self-employment, 43% have progressed to further education or training and just 15% are still unemployed. The work placement aspect, linking core skills and specific skills building and providing wider career development and entrepreneurial guidance were cited as important components in facilitating these outcomes. These results are based on statistics from 5,361 participants, representing 54% of the total completions, with progression data for the remaining participants unavailable. The lack of obligation on providers to ensure outcomes were measured was a weakness that should be addressed in any future Fund, with requirement at the outset for robust and ongoing monitoring of progression outcomes.

Progression Pathways by Type of Course



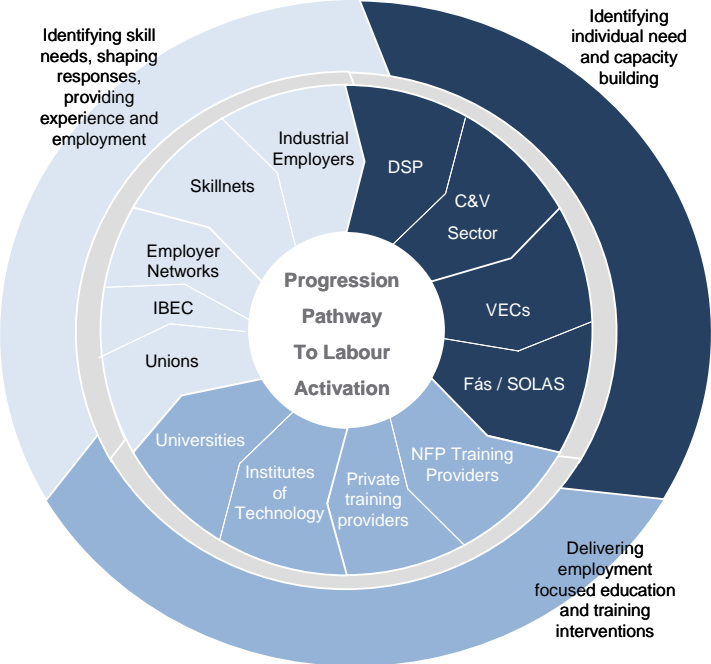
Source: PA Consulting Analysis of Project Provider Statistics

Data provided by the Department of Social Protection was also able to track changes in status of 1,065 individuals that participated in the LMAF via their ISTS system. This revealed that 786 were still in receipt of Jobseekers' Allowance in October 2011, although 25 of this number were in part-time education, internships or work placement programmes. Although this is drawn from a much smaller sample than the destination statistics above - representing 8% of project participants - it nonetheless demonstrates that there remains a cohort that are still unemployed despite the interventions.

Taking account of additionality factors, the employment impact generated from the progression identified to date is estimated to contribute a gross income effect of between €31.5mn to €54.1mn per annum to the Irish economy. The further benefit to the Government as a result of individuals moving off the live register was estimated at between €12mn and €21mn. Employers emphasised the benefits within projects of a quick turnaround in response to their skills needs (and their ability to shape project delivery) and the ability of work placements to serve as 'trials' to determine the suitability of potential employees. Participants consulted noted that a clear focus on the progression outcome from the project was an important motivating factor in participation.

Learning can be drawn from the innovative approaches deployed across LMAF projects...

The focus on innovation within the Fund was important given the evolving market context and learning was identified which can inform future labour market intervention policy. The focus on a progression pathway model and an integrated, cross-organisation approach to meeting individual needs is critical and it is important that the good practice identified in this regard is built upon. Clarity of roles at both local and national level in relation to facilitating this progression pathway should be an important priority, in line with the diagram opposite.

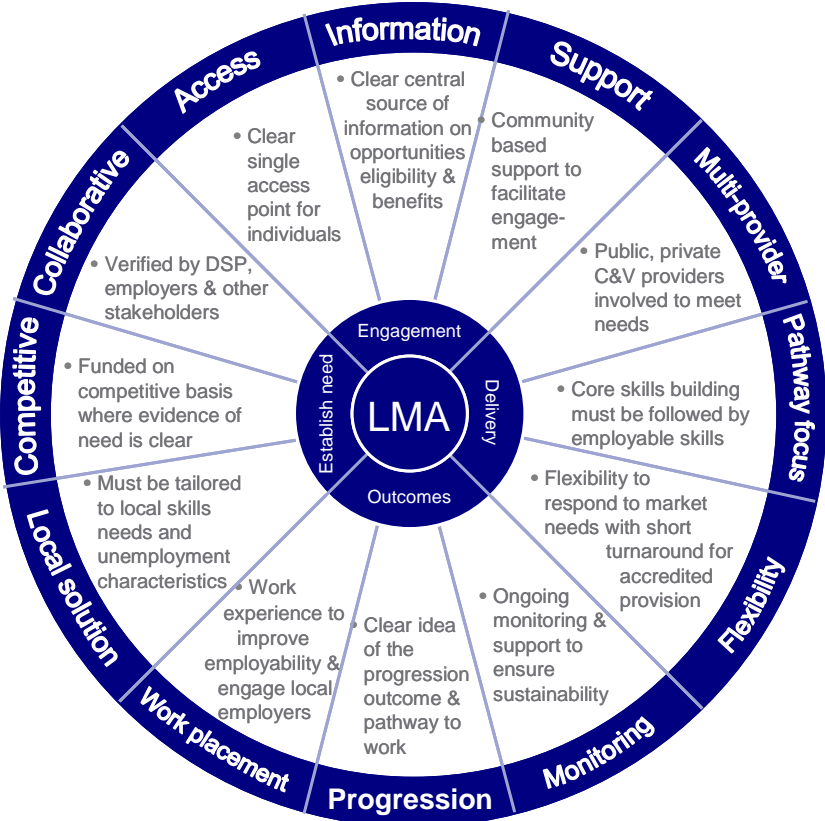


A further key learning point to emerge from LMAF 2010 was the importance of flexibility in dealing with new cohorts of unemployed people. The competitive funding model deployed by the LMAF 2010 was also important in changing culture and behaviours and supporting more cost-effective delivery of labour market activation measures. It is noted that a new competitive labour market fund, Springboard was launched as part of the Government’s Jobs Initiative in May 2011. Under Springboard, which is being managed by the Higher Education Authority on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills, 34 public, private and not for profit providers are delivering education and training programmes for unemployed people leading to higher education awards at NQF levels 6 to 9. While the Springboard Fund is outside of the remit of this evaluation, it is understood a number of the learning points from LMAF 2010 informed the development of that Fund.

Overall, the evaluation found that the innovative, project-based approach offered the flexibility required to address a very different employment environment. The decline in sectors such as construction, manufacturing and retailing and in particular professions such as architecture and engineering brought new cohorts onto the register and new, tailored mechanisms are required to facilitate their re-activation. Such is the difference in the issues to be addressed by such groups and those in lower skilled, marginalised groups experiencing longer-term unemployment, there may be a case to consider activation in a separate context for each. Nonetheless the LMAF 2010 has supported successful projects to address all types of unemployment, and there is a need to ensure that momentum is not lost where interventions have been successful and that funding continues to be available to support projects which can demonstrate delivery of progression outcomes. Indeed there is potential to realise greater impact through multi-annual funding and continuation of funding on basis of success.

The LMAF experience provides important input in defining an effective future labour market activation model...

Given the findings from the evaluation of the Labour Market Activation Fund 2010 on its value and the learning from its performance, there is a foundation for contributing to a new model of labour market activation moving forward to reflect the rapidly evolving social and economic circumstances in Ireland. Having considered the LMAF 2010 experience, we are able to define a number of key principles which we propose should characterise the future model of labour market activation in the state. This can be broken down into 4 core aspects of assessment of need; engagement; delivery; and outcomes with accompanying characteristics as shown in the diagram below.



If all these principles can underpin the progression pathway model and support flexible and tailored responses to labour market activation issues a foundation exists to deliver substantial and sustainable outcomes and impacts. There is sufficient evidence from the evaluation of LMAF 2010 to justify the continuation of this type of funding for tailored flexible interventions to address particular labour market activation needs. Moving forward, there is a *strong case for a new Labour Market Activation Fund to be launched*, retaining a competitive approach to selection and funding of activation projects. There are also other key learning points from the evaluation which should have implications for the future approach to labour activation:

- The need for all projects funded under any new Labour Market Activation Fund to demonstrate how they *conform with a defined future labour market activation model* of the kind set out in this report and to future skills needs as identified by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. To ensure a comprehensive approach to meeting particular labour market activation needs, consideration should be given to *splitting any future funds into dedicated theme-based streams*. These funding streams would offer 'packages' of funding for which providers could compete based on

demonstration of how they would address, for example: a particular activation issue or target cohort; skills needs in a particular sector (or issues arising from decline in a particular sector); or roll-out of a proven activation level at a wider regional or national level.

- As a key attribute in LMAF 2010, the *multiple provider model for addressing labour market activation issues should be preserved* in any new Fund with competition between publicly funded, private sector and community and voluntary providers. This was found to support streaming of LMAF programmes across different NFQ levels of provision. The *core focus of projects on streaming around levels 3 to 6 in order to target a specific industry or occupational skills need* should be a key consideration in designing and delivering activation interventions in future. In recognition of the complexities in multi-provider, multi-tier activation model, it is worth considering whether *all project providers should be required to progress through a pre-qualification stage* before submitting proposals for any new Fund. This stage will provide further quality assurance and ensure robust ongoing monitoring of progression outcomes, validating financial standing, availability of resources to deliver the project and ability to provide accredited training.
- To facilitate a more integrated approach to identifying individual needs, tracking up-skilling (including major, minor and special purpose awards at NFQ level) and recording progression outcomes, the feasibility of *establishing shared databases across the key agencies along the progression pathway* should be investigated, taking full account of data protection implications. It is important that such databases not only record completion, accreditation and progression but also gather robust information on drop outs from programmes. There should be a cohesive *communication strategy for engaging with participants at the outset* of labour market interventions of this kind. This should make clear expectations and progression outcomes from the delivery of the learning, with NEES staff able to fully brief participants prior to referral and further initial guidance given by the project provider on joining.
- A more formal and robust approach to ongoing monitoring of participant progression outcomes should be a key goal in future, requiring *consistent and sustained recording and reporting post-funding* and post-project to ensure that the full value of the public investment can be ascertained. In line with this, consideration should be given to *piloting an outcomes-based funding model* within any future Fund where project providers are rewarded on the basis of meeting specified outcome targets.
- A *multi-annual approach* to funding labour market activation projects should be considered in any future Fund to maximise the impact of interventions which are able to demonstrate success. As part of the approach to funding, potential should be investigated for *setting aside resources to address barriers to participation and engagement* such as travel and childcare barriers, allowing proposals for holistic responses to meet target group needs.

While these points are important in informing the future approach to activation, it is also critical that the potential of the portfolio of projects funded by LMAF 2010 to deliver employment impacts is maximised. This report set out examples of where mainstreaming prospects lie and *an action plan* should be put in place which sets out *how the learning* from the most successful LMAF programmes *can be mainstreamed* into wider labour market activation policy and interventions. If this is progressed, and the implications from the findings noted above are taken into account in planning the future activation approach, there is opportunity to build on the momentum of the work undertaken thus far to begin to realise more significant and sustainable employment outcomes.

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1 Introduction and Background

In this chapter we examine the context for the establishment of the Labour Market Activation Fund 2010, providing an overview of the social and economic conditions which provided the strategic rationale for the intervention. We then profile the development and set up of the LMAF and identify its initial objectives, with the terms of reference for this evaluation of the fund outlined. We conclude by setting out the overall structure of the remainder of the report.

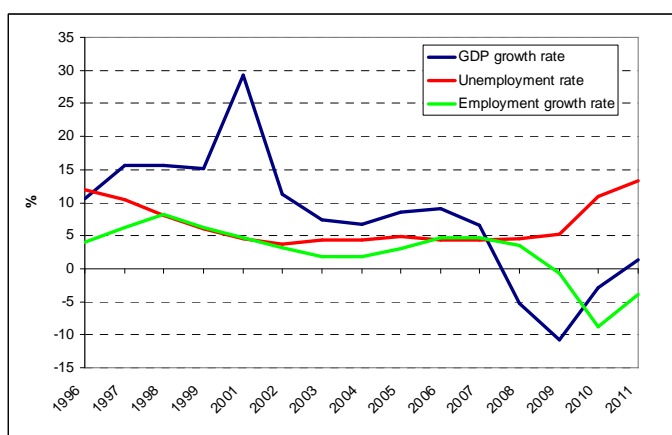
1.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings from the evaluation of the Labour Market Activation Fund 2010 for the Department of Education and Skills. It brings together the findings from an intensive programme of research and consultation. This final version has taken into account feedback on previous drafts provided by a Steering Group appointed by the Department. The Steering Group involved representatives from the Department, the Department of Social Protection, Forfás and FÁS.

1.2 Strategic rationale for the LMAF intervention

Ireland is in the midst of an unprecedented period of social and economic change. Following a period of sustained economic growth over much of the last two decades, the onset of global recession towards the end of 2008 had significant implications for Ireland's economic performance. As a small and open economy, demand for its goods and services were naturally severely impacted by the downturn, but particular prevailing domestic characteristics, most notably the prominence and nature of the banking sector and an over-reliance on construction activity to fuel growth meant that the difficulties experienced across much of the developed world were exacerbated in Ireland. The economy began to contract significantly, and from a position of close to full employment, unemployment rose to substantial levels unseen since the 1980s. Figure 1.1 illustrates how the economic downturn was felt across key indicators in the past 15 years.

Figure 1.1: OECD GDP, Employment and Unemployment Trends in Ireland, 1995-2011



Source: OECD

While existing issues of long-term unemployment and social exclusion continued to pose challenges, the most striking characteristic during the period was the large base of people experiencing unemployment for the first time as a result of sectoral decline. The construction sector was particularly badly hit, with related professions such as engineering and architecture significantly affected. The FÁS Irish Labour Market Review 2008 and various quarterly labour market commentaries produced at the time highlighted the impact that the downturn had on these particular sectors.¹ There had also been a recognition for a number of years that Ireland's future economic prosperity would be dependent on a knowledge intensive, innovative economy and that there was a need to ensure that the 'smart skills' required to facilitate this move began to permeate throughout the labour market. The 'Ahead of the Curve' report in 2004 had first flagged the need for Irish industry skills to move further up the value chain in this regard, and subsequent policy reinforced this commitment.² With sectors that had stimulated growth now in decline, the case for immediate and sustained change was clear and the Government's 'Towards a Smart Economy' document emphasised its pivotal role in returning the state to economic growth, with skills development a core focus in the strategy.³

The need for state intervention to address new and serious labour market challenges was clear. The OECD Economic Survey emphasised the importance of getting people back to work and the need for Ireland to ensure that it had first class policies to support that drive. The Survey highlighted the risk that short-term unemployment will translate into a permanently higher level of unemployment and stressed the importance of encouraging people to stay connected to the labour market through effective activation measures.⁴ The OECD had already carried out a detailed assessment of labour market activation policies in Ireland which found that Ireland needed to tighten and modernise labour market activation policies as a matter of urgency.⁵

At this time, significant questions were being raised about government investment in training and education bodies. There was a particular focus on ensuring value for money for investment in training and education, with an acknowledgement that a 'one size fits all' approach was no longer appropriate to deal with the rapidly evolving labour market environment. Recognising that existing approaches to education and training were inadequate in the current context, a decision was taken by Government to establish the Labour Market Activation Fund to support labour market activation measures for specific target groups, specifically the low-skilled and those formerly employed in declining sectors such as construction, retail and manufacturing services with a particular emphasis on the under 35s and the long-term unemployed.

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) had carried out in-depth analysis of labour market trends in its annual skills bulletin. The EGFSN sought to identify which sectors had skills shortages and therefore offered potential employment opportunities with appropriate and effective up-skilling.⁶

¹ FÁS, Irish Labour Market Review 2008, 2009

² Forfás, Enterprise Strategy Group, Ahead of the Curve – Ireland's Place in the Global Economy, 2004

³ Department of the Taoiseach, Building Ireland's Smart Economy – A Framework for Sustainable Economic Recovery, 2008

⁴ OECD, OECD Economic Survey of Ireland, 2009

⁵ OECD, OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 75 Activation Policies in Ireland, 2009

⁶ FÁS and Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, National Skills Bulletin 2009 – A Study by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in FÁS for the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2009

The skills gaps identified in the 2009 National Skills Bulletin included Information Technology, science, engineering, marketing / sales, life sciences and healthcare, some specific financial expertise, food and beverages, environmental goods and services and eco-tourism.

1.3 The Labour Market Activation Fund 2010

The LMAF 2010 aimed to provide an innovative new approach to stimulating labour market activation. A particular emphasis was placed on providing a participant-centred response that required closer integration of social and economic policy. The LMAF aimed at ensuring that individuals not only received the education and training support in areas where potential demand for skills existed, but also received the wider support often required during periods of unemployment. The difficulty of those that had lost their jobs in securing new employment opportunities meant that a new generation of long-term unemployed was emerging, requiring new types of participant-centred interventions to facilitate a progression pathway back to the labour market. A decision was therefore taken to provide support via LMAF 2010 to a wider base of providers that could provide the flexible and locally focused responses essential to provide such pathway support. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment was given responsibility for the development, management and delivery of the fund⁷.

To help ensure that projects targeted strategic areas of need, Forfás produced a document 'Guiding Principles for the Activation Fund'.⁸ This set out the importance of: ensuring that courses support the goals of the Government's Smart Economy and target specific skills needs of exporting sectors; an outcomes-focused approach; and that the qualification achieved moves the student at least 'one-step-up' on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

The LMAF 2010 was launched in March of that year to assist in the creation of training and education provision for specific priority groups among the unemployed, namely the low skilled, and those formerly employed in declining sectors - construction, retail and manufacturing - with particular emphasis on the under 35s and long term unemployed. A total of €32 million of funding was made available through the LMAF to support *innovative proposals* for substantial training and education provision targeting specific priority groups among the unemployed. The LMAF marked a shift away from the traditional one-size-fits-all approach to ensure a tailored, participant-centred market-led approach. The Fund is part financed from the European Social Fund Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007-2013. On the basis of the focus on the under 35s and long term unemployed, the Department issued a call for proposals to address two key areas:

- **Activation** – Activation measures aimed at improving the employability of unemployed persons by providing 'progression pathways' of relevant job search, training, education and employment opportunities for the two priority groups. This includes the need to ensure that any disincentives to participation are minimised.

⁷ Responsibility subsequently switched to the newly created Department of Education and Skills when the skills function within the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment was switched to this department in 2010.

⁸ Forfás, Guiding Principles for the Activation Fund, 2009

- **Up-skilling and re-skilling** – boosting human capital by enhancing education and skills levels in line with the National Skills Strategy and the needs of the ‘Smart Economy’.

In all, 370 tenders were received from public, private, voluntary and not-for-profit organisations and following an appraisal and selection process, a total of 55 projects were supported by the Fund. Delivered over the period September 2010 to June 2011, these projects have now drawn to a close and there is a need to take stock on their performance.

1.4 Background to the evaluation

Aside from the need to assess the value-for-money of the public funding invested in LMAF 2010, there is wider recognition of the ongoing need for intervention to address labour market activation issues as the social and economic challenges for Ireland continue. Since the first LMAF was launched, the financial crisis which led to the IMF/ECB loan in November 2010 has placed further pressure on budget austerity, meaning an urgent need to find more cost effective approaches to deliver essential policy objectives. The focus of the LMAF on new and innovative approaches means that there is an opportunity to use the evaluation to identify successful and cost effective responses to labour market activation and ensure that learning can be drawn from successful experiences and mainstreamed into future policy. The new Government has demonstrated that a more integrated approach is required in the delivery of social and labour market policy, most notably in the recent announcement of the dissolution of FÁS and the creation of Solas to bring together aspects of education, training and welfare support to ensure client and outcome focused delivery. These changes are being made being made in the context of wider policy reform agenda, as set out in the new National Employment and Entitlements Strategy. If good practice can be identified from the LMAF projects, this can be used to help shape approaches within the new system.

As a result, the Department of Education and Skills commissioned an evaluation of the Labour Market Activation Fund. This evaluation is focused on describing the nature, extent and costs of project activity supported by the Fund, assessing how, and to what extent, project outputs and outcomes met the goals and objectives of the Fund and providing conclusions on the fitness for purpose of this funding model in the context of Government policies, and mainstream activation measures, to assist the unemployed. The specific objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Provide quantitative findings on: provider profiles (Type of providers; Participation levels Geographical spread); key performance metrics (type of project provided, budget, participant profile, numbers starting and completing and non completers etc)
- Evaluate the fulfilment of beneficiary needs and expectations through:
 - Describing and assessing the nature and effectiveness of the approaches employed by projects for targeting, recruiting, selecting, establishing, and providing for, the needs of project participants, highlighting any particularly successful models employed
 - Describing and assessing the nature and effectiveness of the approaches employed by projects to engage employers in their projects for the purposes of work placement, work experience and/or employment opportunities

- Describe and assess the nature and effectiveness of the means by which projects gathered and acted on feedback from participants/employers on experience of the projects
- Synopsise and comment on the views of employers/businesses on how the projects contributed to meeting their own organisational goals.
- Evaluate stakeholder roles and collaborative effort in project development and implementation
- Having regard to established best practice in mainstreaming training and education provision, evaluate the extent to which projects delivered under the Activation Fund demonstrated innovation in terms of course content, delivery mechanisms, collaboration between providers and between providers and enterprise
- Assess the impacts of the Labour Market Activation Fund through:
 - Evaluating the degree to which the funded projects were effective and efficient vehicles for delivery of quality education and training provision to the unemployed having regard to other established projects in place. This analysis should include comparisons between LMAF funded projects and their nearest equivalent providers
 - Objectively reviewing the analysis provided by the projects in their self-evaluation reports on the economic and social benefits they contend resulted from their projects
 - Providing analysis and conclusions relating to: learning points that emerge; how the fund has met its objectives; efficiency, effectiveness and overall impacts.

The analysis in this report addresses each of these requirements.

1.5 The remainder of this report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 sets out the evaluation framework which frames the analysis in this report and notes the evidence base on which our findings are based.
- Chapter 3 profiles the funding inputs of the LMAF 2010 and considers the activities and outputs produced as a result of the funding of the projects.
- Chapter 4 analyses the outcomes and impacts arising from the projects funded by LMAF 2010 and considers their additionality.
- Chapter 5 identifies the learning and innovation from delivery of LMAF 2010 projects which can be used to inform future labour market activation policy and practice.
- Chapter 6 summarises the conclusions from the evaluation and identifies findings to inform the development of a future labour activation model in Ireland.



2 Evaluation framework and evidence base

In this chapter we define the evaluation framework which we have used to frame the undertaking of this study. This provides a structure for the assessment of LMAF performance in the remainder of the report, with funding inputs, project outputs, overall outcomes, additionality and impact discussed in turn, followed by an examination of learning which can inform the planning and funding of future interventions. To build up the analysis in this way, we have undertaken a robust programme of research and consultation, which we summarise to highlight the evidence base on which our findings are based.

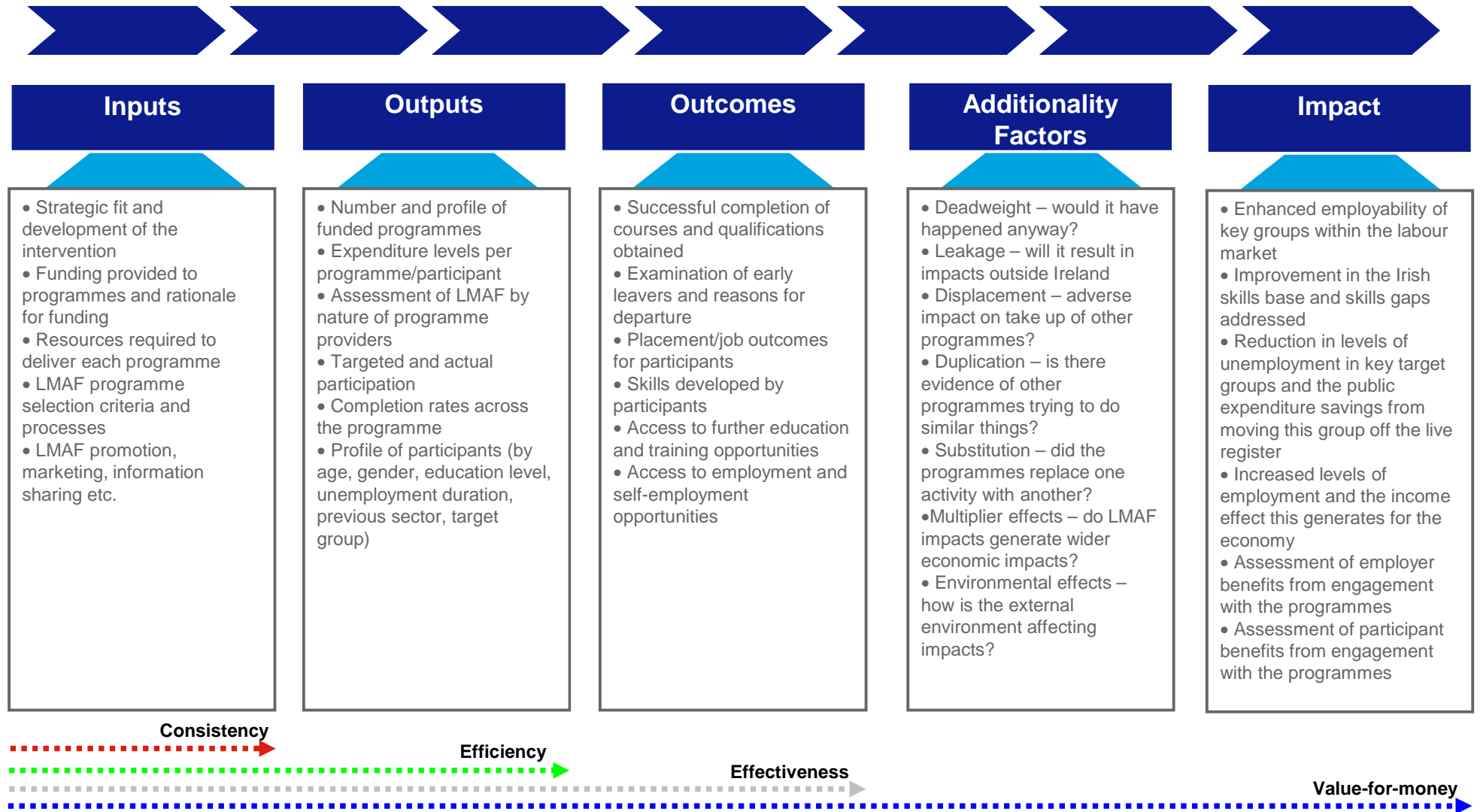
2.1 The evaluation framework

The evaluation framework has been built up by establishing the logical relationship between the public funding inputs via the LMAF and the outputs, outcomes and impacts that have been generated as a result. The analysis within this report is structured in this way to provide clear findings of the efficiency, effectiveness and value-for-money of the projects delivered and the learning which can be identified in the assessment of this performance. Specifically, we have examined:

- the **inputs** in terms of the funding invested in the different LMAF projects, the nature of this funding and how it relates to specific areas of need or policy objectives.
- the **outputs** and activities in the form of the actual support, provision and participation supported across the projects as a result of the LMAF funding.
- the **outcomes** generated from the project activities, including skills obtained and accredited, work placements secured, target groups supported and progression outcomes secured.
- the **additionality** of the LMAF and these outcomes in terms of multiplier effects, deadweight, leakage and substitution.
- the **impacts** generated by the projects in terms of improved employability, enhanced skills based, reduced unemployment and the economic value that can be attached to such impacts.

A summary of the indicators and characteristics that we have analysed in the context of LMAF 2010 delivery is provided in the overview of the evaluation framework in Figure 2.1. This analysis has been facilitated by deployment of a robust methodology which has provided a strong evidence base from which conclusions can be drawn. This evidence base is summarised in Section 2.2.

Figure 2.1: Evaluation Framework for the Labour Market Activation Fund 2010

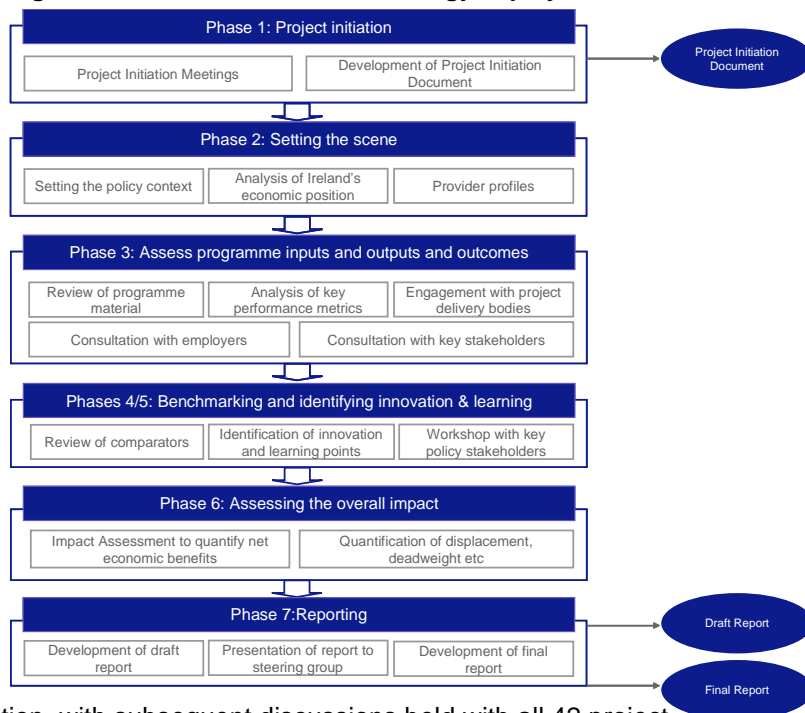


2.2 The evidence base

This evaluation has involved an intensive period of research and consultation, delivered across 7 short, focused phases. An overview of the methodology which was deployed during its undertaking is provided in Figure 2.2. The core aspects of this work involve:

- Review of policy and strategy material and consideration of socio-economic trends to establish the strategic rationale for the LMAF intervention.
- Analysis of project material and performance data across all funded projects by reviewing sources including applications, final reports, self-evaluation reports and other relevant material. Due to the short timeframe since project completion, the extent to which these revealed comprehensive details of outcomes was limited, particularly in relation to accreditation.
- Targeting all project providers for consultation, with subsequent discussions held with all 42 project providers⁹. Additional consultations were also held with employers and beneficiaries related to a sample of these projects. This provided important qualitative evidence to inform the analysis in the report, a key aspect in identifying learning which can inform future policy in this area.
- Consultation with wider stakeholders including the Department of Social Protection, the Department of Education and Skills, the Higher Education Authority, the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed and Qualifax to establish the external perception of the relative effectiveness of the LMAF 2010.
- Examination of alternative delivery models, both in Ireland and overseas, in order to benchmark the performance of the LMAF and identifying innovative good practice which can inform the development of policy moving forward.

Figure 2.2: Overview of the Methodology Deployed



This evidence base has provided a foundation for the mapping of the inputs, outputs, outcomes, impacts and additionality of LMAF 2010 in line with the evaluation framework set out in Figure 2.1. These aspects of project delivery are considered in turn in Chapters 3 and 4, with the learning and innovation identified from such analysis of performance then discussed in Chapter 5.

⁹ A list of all project providers met and associated projects is provided as Appendix A



3 Project activity under the LMAF

This chapter provides an overview of funding inputs and project outputs and activities of projects funded under the Labour Market Activation Fund 2010. We review the nature of the funding inputs (Section 3.1), provide an overview of the nature of the projects supported (Section 3.2) and then profile the outputs and activities across the LMAF portfolio (Section 3.3). This will provide a platform for then considering the outcomes and impacts from the funded interventions, which will form the focus of our analysis in Chapter 4.

3.1 Allocation of LMAF funding inputs

3.1.1 Project selection

As we noted in Chapter 1, the Labour Market Activation Fund was launched in March 2010 to support the creation of training and education provision to address unemployment among the low skilled and those previously employed in declining sectors (i.e. construction, retail and manufacturing) sectors. The intention was to stimulate innovative approaches to labour market activation that could not only address urgent unemployment issues but which could also inform future policy if proven to be a success. A robust application and selection process was commenced which placed significant emphasis on the provision of evidence in support of any proposed project. The requirements included demonstration of:

- *Assessment of need*, including the specific learning needs of the target group and how the proposed response would address these needs, citing independent research sources and evidence from key stakeholders (including employers).
- *Management, capacity and resources*, including relevant expertise and experience, the assessment and certification process and any additional funding to be provided.
- *Programme methodology and tuition*, including how the training would be delivered, the resources that would be deployed and the support that would be offered to people experiencing barriers to participation.
- *Participant progression*, showing how the project will create clear and sustainable progression pathways that will ultimately lead to employment, how the individuals will be supported to move along that pathway and any work placement experience offered to enhance employability.
- *Innovation*, highlighting how the project compares with or differs from existing education and training provision for the proposed target group.
- *Costs and fees* attached to project delivery.

While there was a strong focus within the assessment criteria on the strategic need for the project, the call for proposals was completely open to all providers. This was an important aspect of ensuring flexible and tailored responses as will be further detailed in the report. However our later analysis also reveals some inconsistency in the approach across project providers, particularly in terms of the level of information gathering. While there was a need to fast-track implementation of the response giving the worsening environment, if more time had been available then a pre-qualification stage could have provided further quality assurance in subsequent project delivery and demonstration of outcomes and impacts arising. In future, a pre-qualification phase confirming the financial standing of the potential provider, the adequacy of resources available, track record in delivery, ability to provide recognised, accredited courses and ability to record and monitor participant outcomes would add value to a fund of this nature.

3.1.2 LMAF funding allocated

In total, 370 applications for funding were received. Following the selection process, the LMAF funded 55 projects ranging in size from €7,000 to €7.5m, delivered in two phases. Appendix A provides an overview of all of the projects supported under the programme. For the first phase, the Government allocated €20mn followed by an additional €12.043mn in support. Figure 3.1 presents an overview of the LMAF funding allocated.

Figure 3.1: Overview of LMAF 2010 Funding

Funding Range	Number of Projects	Total Expenditure	Average project size	Participant Intake	Cost per participant
0 - €100,000	16	€0.9m	€53,681	422	€2,053
€100,001 - €500,000	24	€5.7m	€236,869	2,641	€2,153
€500,001 - €1m	8	€5.4m	€677,613	2,697	€2,010
€1m+	7	€17.5m	€2,506,198	6,869	€2,554
Total	55	€29.5m	€536,510	12,629	€2,337

Source: Department of Education and Skills LMAF 2010 Project Data

Although the total allocation for the fund was €32m, the Department of Education and Skills made a concerted effort to drive project providers to identify efficiencies in their delivery plans. This process resulted in savings of €2.5m, meaning final total expenditure of €29.5m. This does not appear to have adversely impacted upon project providers’ perceptions of the Department, as there was praise for the flexible approach and level of engagement during provider consultations. This meant that projects could be adapted and expanded in response to changing market conditions.

The announcement of the second phase of funding in August 2010 resulted in some providers experiencing difficulties with timescales from award to project commencement, especially those that needed to secure physical infrastructure; that wanted to incorporate a work placement element and that were bound by September start dates (e.g. within the higher education sector). There was however some recognition that given the pace of change, the prevailing social and economic conditions and the uncertain funding environment, the luxury of longer lead-in times from conception

to funding was impractical. Nevertheless as labour market activation planning moves forward, there should be more emphasis on allowing a sufficient period for programme design. This is important to ensure that it accurately reflects need and is carefully constructed to deliver the envisaged outcomes and impacts. Despite such constraints, the strategic approach to project assessment provided the scope for many of the project providers to make reasoned and compelling cases on how provision linked to evidence of need¹⁰. It is important that the flexibility in supporting evidence-based responses is not lost in an over-prescriptive process, while recognising the need for further qualification control noted above.

CASE STUDY ON MATCHING PROVISION TO EVIDENCE OF NEED – IRISH CENTRE FOR BUSINESS EXCELLENCE (ICBE) BEGIN AGAIN™ PROGRAMME

The ICBE Begin Again™ Programme was designed to help out of work professionals (job seekers with transferable work skills and with a professional approach to work) return to the workplace. The ICBE Begin Again programme case study demonstrates success in providing a course that matched participant training needs (supply) with market demand. The budget for the ICBE Begin Again programme was €2.1Mn and 733 people participated on the project. The programme was over-subscribed and results show that the programme has been very successful in supporting participants return to employment.

The programme comprised:

- 10 training days, with certification, designed to enable unemployed participants re-plan their careers and recover the loss of confidence and esteem that comes with unemployment, and to update their skills to meet the needs of the current challenging workplace.
- A 12 week work placement to carry out a project or assignment with a host company where the participant provided the knowledge, skills and experience needed by the company and was thus able to prove and demonstrate their employability.
- The support of an experienced business mentor, to help the participants re-build their careers and make a success of the placement. In some cases, participants were supported to explore or investigate self-employment.

The contract provided for delivery of a programme of training and directed work placement to 300 unemployed people nationally. This number was exceeded and the project was actually delivered to 402 people at no extra cost. Further, as the success of the project became apparent - **69% of participants who completed the course have gone into employment and 4% have gone onto further training** - a contract extension was provided in April 2011 to work with a further 300 people. In fact 331 were supported, bringing the overall total to 733 people.

The flexibility demonstrated by the Department in this case has been a key element of the esteem in which the LMAF is held by project providers and reflects much of the feedback from consultees throughout this evaluation.

3.1.3 Fund management

The management of the fund by the Skills Development Division of the Department of Education and Skills was found to be effective. This remit was also delivered efficiently, with a team of 3 people managing and administering the Fund over its implementation period. As noted above, the flexibility of the approach of the Department was seen as a key attribute, particularly given the need to engage

¹⁰ This was found from analysis of all successful LMAF 2010 project applications.

with a diverse group of project providers. While structured processes were in place to ensure a transparent and accountable process, there was also a strong level of ongoing engagement between Department personnel and the individual projects, ensuring that any issues were identified and resolved at an early stage.

The progression pathway approach which underpins the success of interventions of this kind requires a wide base of understanding covering how social inclusion can be supported and the nature of, and linkages between, further and higher education. It also requires a strong enterprise and employer focus to ensure that the ultimate impacts sought can be delivered. In this regard the function managing LMAF benefited from a legacy of managing ESF programmes and most notably the EQUAL community initiative which targeted innovative labour market activation projects in a similar way to the Fund. Its previous location within the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment during this time also allows the Training and Skills Development function to maintain a strong understanding of industry skills needs.

However the current location of the Fund within the Department of Education and Skills has been a key move in supporting effective delivery. Its overall remit in skills development of the labour force, bringing together further and higher education provision and vocationally focused up-skilling and re-skilling, has provided a platform for integrated approaches via the Fund. This wider role includes the provision of important and complementary initiatives such as Springboard and the synergies across the Department must be maximised in any future Fund. The role of the Department of Social Protection in this regard will also be important given their position as the first access point to the system for potential participants and understanding of welfare support and reform issues. Moving forward, it is critical that the expertise of both departments is taken into account when defining the responsibilities of any agency charged with delivering a future activation fund.

3.2 Overview of LMAF projects

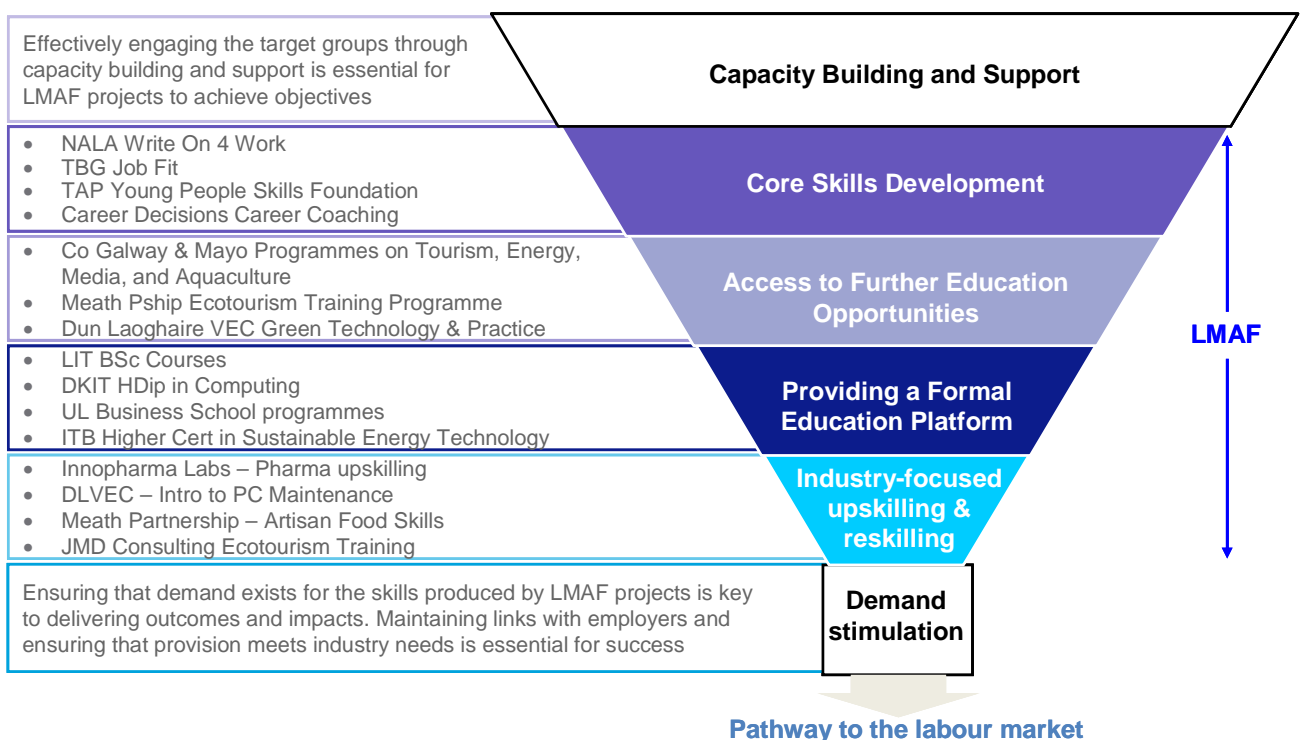
The call for proposals for LMAF 2010 offered funding support for measures targeting activation, up-skilling and re-skilling. The allocation of funding under LMAF 2010 needed to be on the basis of a wide variety of differing labour market needs. For the purpose of analysis and assessment, provision across the projects can be defined in terms of a six-tier model that categorises the main types of intervention funded. As summarised in the analysis in Figure 3.1, aspects of projects focused on:

- *capacity building and support* to engage participants from key target groups in education and training activity;
- the *development of core skills* to ensure that individuals could access further education and training and improve employability or opportunities for self-employment;
- facilitating *access to further education opportunities* where core skills development is complimented by very vocationally focused training which can lead to employment outcomes;
- the *provision of a formal education platform* which would allow those with no previous formal higher education qualifications to obtain accredited skills in key areas of opportunity;

- *industry focused up-skilling and re-skilling* where a clear employment outcome was targeted in an area of industry demand
- *engagement with employers* to establish where existing skills gaps existed in order to design appropriate responses that could facilitate labour activation and stimulate demand for skills developed during project delivery.

In Figure 3.2 we highlight examples of projects which have addressed that particular aspect of labour market activation as a core area of provision. This does not mean that these projects have only focused on this one aspect, as our analysis of LMAF 2010 demonstrates that the key to success seems to lie in the ability to link interventions across these tiers, so that an individual can move across a progression pathway over time in order to ultimately secure employment.

Figure 3.2: Focus of Funded Projects for the LMAF 2010



Source: PA Consulting Analysis of LMAF 2010 Project Applications

This 'progression pathway' approach is important because it represents somewhat of a departure from the traditional approach to labour market activation. In the past, there was often a focus on core skills development in isolation, without a clear idea of how those core skills would be built upon with formal education and training which would ultimately lead to employment opportunities. The LMAF 2010 recognised that there was a continued need to focus on development of softer skills, particularly those cohorts which had experienced either long-term employment or where previous working experience had been concentrated within a very specific skills or employment background (e.g. on a construction site or in basic manufacturing). However it also recognised that such core skills development must be linked to a distinct and complete intervention outcome which will ultimately support a progression into sustainable employment. The ways in which project outputs and activities were designed in this way is further discussed in Section 3.3.

3.3 LMAF project outputs and activities

3.3.1 Project design

As discussed in Chapter 1, there was a strong rationale for the LMAF intervention due to the prevailing conditions of unemployment. There was a need for new and immediate responses to address a range of issues with a particular focus on those market segments where skills shortages had been identified. The sectors targeted by projects included medical devices and biopharmaceutical sector; high level ICT skills; international financial services; the food and beverages sector and the green economy.

The LMAF 2010, by necessity, was conceived, developed and rolled-out within a very short timeframe. This resulted in some disconnect between and within Government departments. Although the programme was approved by the Inter-Departmental Committee which included the Department of Social Protection, relevant information did not disseminate through the department to the appropriate sections and there was a lack of awareness of the nature of the intervention and the eligibility criteria. When the fund was launched and promoted it was communicated that participants would still be entitled to welfare supports, but this was not aligned with existing policy and procedures. This made it problematic for local social welfare offices to reconcile clients' requirements. Those that wished to participate on projects still had to adhere to Back to Education conditions for full-time and part-time courses. This led to confusion between social welfare offices, the project providers and the potential participants, which could have been avoided with more effective communication between and within the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Social Protection. Despite some of the difficulties that arose as a result of poor communications, it should be acknowledged that most problems were ultimately resolved through working together to address the issues raised.

The wide potential target group for the LMAF, ranging from low skilled to high skilled and recently employed to long-term unemployed, means that a diverse range of interventions was required to meet varying needs. This was reflected in the design and structure of the projects which were supported. They involved a range of different types of provision, targeting core skills development; further education and training; higher education; and industry/sector focused up-skilling and re-skilling in line with the pathway tiers noted in Section 3.2. In Figure 3.3 we highlight the main focus of each of the funded projects in this regard.

Figure 3.3: Selected Metrics by Level of Provision

Level of Provision	No of Projects	Participants	Completion Rates	Cost	Cost per completion
Core Skills Development	4	936	80.24%	€2.68m	€3,565
Accessing Further Education Opps	22	7018	80.04%	€16.36m	€2,913
Providing a formal Higher Education platform	19	2138	83.16%	€6.97m	€3,923
Industry/Sector Upskilling & Reskilling	10	2537	79.50%	€3.49m	€1,731
Total	55	12,629	80.47%	€29.51m	€2,903

Source: PA Consulting Analysis of Department of Education and Skills LMAF 2010 Project Data

Figure 3.3 shows that only a small proportion of the funding inputs were directed towards projects with a focus on core skills. It should be recognised that core skills development was an aspect of other projects, but that this was delivered in tandem with more formal education and training provision, building on the progression pathway concept. A significant proportion of the LMAF was devoted to courses which provided a formal education platform, from further to higher education levels, with €16.3mn in the former category and €7.0mn in the later. It is interesting to note that completion rates were around 80% across all tiers of provision, suggesting that participants received appropriate levels of support and learning provision across different types of projects, with no evidence of drop-off in rates as this became more advanced.

3.3.2 Approaches to learning delivery

Project providers used a range of techniques to design appropriate approaches in response to target group needs. A key focus was direct engagement with employers to establish their skills needs and stimulate future demand for participants' skills (this was the case, for example, in the Letterkenny IT Higher Diploma in computing project where Primerica Systems Ireland Ltd had considerable input with the IT in conveying skills demand issues). This was particularly critical in the projects involving industry focused up-skilling or re-skilling where immediate employment was often a primary goal. Approaches often built upon previous experience of delivery, adding additional supports or innovative means of delivery to facilitate access by participants most in need of support (e.g. the First Step project built on its track record of offering funding to unemployed people to start their own businesses by offering intensive training and mentoring support that decreased the loan rejection rate from 70% to 7% and facilitated activation by a significant base of people).

One issue that was identified was around the requirements for certification from project delivery. Some providers viewed this as largely irrelevant for interventions aimed at entrepreneurship or where they were focused on a very specific industry employment need and where ensuring accreditation of learning impacted upon responsiveness. Flexibility is a key attribute of a competitive activation fund like the LMAF and over-prescriptive requirements on certification should be avoided in such initiatives in the future. However recognition of all training and education undertaken is important (for participant motivation, recording and reflection of skills gathered, future employability, etc) and a balance must be found in this regard.

CASE STUDY WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS – COUNTY OFFALY VEC: WORKING TOGETHER TO GET OFFALY WORKING

The County Offaly VEC project offers a clear example of a LMAF project that was designed in partnership with key stakeholders in the region and thus reflected the needs of the county accordingly. The partnership consortium was made up of the following groups and organisations:

- State agencies: Co Offaly VEC, DSP, FÁS, Offaly County Council and Co. Offaly Enterprise Board
- Community and Voluntary organizations including Offaly Local Development Company, Offaly Community For a, Family Resource centres, Residents associations and local community groups
- The Private sector was represented by the Midlands Chamber of Commerce
- Local community activists and Men's and Women's groups throughout the county.

CASE STUDY WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS – COUNTY OFFALY VEC: WORKING TOGETHER TO GET OFFALY WORKING

In preparing their application for funding, Co. Offaly VEC worked with key frontline staff from each of the consortium partners and drew on information from 15 open evenings held throughout the county which identified education and training needs. This level of collaboration was highlighted by the VEC as being key to the success of both the design and delivery of the project. Of the 71 people whose progression we know about, 41 went into employment (20 of those were self-employment opportunities) and the remaining 30 people went on to further education and training. Local 'buy in' was regarded as critical and without active participation from each member of the partnership, the VEC stated that the project would not have happened.

Many course providers were aware, in designing their delivery, that traditional approaches to teaching would not be as effective. This recognised the distance from the labour market of some participants and the length of time since participants, in many instances, had been in an educational setting. Given this context, a range of approaches to delivery were adopted by providers, including:

- Several providers utilised the moodle portal <http://moodle.org/>. Moodle is a Course Management System (CMS), also known as a Learning Management System (LMS) or a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). It is a free web-based application that educators can use to create effective online learning sites. Several providers placed course material onto the site and used discussion forums as a means of communicating with participants. Other providers filmed teaching and placed it on the moodle portal to enable participants to revisit teaching sessions.
- One scheme offered a laptop loan scheme to enable participants that did not have computer access to complete their FETAC assignments electronically.
- A popular tool used by project providers was to use guest speakers, site visits and work placements during the courses. The rationale for these components was to bring real world, relevant context to participants and cement the idea of progression routes from the courses.
- A number of projects incorporated online learning tools. These proved particularly useful to reach some traditionally hard-to-reach groups, who lacked the self-esteem to attend basic literacy and numeracy courses. The availability of phone support was important for delivery of such courses.

The approaches to learning delivery, and the degree of innovation in this regard, varied significantly depending on the nature of provider. This is something which is further explored in the sections below.

3.3.3 Geographic spread of project providers

The diversity of projects provided added huge variety in terms of the geographic spread of the projects delivered, the different type of provider delivering the courses and the nature of the courses delivered. Although there was not a concerted effort to ensure geographic spread of projects funded, a wide geographic spread across project providers was achieved. The focus of the projects varied from those with national coverage (5 of these were funded under LMAF 2010 including, for example, the Career Decisions Ireland projects), to those covering regions (e.g. the Shannon Consortium projects focused on the Mid-West), counties (e.g. projects delivered by the VECs), cities (e.g. the Make it Your Business Enterprise project in Waterford City), multiple cities (e.g. the Digital Skills Academy project in Dublin, Cork and Galway) and communities (e.g. the Focus Ireland project delivered in Tallaght). This

makes exact analysis of the distribution of projects complex. However by categorising each project by the county or counties included in their respective catchment areas, we have produced an overview of the geographic spread in Figures 3.4.

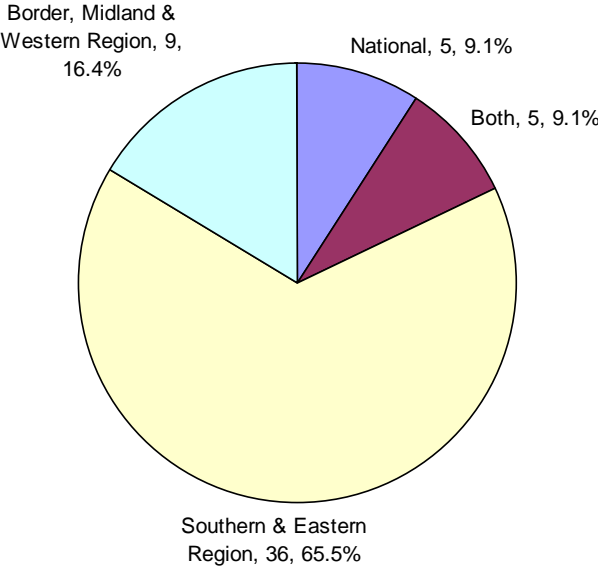
Figure 3.4: Geographic Spread of LMAF 2010 Projects

County Covered	No of projects covering area	% of overall LMAF 2010 projects
National Coverage	5	9.1%
Dublin	22	40.0%
Limerick	8	14.5%
Galway	7	12.7%
Meath	5	9.1%
Cork	5	9.1%
Kerry	5	9.1%
Mayo	5	9.1%
Louth	5	9.1%
Clare	4	7.3%
Donegal	4	7.3%
Waterford	3	5.5%
Carlow	2	3.6%
Wicklow	1	1.8%
Kildare	1	1.8%
Wexford	1	1.8%
Tipperary	1	1.8%
Westmeath	1	1.8%
Offaly	1	1.8%
Kilkenny	1	1.8%

Source: LMAF 2010 Project Proposals

The terms of reference for the evaluation also asked for project coverage to be considered in terms of the two ESF regions: Border, Midlands and Western; and Southern and Eastern. In Figure 3.5 we illustrate this analysis. With 9.1% of projects focused on national provision as set out in Figure 3.4, it was found that a further 9.1% of projects covered specific areas in both BMW and S&E. Some 16.4% of projects focused on areas in the BMW region alone, while 65.5% were focused just within the S&E region.

Figure 3.5: Geographic Spread of LMAF 2010 Projects by Region



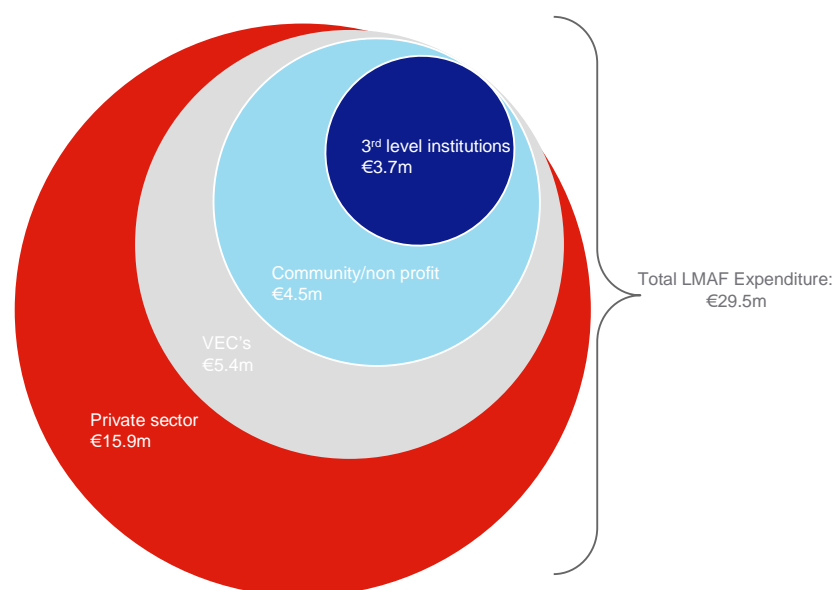
Source: LMAF 2010 Project Proposals

While the above analysis provides an indication as to the spread of the project, it is important also to put this in the context of the competitive approach to funding via LMAF. The focus was on funding the projects which were able to best demonstrate a case in line with the specified selection criteria. Innovation was particularly important and as a result the projects supported were, by definition, those that represented the best evidence-based ideas to address labour market activation. An even spread across counties or regions was therefore unrealistic, but what is essential is that the learning from the projects is reflected in a wider approach which addresses similar needs across the country. The wider approach to meeting particular activation needs may require some modification to the structure of future programmes and this is further considered as we look at different provider experiences and levels of innovation below.

3.3.4 Nature of project providers

The multiple provider model was an important aspect of LMAF 2010. As an open call, it attracted applications from providers in the public, private and community sector. Private sector providers absorbed the majority of funding, as displayed in Figure 3.6.

Figure 3.6: Funding Inputs by Nature of Project Provider



Source: LMAF 2010 Final Reports

The number of projects funded was relatively evenly balanced across these 4 provider groups, although there was a greater concentration of overall funding in those led by the private sector. Further analysis of selected metrics by the different types of provider, presented in Figure 3.7, shows that this was not a product of this training being comparatively more expensive. The cost per beneficiary programme completion by private sector providers was below that of third level institutions and only community and voluntary sector providers were notably less expensive. The completion rates across all types of provider were over 80% with the exception of the VECs, although it should be acknowledged that such provision would be characterised by a greater proportion of lower skilled participants than those managed by other providers. It should be noted that Figure 3.7 presents statistics by *types of provider* and differs from the earlier analysis in Figure 3.3 which was focused on *broad level of provision* (where third level institutions, community and voluntary organisations and the VECs, for example, provided access to further education opportunities, where the private sector and community providers provided industry-focused up-skilling and where a range of providers offered core and generic enterprise skills building activities).

Figure 3.7: Selected Metrics by Type of Provider

Type of Provider	Number of Projects	Participants	Completion Rates	Cost	Cost per completion
3rd level institutions	16	1,264	84.65%	€3.70m	€3,642
Community/Non Profit	13	3,098	80.50%	€4.54m	€1,822
VEC	12	2,921	63.51%	€5.42m	€2,919
Private Sector	14	5,346	88.74%	€15.85m	€3,340
Total	55	12,629	80.47%	€29.51m	€2,903

Source: LMAF 2010 Final Activity and Expenditure Reports by Projects

3.3.5 Collaboration via the projects

Collaboration was a defining characteristic across many of the projects. There was recognition of the progression pathway approach in way in which most projects were conceived and delivered. This included acknowledgement of the need to engage with organisations to ensure that:

- potential participants were aware of opportunities (e.g. the social welfare offices, local voluntary organisations)
- they could receive the support required to engage (e.g. via community childcare initiatives or agencies working with marginalised groups)
- the education and training necessary for progression onto or from the particular LMAF programme was available (e.g. core skills development by a VEC that would allow participants to access higher level vocationally focused courses)
- the skills produced via the LMAF intervention reflected the needs of employers in the area (e.g. by engaging with major local employers, Chambers of Commerce and business associations, industry networks, etc)

In order to reflect these needs, there were generally 3 types of approach identified across projects. Firstly, there were projects where the **provision involved a formal collaboration**. This occurred where a number of stakeholders were involved in delivering different aspects of the project based on their respective remits and expertise. For example:

- the Shannon Consortium, involving the University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology, Mary Immaculate College and Institute of Technology Tralee, applied for support in association with the Tipperary Institute, City of Limerick VEC and County Clare VEC.
- the Digital Skills Academy worked in partnership with four colleges of further education, St. John's Central College, Cork, GTI, Galway, Liberties College and St. Kevin's College in Dublin as well as with the Chambers of Commerce in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Dublin, to deliver the Web Activate programme
- the Sustainable Ireland Cooperative Society (trading as Cultivate) worked with NICER training to deliver a programme on sustainability and the green economy. Cultivate brought their expertise and network in sustainable issues as well as their wider network of industry partners, such as Easca, Business in the Community and the Irish Green Building Council (IGBC) as well as professional organisations, such as the Royal Institutes of Architects of Ireland, the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers and the Institute of Planners Ireland. This broad range of relevant expertise provided understanding of the business case for sustainability and a platform to work effectively with entrepreneurs.

Other project providers focused on a collaborative approach by **linking in with other organisations to ensure access and support** during delivery. For example:

- The Digital Skills Academy worked in partnership with four colleges of further education, St. John's Central College, Cork, GTI, Galway, Liberties College and St. Kevin's College in Dublin as well as with the Chambers of Commerce in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Dublin, to deliver the Web Activate programme.

- The Shannon Consortium noted above used two Downtown Resource Centres in Limerick City and Ennis to access and support participants and delivered a Foundation certificate in partnership with Limerick VEC, feeding into the Level 6-7 vocationally focused courses offered by the higher education institutions.
- The Institute of Technology in Tralee established strong links with a local network of partners, including the local employment services (LES), social welfare offices, the County Enterprise Board and Shannon Development and leveraged that network for the planning and roll-out of the programme.
- Galway and Mayo VECs worked with their local network, including the social welfare office, Bord lascaigh Mhara, GMIT and local employers.

Finally, most project providers demonstrated a **collaborative approach to identification and assessment of need**. Significant consultation and partnership working had been undertaken in the preparation of the initial proposals and in the design of the programmes. For example:

- The Letterkenny Institute of Technology developed their Higher Diploma in Computing in collaboration with key local employers such as Pramerica, Northbrook, SITA, Internetalia and North West Electronics as well as consulting widely with the Regional Executive of IBEC, the management and operational committees of Lónra, the evaluation panel of the Donegal County Enterprise Board, the County Donegal Economic Forum, and the board of the Donegal Citizens Information Service.
- Career Decisions Ireland Career Guidance Programme also benefitted from being framed around the inputs of key stakeholders. Not only did collaborating with partners such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development, National Recruitment Federation, Irish National Teachers Organisation, Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland among others help shape the project, it also provided access to client groups that are aligned to the target profile and, as a result, expedited the promotion and recruitment process.
- The design of the National Butchery Academy programme was developed in collaboration with the Danish meat training college, Roskilde, and with the major meat employers operating in the sector in Ireland, Dawn Meats, AIBP, Kepak, Kildare Meats and Dunbia. Each of these companies agreed to provide work placements to participants. Every participant, who finished the course, including a 4-week placement, got full-time employment in the sector.

3.3.6 Innovation in project development

Throughout the consultation exercise, we also sought to identify innovative practices in the development and design of project development. It was found that there were three typical types of approach to the nature of learning delivered by the projects:

- **Courses that had been run before.** This was mainly found in HE institutions where new course development can take 12 months or more to design and process for internal approval procedures.

- **Courses that were adapted from other offerings.** This was a common approach in HEIs and VECs, where already designed modules were brought together into new courses and literacy and numeracy courses added as an additional ‘up front’ element
- **New, ‘blank sheet’ designed courses** such as the National Butchery Academy or the Innovo Training Enterprise Evolution project which responded to needs and tailored responses rather than offering formulaic and fixed approaches.

All the project providers were aware of the desire to provide innovative solutions to the call for proposals from the Department when the LMAF was introduced and innovation was an ongoing consideration in course design and delivery. However it appeared that the ‘traditional’ project providers were typically less able to design new courses from ‘scratch’ (and therefore introduce more innovation) due to their internal course approval processes.

For example, in third level institutions, while completion rates were high, the evaluation of projects¹¹ suggested that the degree of innovation delivered in the project roll-out was somewhat more limited than was apparent for other providers. There seemed to be an over-reliance in some cases on existing courses rather than development of new content to match emerging labour market need, with the justification that access was being facilitated by a cohort that would not otherwise have been able to secure these education opportunities.

Innovation was one of the core themes of the Labour Market Activation Fund as the fund sought to provide a participant-centred approach that was tailored to meet the specific needs of the target groups. It was important that projects recognised the needs of the target group and the fact that they were returning to training and education after some time away, often meaning that they differed from the cohort traditionally trained by the provider. It is critical that all future activation measures place a strong onus on tailoring provision and associated support to the particular needs of the participant, in addition to facilitating access to courses by those that would not normally avail of such opportunities.

3.3.7 Project recruitment and participation

Effective communication to the potential target audience of an activation intervention is typically a critical aspect of success. This is important not only to raise awareness of the existence of the project and attract participants, but also to ensure that participants fully understand the nature of the project and the expected outcomes and engage on that basis. While the Fund was heavily and successfully promoted, there were some issues around the effectiveness of communication to project participants. The continued entitlement to social welfare payments by participants announced on the launch of the fund was inconsistent with the approach in place in social welfare offices given the nature of some of the projects. This meant that some clients were given conflicting messages when they were presented to these offices. In order to ensure that they could access activation support, some were asked to seek participation on alternative projects (e.g. shorter-term courses) in order to meet the Department’s eligibility conditions. Some examples were also cited at local level of individuals being accepted onto

¹¹ This finding is based on our visits to all project providers and consideration of project proposals, final reports and self-evaluation reports.

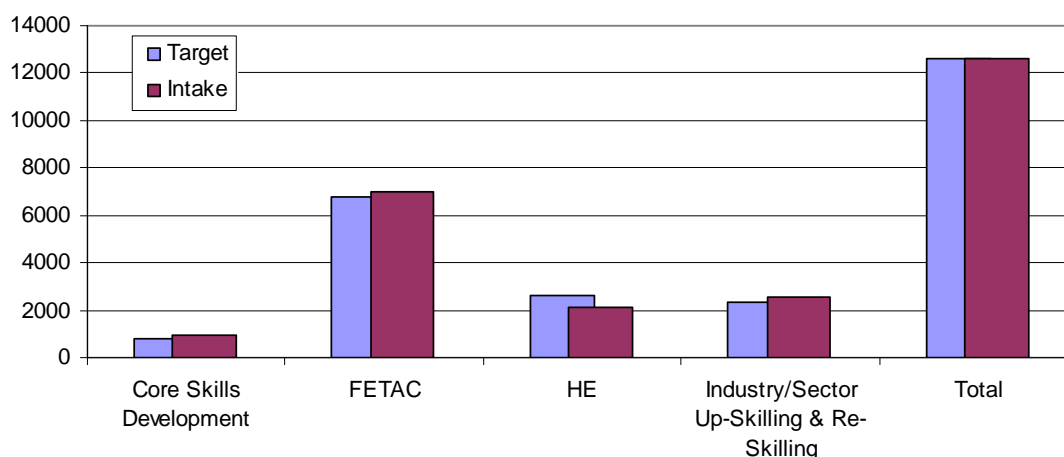
courses while not meeting the overall LMAF requirement of spending 3 months on the live register, again causing frustration within the social welfare offices.

Despite these difficulties in the messages conveyed to potential participants, almost all LMAF project providers reported strong demand for their courses, with many noting anecdotally that they could have filled courses several times over. Projects used several approaches to generate enrolments and there were many innovative approaches to recruitment apparent. For example, DIT used their existing database to do a mailshot to specific, target groups, Innopharma used LinkedIn extensively and other providers used the Department of Social Protection's database to reach their target group. All courses were advertised on the Qualifax website, a national portal that provides information on education and training courses. At a local level, the typical approaches to generating interest in the courses were:

- Radio advertisements
- Press articles and advertisements
- Letters to alumni
- Engagement with the local social welfare offices.

This recruitment activity generated 12,629 enrolments in the LMAF projects, against a target of 12,616. Figure 3.8 illustrates the success of the recruitment process by the nature of the project delivered.

Figure 3.8: LMAF 2010 Enrolments against Targets



Source: PA Consulting Analysis from LMAF Project Final Reports

Enrolment targets were therefore generally met, with only provision by higher education providers slightly lower than envisaged. The recruitment and screening process required a balance between two potentially conflicting interests. On the one hand, in the interest of the sustainability and impact of investment, programme providers were seeking to attract and retain participants who would be most likely to stay engaged and go on to employment and less likely to drop out of a course or programme. On the other hand, the Labour Market Activation Fund was established to help vulnerable groups, particularly the long-term unemployed, get back to work. Often these vulnerable groups would be the least likely candidates to stay engaged in a particular course and the risk of drop-out would be much higher. Thus, course providers needed to balance these conflicting interests. How this was managed and prioritised varied significantly between providers. Many of the programmes provided by the

voluntary community, such as the Focus Ireland programmes, targeted particularly vulnerable who were long-term unemployed. The priority for these groups was to reach the most vulnerable in society and they built in the appropriate tailored supports to help participants stay engaged in the courses. This included everything from course design to extra guidance and advice. The courses were tailored to meet the specific needs of participants at times and locations that would best facilitate their ongoing participation in the programme. Despite the tailoring and extra support provided, these types of courses were more likely to suffer from higher drop-out rates. While other more industry-focussed programmes may have attracted more recently unemployed people, who were closer to the labour market, these courses were likely to have lower drop-out rates.

CASE STUDY SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT - COUNTY DUBLIN VEC

County Dublin VEC provides an example of a LMAF project that demonstrates a successful recruitment strategy. County Dublin VEC was awarded funding to provide 45 programmes under the LMAF. Programmes were designed for the delivery of a range of Further Education & Training Award Council (FETAC) major awards in a variety of key work-related subjects from Levels 3-5 on the NQF. A total of 45 programmes were delivered across 5 Adult Education Centres, 5 Community Colleges, 1 College of Further Education, 1 Youth Support and Training Centre, 1 Traveller Training Centre, 1 Local Community Development Company and 1 Institute of Technology. These programmes ran in the areas of Dundrum, Clondalkin, Blanchardstown, Tallaght, Donaghmede, Balbriggan and Lucan. Course offerings included: Retail and Security; Information Technology; Sport and Fitness; business studies; etc.

The project surpassed its recruitment target of 650 learners, recruiting 743 in total. The VEC did report a concern about the level of communication between the Department of Social Protection and staff working at the 'hatches'. Having recognised this problem early in the process, the VEC undertook a series of recruitment initiatives that included:

- At the start of the project the County Coordinator for LMAF made appointments to meet staff at local social protection offices and gave talks about the programmes County Dublin VEC were running across the county.
- Many local coordinators contacted local offices, spoke with various people and explained the programme further
- Promotional stands in local Social Protection offices and shopping centres.
- Promotion with the Local Employment Service and Local Development Company.
- Internal networking and referral.
- Advertisements in local newspapers and online, in community centres, local churches, shopping centres, post office and online.
- Open days, Interviews and Q&A sessions
- Social Protection in Balbriggan sent a mail shot to 3,000 unemployed adults who fit the criteria.

Once participants were recruited, centres provided an induction week of 20 hours of student participation which involved initial literacy, language and numeracy assessments and initial interventions from Education Guidance Officers.

The induction week also allowed tutors to implement the 'Key Skills' screening tool. This enabled them to have a clear idea of participant's levels and ensure they were on the most appropriate programme for their needs. The induction week allowed centres to provide learners with timetables, handbooks on policies and procedures, study skill sessions, information sessions on FETAC and the Qualifications Framework.

The only recruitment frustration apparent in project providers was some inconsistency in conveying the existence of the LMAF projects to local social welfare offices. There appeared to be a lack of

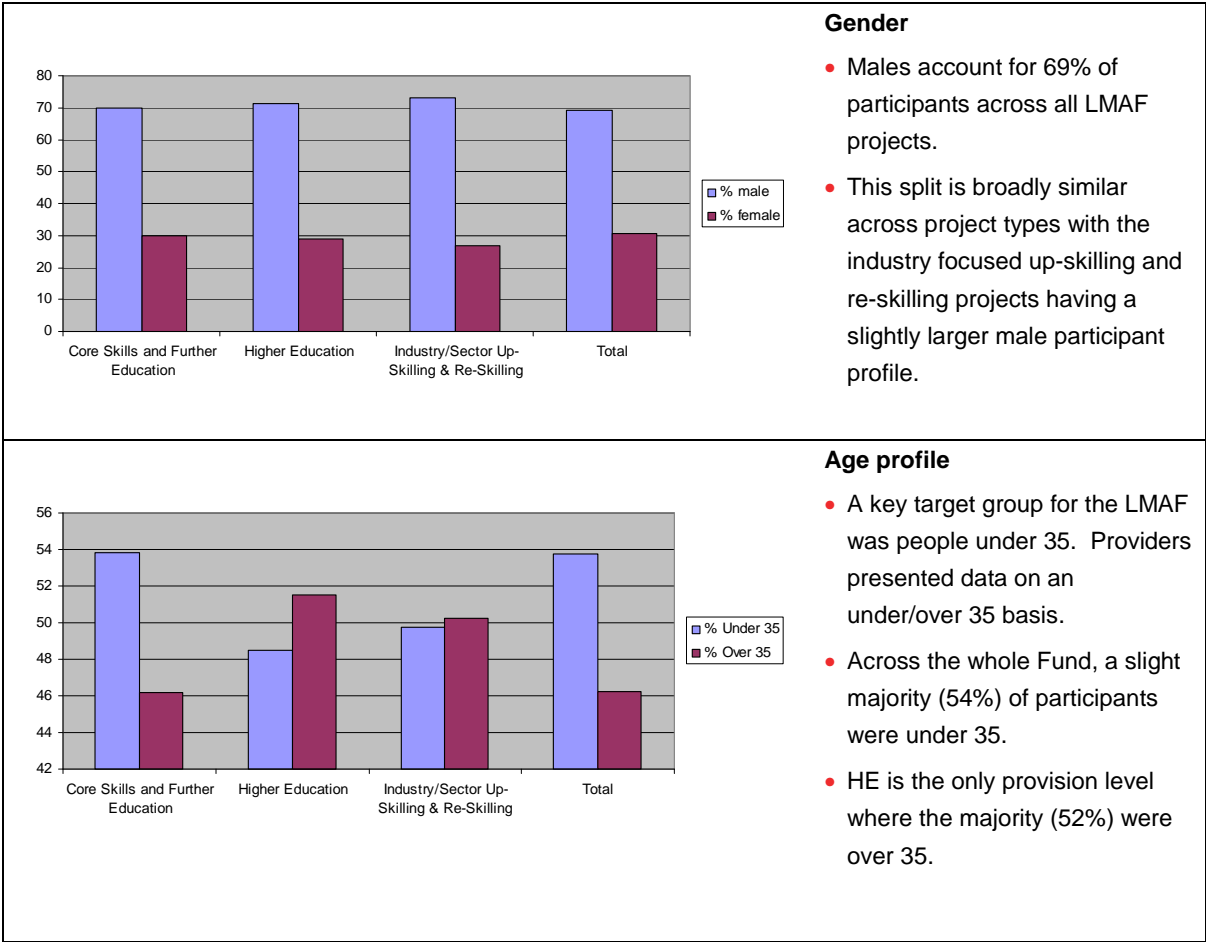
awareness by staff in these offices about the LMAF and the locally funded projects and further difficulties were noted around the understanding of eligibility criteria. On the provider’s part, there was found to be a greater need to communicate where the intervention fits into participants overall path to employment (especially where one intervention leads to another intervention).

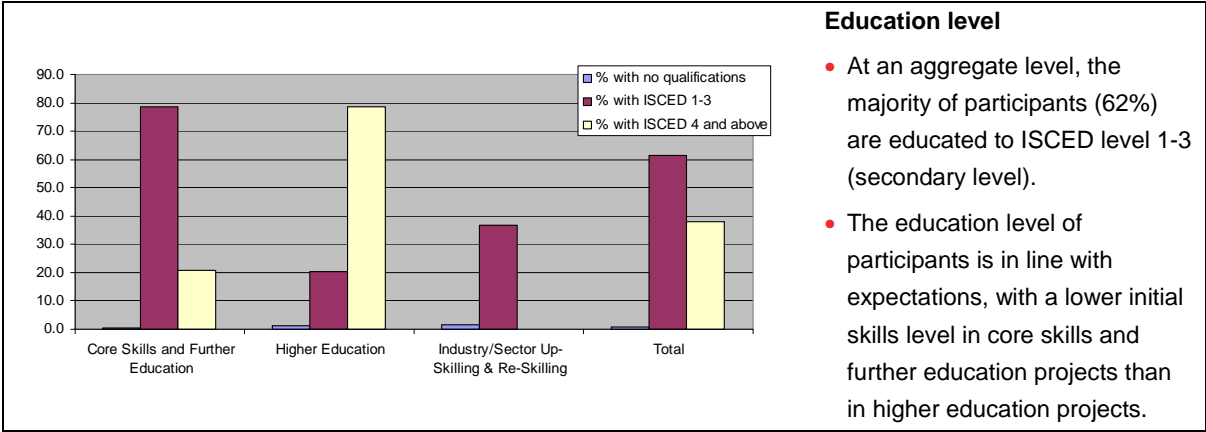
3.3.8 Participant profile

We have noted the differing focus of LMAF projects as they attempt to address particular activation issues and facilitate a move by key target groups along a progression pathway. This is reflected in a very diverse participant profile across LMAF 2010, with significant variances in characteristics of the 12,629 participants including age, education level and length of unemployment. This reinforces the need for flexible tailored responses to meet the needs of very different cohorts, and some of the projects demonstrated very interesting approaches to engaging with particular participant profiles. For example, the Higher Certificate in Electrical Technology in IT Blanchardstown was designed to provide unemployed electricians with an opportunity to build on previous qualifications and work experience and acquire skills in the so-called green energy technologies. Programme providers used a number of different avenues to attract the right candidates, including using their own network of contacts in the industry, hosting open evenings, using their existing student database, as well as liaising with home school liaison officers in the Blanchardstown area to reach parents.

Figure 3.9 provides a ‘snap shot’ overview of the participant profile across LMAF 2010 projects.

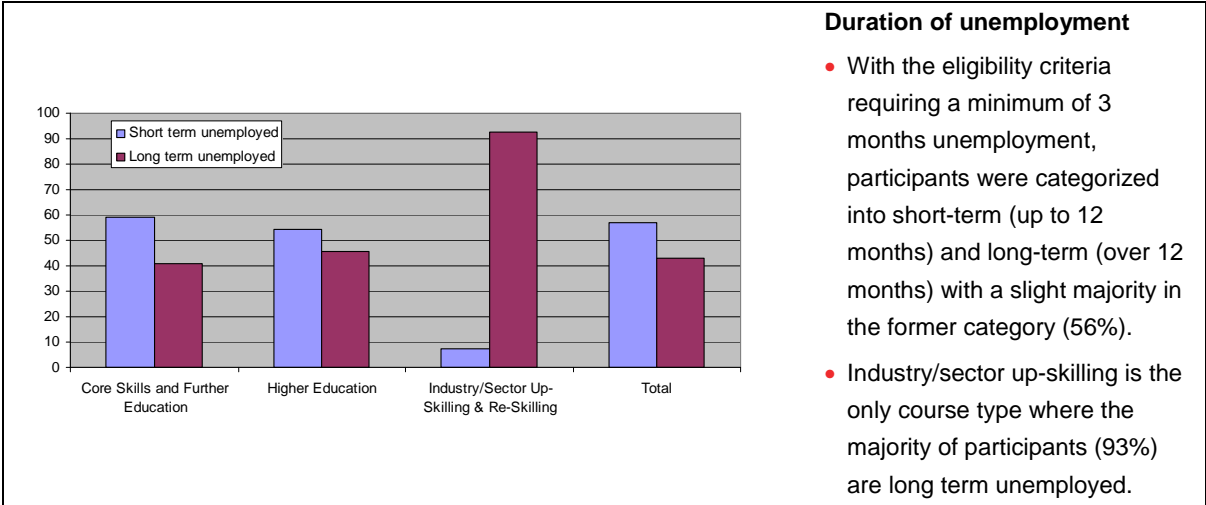
Figure 3.9: Participant Profile





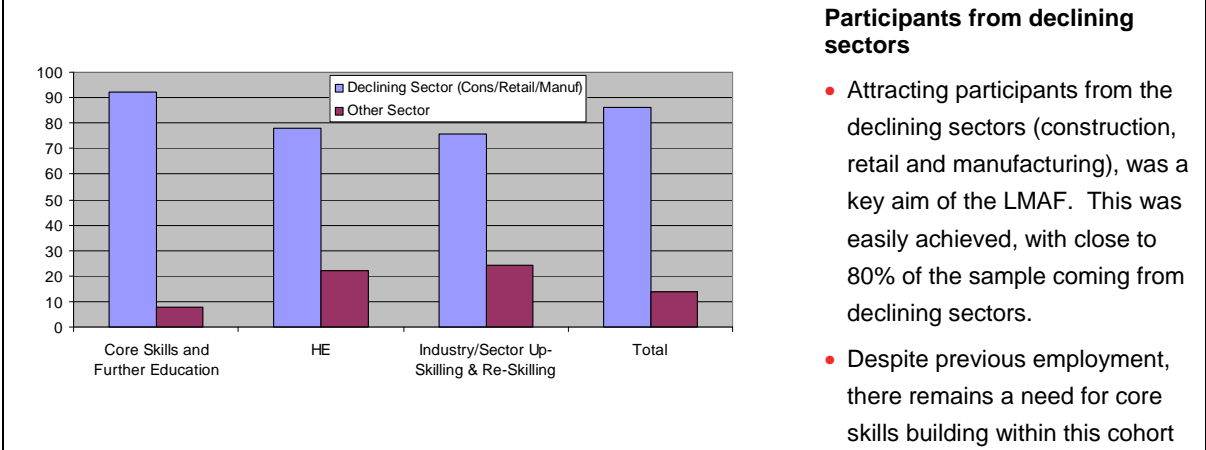
Education level

- At an aggregate level, the majority of participants (62%) are educated to ISCED level 1-3 (secondary level).
- The education level of participants is in line with expectations, with a lower initial skills level in core skills and further education projects than in higher education projects.



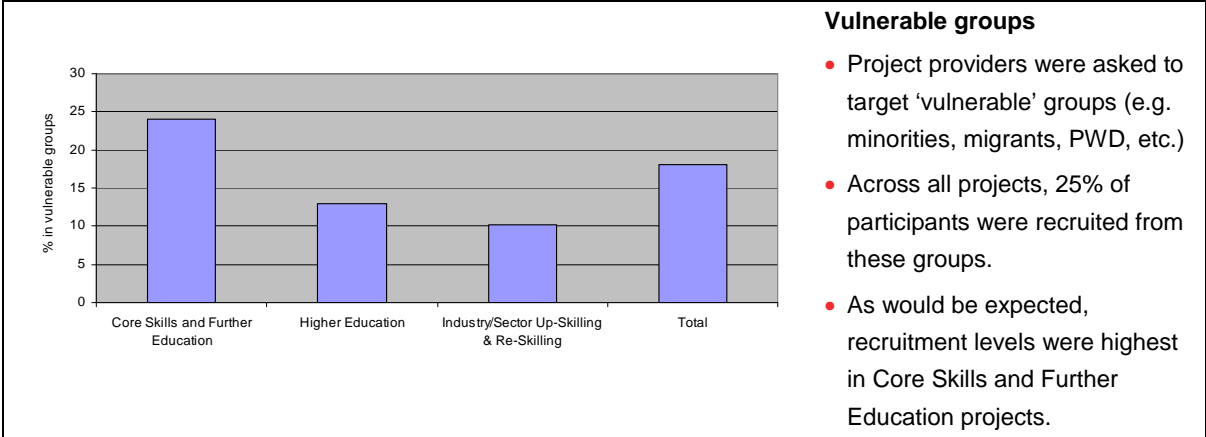
Duration of unemployment

- With the eligibility criteria requiring a minimum of 3 months unemployment, participants were categorized into short-term (up to 12 months) and long-term (over 12 months) with a slight majority in the former category (56%).
- Industry/sector up-skilling is the only course type where the majority of participants (93%) are long term unemployed.



Participants from declining sectors

- Attracting participants from the declining sectors (construction, retail and manufacturing), was a key aim of the LMAF. This was easily achieved, with close to 80% of the sample coming from declining sectors.
- Despite previous employment, there remains a need for core skills building within this cohort



Vulnerable groups

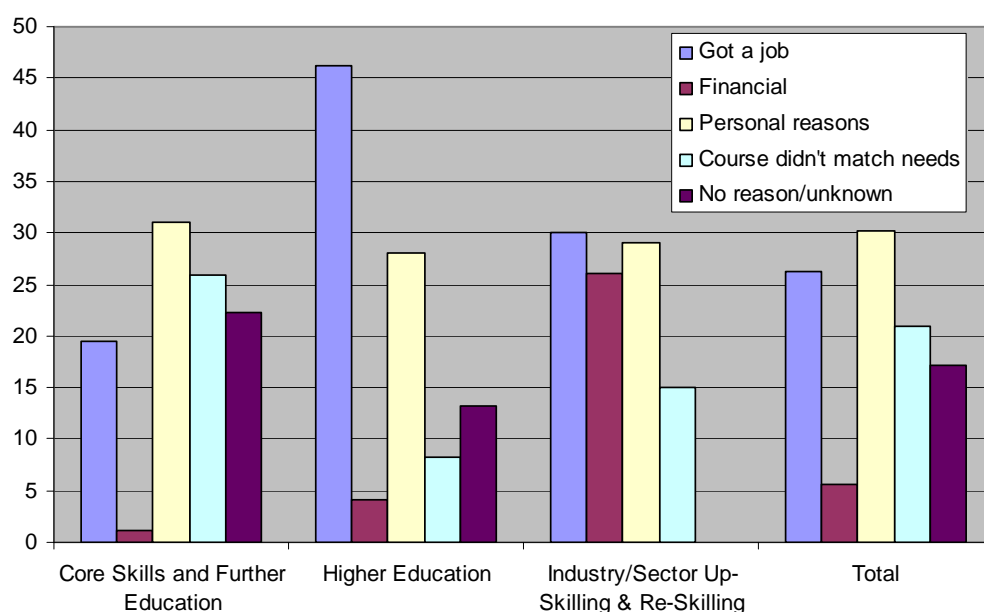
- Project providers were asked to target ‘vulnerable’ groups (e.g. minorities, migrants, PWD, etc.)
- Across all projects, 25% of participants were recruited from these groups.
- As would be expected, recruitment levels were highest in Core Skills and Further Education projects.

Source: PA Consulting Analysis of Project Provider Self-Evaluation Reports

3.3.9 Early departures

The analysis above demonstrates a diverse participant profile across LMAF 2010, with the majority reported by project providers as being highly motivated to attend and learn. As with all activation interventions, however, there were inevitably people who left programmes prior to completion. Project providers were asked to profile the reasons for these early departures. Statistics in this regard are available for just over 1,000 of the 2,466 early leavers, with Figure 3.10 presenting the analysis.

Figure 3.10: Reasons for Early Departures



Source: PA Consulting Analysis of Project Provider Statistics

Across all projects, close to a quarter of participants left early to take up employment, representing a positive factor in not completing the programme. Personal reasons were recorded as a significant rationale for early departure. Anecdotal evidence suggests that such reasons typically encompassed childcare issues, travel difficulties or health reasons. Indeed childcare was consistently raised as a barrier to participation during our consultations. One provider, the Meath Partnership, offered access to childcare support funding of up to €300 per participant. Although not deemed to be a significant amount of money to cover all childcare requirements for some participants, it was a welcome support for participants that had availed of this opportunity.

3.4 Evolution of approach to activation inputs and outputs

One of the most striking characteristics in the analysis of LMAF inputs and outputs was the extent of variation across funded projects. The pressing desire to find innovative means to address serious labour market activation issues prompted an open call for proposals allowing a high degree of flexibility in the responses. This had significant merit at the time given the unprecedented nature of the challenges being faced, with new cohorts joining the live register for the first time and a new way of thinking required to improve the value-for-money in mainstream activation interventions. The result was that the Fund supported a very diverse project portfolio, involving very different providers, approaches to learning and support, participant profiles, levels of collaboration and innovation. These

distinctions in approach were justified as the projects were targeting different types of need, from those of highly marginalised cohorts to lower and higher skilled groups experiencing unemployment for the first time as a product of sectoral decline. They also facilitated a progression pathway approach which linked provision to further education and training or employment outcomes.

However this does mean that deciphering the overall success of the LMAF intervention is complex with different provision models seeking different participant outcomes. The strategic, competitive and multiple provider approach of the LMAF offered the flexibility required to address the different needs and these key attributes should be retained in the approach to funding activation measures in the future. There is however a case for looking at whether activation funding inputs and outputs should be funded on such a universal basis, with more focused programmes targeting different aspects of need offering advantages including:

- a clearer link between funding and defined outcomes;
- selection, delivery and reporting requirements which closer reflect the nature of providers
- greater potential for roll-out to address similar issues of need elsewhere in the country
- an approach which builds further on the participant-centred approach of the LMAF to recognised specific cohorts within dedicated programmes

Taking account of these advantages from a more focused intervention, there is merit in designing future Funds around particular levels of provision (e.g. NFQ 6 and below), types of provider, region of the country and target sectors. This would also facilitate development of a more robust pre-qualification and selection stage which placed practical conditions on the resources to be deployed, means of delivery, monitoring and reporting requirements and links to pathway outcomes. This latter aspect has to be the critical determinant in the justification of future activation funding. The extent to which LMAF 2010 realised such outcomes forms the focus of the next Chapter, and this will allow a focus on achievable performance indicators within more focused programmes in the future.

4 LMAF outcomes, impacts and additionality

The Labour Market Activation Fund 2010 thus supported a series of projects that were linked by one common theme: a focus on moving individuals along a progression pathway that would ultimately lead to sustainable employment. It is essential therefore that the evaluation clearly sets out the progression that has been achieved from these interventions and the overall impact that has arisen to date from the LMAF funding. In this regard it is critical to establish the additionality of the projects, ensuring that the outcomes and impacts generated would not have been realised without the introduction of the fund.

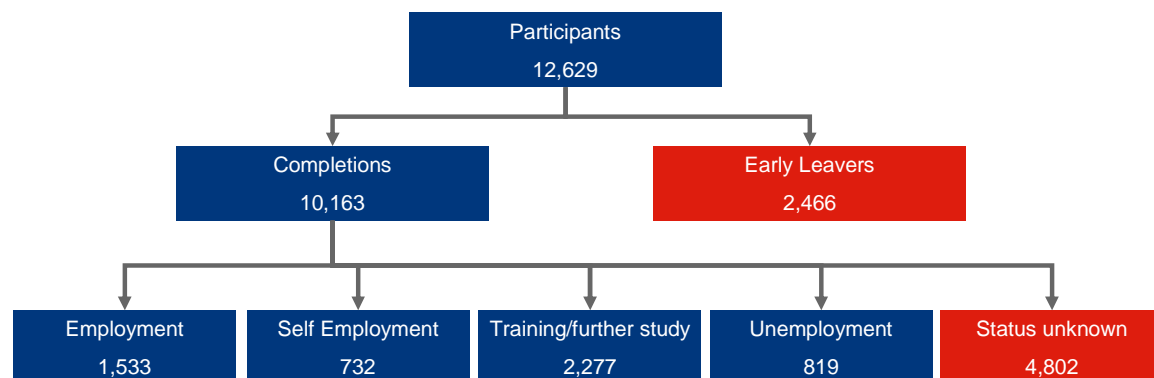
4.1 Analysis of LMAF outcomes

4.1.1 Overall progression outcomes

In analysing outcomes, it is important to acknowledge that a significant proportion of LMAF projects have only recently been completed. As such, the outcome statistics should not be taken as a true reflection of the final outcomes of the Fund, with the nature of the progression pathway meaning that there is often a lag before further education and training or employment opportunities are secured following completion of the initial activation programme.

Nonetheless identifying the progression routes following completion from funded projects is essential to the overall consideration of LMAF value-for-money. As noted in Chapter 3, the average completion rate was 80% and ranged from 64% to 89% across the different types of provision. The diagram below provides an overview of the progression paths across all participants.

Figure 4.1: Progression Pathways

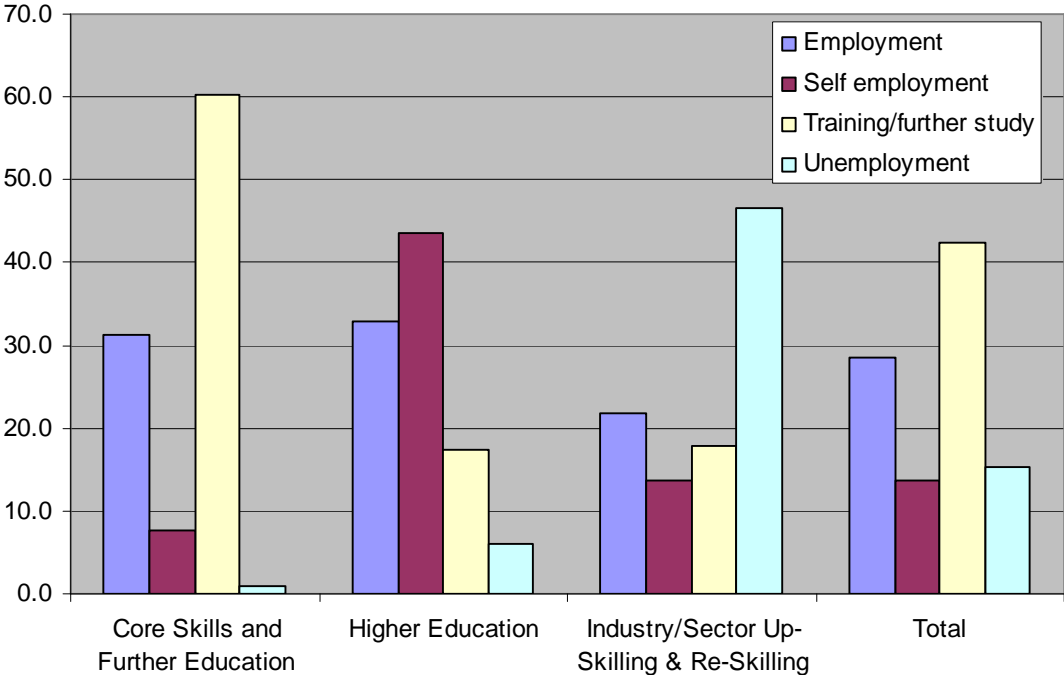


Source: PA Consulting Analysis of Project Provider Statistics

One striking component of the analysis in Figure 4.1 is the high proportion (47%) of those completing the LMAF supported programmes where current status is unknown. This is partly attributable to the short timeframe since the completion of courses which has limited the extent to which follow-up monitoring has been undertaken. However it is also an indication of the lack of an obligation to conduct such analysis at regular intervals post-completion and ensure that project outcomes were robustly measured on an ongoing basis. The onus on project providers to monitor and report on outcomes and impacts post funding should be a prior condition of future activation support, with clear guidance on how this is collected and fed back to the Department. This will ensure that the full value of the investment can be ascertained on an ongoing basis, filling a key data gap which is essential if we are to judge if there is an effective progression pathway approach in place.

Although such an unequivocal conclusion is not possible at this stage, the available data does point to an emerging progression pathway from the activation measures. Where progression outcomes are known (for a strong sample of 5,361 people), 29% of participants were found to be in employment, 13% were in self-employment, 43% had progressed to further education or training and just 15% were still unemployed. The positive outcomes do not automatically mean that these individuals have left the live register. Many of those self employed and those engaged in further studies may possibly still be receiving support from the Department of Social Protection, as will a number of those employed, depending on their hours worked. Nonetheless Figure 4.2 reinforces the emerging indications of successful progression across the different types of provision supported by the LMAF. The interventions focused upon core skills development and accessing further education in particular seem to be a key bridging stage, with participants accessing programmes delivered by the VECs and community and voluntary providers to build capacity and begin specific skills building, which then lead on to further education and training opportunities.

Figure 4.2: Progression Pathways by Type of Course



Source: PA Consulting Analysis of Project Provider Statistics

The analysis of progression pathways by type of provision also reveals positive progression routes from higher education, with greater prominence, as would be hoped and expected, of employment and self-employment outcomes over further study progression. Industry led and focused up-skilling and re-skilling has more disappointing levels in this regard, although this is the area where the sample of participants was least concentrated.

CASE STUDY ON TARGETING PROVISION AT GROWTH SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY – INNOPHARMA LABS UPSKILLING FOR THE FUTURE

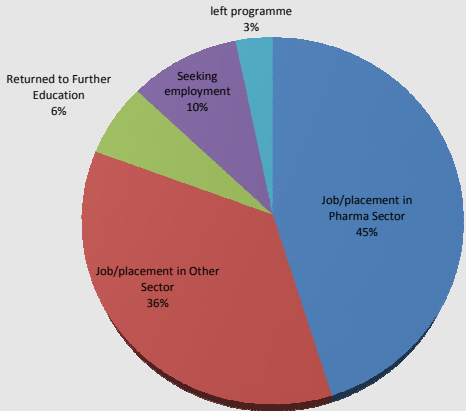
The Innopharma Labs case study demonstrates a proactive response to market demand in a growth sector with strong employment prospects. Innopharma Labs is a private education provider that delivers education and training in the pharmaceutical and medical devices sector. The programmes were developed in response to discussions with the pharmaceutical sector as well as recent Pharmachem Ireland and Forfás reports that recognised a skills gap in these sectors.

Of the 100 programme participants, 60 formerly unemployed people are now employed as a result of their participation on the project and project providers are confident that the remaining 40 will also reach the ultimate goal. Project providers have remained in regular contact with the participants and continue to support them in their search for employment.

A robust application process was fundamental the success of the project. Innopharma Labs used a detailed application, short-listing and interviewing process to ensure that the most appropriate people were offered places. Of the 378 applications received, 239 were short-listed, 193 were interviewed and 115 were offered places.

A unique selling point of the Innopharma Labs approach was the emphasis on networking in the industry. Innopharma Labs facilitated networking activities through their established industry links, meetings, events and through setting up a LinkedIn Group, which included senior people working across the industry.

‘This programme supports some of the key objectives outlined in the recently published IBEC paper on ‘Innovation and Excellence – Pharmachemical Ireland Strategic Plan’ with regards to developing a flexible and adaptable workforce coupled with being highly efficient and cost effective. There are nine major ongoing capital investments, totalling over €1.5 billion - at Centocor, Eli-Lilly, Glaxo-SmithKline, Gilead and Pfizer in Cork, at Genzyme and Servier in Waterford and at Merck Sharp and Dohme in Clonmel and Carlow. More significant is the fact that most of these investments are in Biotech or R&D - the cutting edge of the sector. This bodes very well for the long-term future of the industry in this country.’



Data provided by the Department of Social Protection was also able to track changes in status of 1,065 individuals that participated in the LMAF via their ISTS system. This revealed that 786 were still in receipt of Jobseekers’ Allowance in October 2011, although 25 of this number were in part-time education, internships or work placement programmes. Although this is drawn from a much smaller sample than the destination statistics above - representing 8% of project participants - it nonetheless demonstrates that there remains a cohort that is still unemployed despite the interventions.

4.1.2 Project success in generating outcomes

While the overall analysis shows some immediate and promising evidence of the LMAF intervention facilitating progression routes for individuals, it is also important consider outcomes at a project-specific level. As an intervention targeting innovative approaches to labour market activation, a key objective must be to determine project success in terms of its ability to deliver the outcomes identified at the outset.

From our review of the 55 projects across 42 providers, it was found that 53 had produced outcomes which were generally in line with the initial target (and which reflects the fact that the LMAF overall delivered its target number of beneficiaries). There were only 2 projects where outcomes fell significantly below initial targets. Some of the factors which impacted upon the relative success or failure of projects which were noted in examining their outcomes:

- The courses offered across the LMAF projects included a mix of specific skills building courses that were targeted at particular sectors or industries and more transferable skills which are applicable across sectors and industries. Those supported by the Fund generally included some modules around the softer supports required to support return to employment, such as confidence-building, CV clinics, networking, in their portfolio. Those that focused only on core skills development tended to be less effective in demonstrating tangible outcomes.
- The few projects where there appeared to be limited evidence of progression were focused on engagement with the most marginalised groups in inner city areas. Although still offering a goal of formal accreditation and a link to outcomes which would facilitate employability, the nature of such interventions tended to be more focused on social inclusion objectives rather than education and training pathways.
- Despite this the drop-out rates across all projects were not significant, although they were highest within VEC provider projects, reflecting a focus on the lower skilled cohort. A certain drop-out rate is unavoidable in any intervention of this nature. Some drop-outs will be 'positive' drop-outs, for example if people find full-time employment that prevents them to complete the course. Others are avoidable, due to a lack of support or a failure to accommodate the needs of the participant in the way in which the course has been delivered (a weakness in some third level provision). Monitoring progression of those that leave the programmes prior to completion is critical if such issues are to be addressed.
- The successful focus on building entrepreneurial and wider business skills to facilitate a move into self-employment and stimulate new businesses across key projects. By tailoring such interventions to meet the needs of particular cohorts and offering support in areas such as business planning, finance, peer networking, mentoring and innovation capability building, there is emerging evidence of sustainable new businesses created as a result of projects.
- Many of the projects funded offered a work placement as a core component of the course and this was a key attribute. The work placements provided an important learning opportunity to give participants direct experience of working in an environment or sector which might be new to them. There was, however, some resistance where there was a perception of 'working for free' or where

travel, childcare and other costs were barriers to participation in employment. Support mechanisms alongside placement provision are therefore a key aspect in supporting progression.

- Work placements need to be designed to match employer need with participants' skills and circumstances. Work placements that add real value for the employer, rather than displacing employment which would have occurred in any event and which provide a good fit for the participant providing a 'win-win' result.

This analysis points towards certain types of projects where the platform for activation success is more evident. The mix of core and specific industry and occupationally focused skills, the inclusion of a work placement aspect, the provision of wider participant support, the importance of building capability for self-employment and business start-up and the focus on progression rather than the education and training course in itself were all key characteristics of success which should be reflected in the design of any future interventions. Such features are reinforced when mapping all of the projects in terms of accreditation and level of provision and this is set out in section 4.1.3 below.

CASE STUDY ON THE IMPORTANCE OF WORK PLACEMENTS – DIGITAL SKILLS ACADEMY WEBACTIVATE

The WebActivate project, run by the Digital Skills Academy, demonstrates the importance of work placements in integrating participants into a learning environment, providing hands-on learning and offering an opportunity to network with industry experts.

The WebActivate project addresses the digital deficit among Irish SMEs by training the unemployed in the skills required to publish business websites, and drive traffic to these websites through online marketing and social media. These skills, focused on producing Web Publishing and Marketing Freelancers, were FETAC certified (with 4 credits at NFQ level 6).

Work placement played a vital role in the participants' development of SME websites. Following their 'In-Centre' training, each participant spent fourteen weeks with several different SMEs on 'freelance' work placement. In this time they created the SME websites and coached business owners on how to maximise business via their newly achieved web presence – all at no cost to the employer. This 'freelance' work placement was facilitated by supplying each participant with a hi-spec HP laptop, a range of software, 3G broadband and mobile telephony equipment and accounts.

Overall, 198 people enrolled on the course and 160 of those completed the course (80%). A survey of the 160 participants who completed the course was carried out 3 months after the course to assess programme impact. The survey had an 86% response rate and found that 56% of those who responded to the survey had gone on to employment. 51% of respondents were working as free-lancers / sole traders, a further 3% were contracted to a company or were employed by a company and three had set up their own companies. 59% of respondents said that they had used their skills to provide services to the digital media sector.

4.1.3 Realising accreditation outcomes

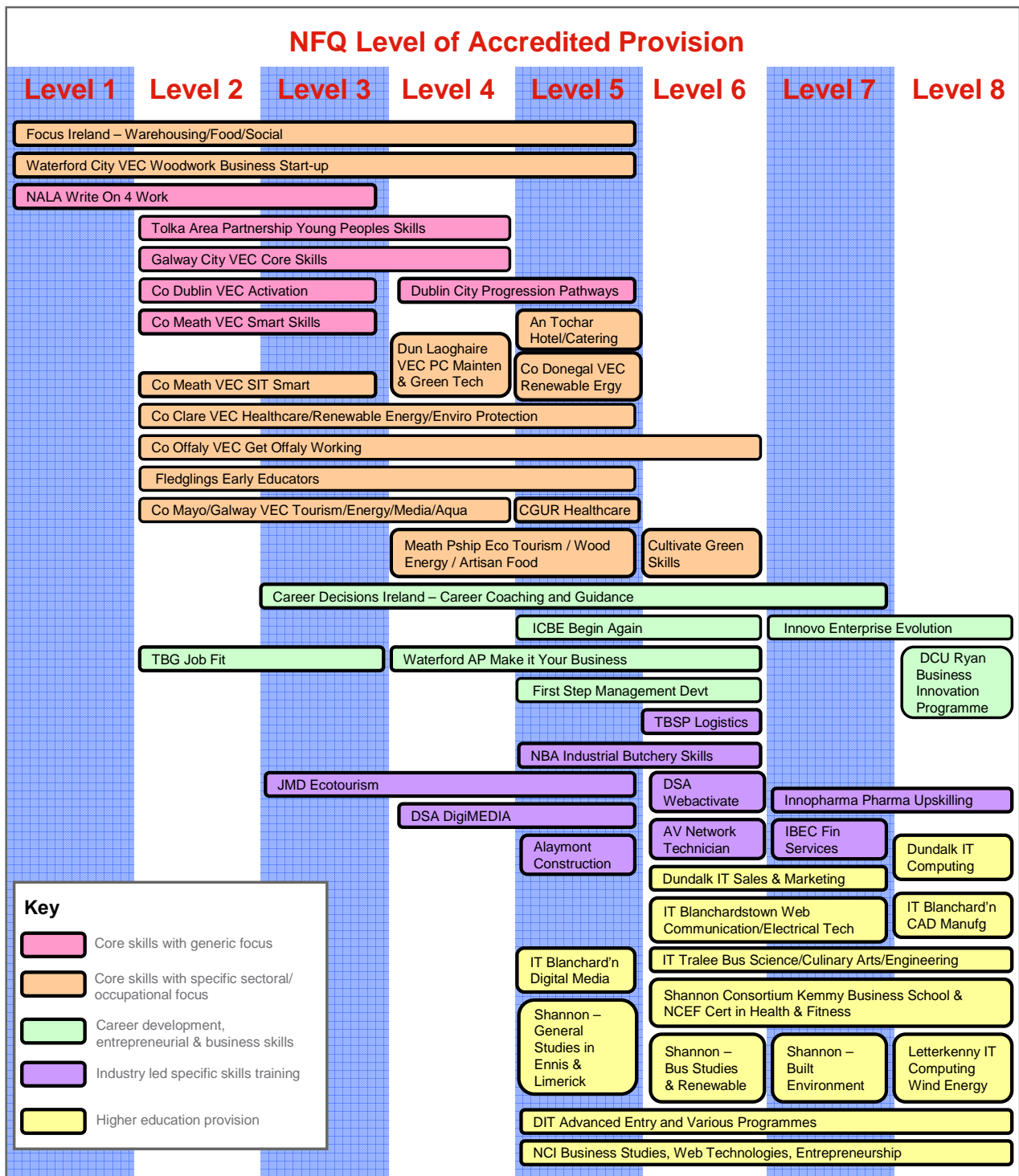
In addition to the relative success or failure of projects in terms of meeting their respective objectives, there was a wider goal to raise overall skill levels across participants in order to support the development of the economy. Strong emphasis was placed on the need to all education and training provided via LMAF projects to be NFQ accredited. This ensured that all participants had a tangible outcome from the skills obtained regardless of the immediate outcome. The focus on NFQ accreditation also facilitated the overall progression pathway, providing a platform for people to move on to the next stage of education, training or ultimately securing employment.

An important aspect of the evaluation was therefore to understand the accreditation outcomes across each project. This helped define their respective roles in the pathway and provide a guide to the level of up-skilling produced by LMAF 2010. In Figure 4.3 over the page we map each of the projects in terms of their focus on provision and ultimate accreditation outcomes. This covers the entire range of training provided, from NFQ level 1 where projects began by addressing the basic numeracy and literacy issues of participants, to NFQ level 8 where participants could obtain higher diplomas from third level institutions in specific, highly skilled areas. The mapping exercise revealed a number of trends which build upon the proceeding analysis:

- Projects which provided a focus on core skills development and generic skills only which build the capability of individuals to access further education and training find work but which did not target specific industry sectors or occupations for this ultimate outcome.
- Projects which recognised the need for some core skills development but which linked this to more specific vocational training which was focused on securing future employment opportunities within particular industries or occupations.
- Projects which focused on building career development, entrepreneurial or business skills to stimulate self-employment and sustain ongoing employment.
- Projects which were industry-led responses to specific up-skilling or re-skilling activities which met and identified or occupational need.
- Projects which provide access to third level education provision, either in the form of initial foundation courses or in follow-on specific degree and diploma programmes which target specific industry and occupational skills needs.

The analysis demonstrates the practical application of the progression pathway approach across the funded projects. The importance of provision across the spectrum of NFQ level provision was critical, and the mapping exercise shows how projects focused on building capability across a number of levels, mixing core skills development with specific skills building to ensure success.

Figure 4.3: Mapping Accreditation Outcomes across LMAF Supported Projects



Source: PA Consulting Analysis of LMAF 2010 Project Applications and Final Reports

Figure 4.3 highlights a pattern in the streaming of LMAF programmes across different NFQ levels of provision. Most of the projects have some focus of provision on NFQ levels 3 to 6, while linking this to some core skills building at NFQ levels 1 to 2 if required, and in some cases offering the opportunity to progress onto HE courses at levels 7 and 8. This core focus on streaming around levels 3 to 6 in order to target a specific industry or occupational skills need should be a key consideration in designing and delivering activation interventions in future.

The analysis of accreditation outcomes is limited at this time to project level due to the short timeframe since programme completion (with many projects yet to formally award qualifications) and a lack of disaggregation in some of the statistics which have been provided. We have discussed the need for more robust monitoring of individual progression and recording accreditation of up-skilling is a key part of that process. The mapping of accreditation outcomes not only on a project basis but also on an individual basis (in terms of major, minor and special purpose awards at NFQ level) needs to be a critical aspect of future labour market policy. It will form an important part of quantification of the National Skills Strategy and needs to be reflected in the approach to any future activation Fund.

4.1.4 Potential for mainstreaming successful projects

The previous two sections of the report set out the key factors in stimulating project success and the accreditation outcomes generated through the LMAF 2010. In this section, we build on this analysis to review which projects offer the greatest potential for mainstreaming learning into wider labour market activation policy and interventions. In undertaking this analysis, we are seeking examples of best practice in particular aspects of programme delivery, such as strong partnership mechanisms, an innovative approach or an effective response to identified industry need. Based on analysis of programme outputs, outcomes and impacts, including success in reaching and responding to the needs of target groups, Figure 4.4 sets out examples of projects that offer the best examples for mainstreaming. The table describes the key learning and success factors of those projects and explains why they demonstrate potential for mainstreaming.

Figure 4.4: Successful Projects and Potential for Mainstreaming

Relevant Projects	Key learning / success factors	Potential for mainstreaming
Career Decision Ireland (Career Fit)	This was an assessment and guidance Programme provided to over 1,000 unemployed persons around the country. The primary purpose of the programmes was to provide individualised and person-centred Career Assessment and Guidance to help participants to scientifically identify suitable employment/career opportunities, their training and educational needs to respond to those opportunities and programmes available that address those training needs.	The tools used by Career Decisions Ireland to deliver this training could be used in the mainstream programmes to assess job seekers employment options. This would provide a real benefit in matching jobseekers skills, experience and interests with market opportunities.
IBEC, ICBE	The benefits of incorporating a work placement into the training programme were maximised when there was a clear project goal with specific timelines and deliverables, for which participants were responsible. This approach provided both the participants and employers with a clear understanding of the purpose, benefits, duration and conditions of the placement.	Incorporating structured work placements into mainstream programmes in the future would maximise the benefits from this approach for the participant and the employer.
First Step Microfinance	A number of projects focussed on building the capacity of individuals to start their own business, with the potential that these businesses would in	As well as providing core skills, specific skills, technical knowledge and industry-specific

Relevant Projects	Key learning / success factors	Potential for mainstreaming
	<p>fact create further jobs. The project run by First Step is an example of this, whereby following a rigorous evaluation process, 219 participants were selected to go on the project, resulting in 187 new business start-ups. The project provider believes there is a strong demand for this type of service, with over 600 applicants on their waiting list.</p>	<p>training, the support provided to facilitate new business start-ups offers opportunity to create new employment prospects.</p>
<p>Digital Skills Academy, Alaymont</p>	<p>A number of the funded projects were aligned to wider economic policy and target sectors. For example, the Digital Skills Academy delivered training to create websites for small businesses, aligning participants with a business that otherwise would not have the funds or the skills to launch their website. This is aligned to enterprise policy of increasing the online presence of Irish businesses, and benefits both participants and the businesses. Alaymont training delivered three different courses with regard to improving skills required for building and refurbishing buildings to higher energy efficiency standards</p>	<p>Priority should be given to funding programmes that are strongly aligned with national policy priorities, such as energy efficiency, ICT integration, etc.</p>
<p>The National Butchery Academy</p>	<p>The NBA academy partnered with a Danish meat training college to deliver the most cutting-edge training in butchery skills. As there was no recognised accreditation available in Ireland, the Danish school provided the training structure, course material, assessment and accreditation to the National Butchery Academy.</p>	<p>Where there are gaps in particular relevant industry or sector skills, working in partnership with the right international partner can provide practical and useful access to the latest global thinking in that particular area.</p>
<p>Offaly VEC</p>	<p>The partnership approach adopted by Offaly VEC provided an integrated holistic approach to delivering training and support services. By working together, the VEC, Offaly Partnership, FÁS, Offaly County Council and the County Enterprise Board, could offer a range of ongoing supports throughout and beyond the project lifecycle. The partnership approach, working in collaboration with local stakeholders provides a seamless approach to supporting job seekers return to employment.</p>	<p>Future programmes should consider the partnership approach adopted by providers. This would ensure a holistic, seamless approach to service delivery.</p>
<p>Co. Dublin VEC</p>	<p>The core skills programmes provided by CDVEC support those with very low skills to return to training and ultimately to employment. This core training increases participants' chances of success when they engage in further training.</p>	<p>An element of core skills training needs to be incorporated into mainstream delivery in order to reach those farthest from the labour market and to maximise their chances of sticking with the training programme.</p>

Relevant Projects	Key learning / success factors	Potential for mainstreaming
Innopharma Labs	Innopharma Labs responded to an identified market need, as highlighted by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. The EGFSN recognised a skills gap in the pharmaceutical and medical devices sector and the programme delivered by Innopharma Labs sought to up-skill participants in response to the recognised skills shortage. This can include sector-specific gaps or regional market response, such as the programmes delivered by Galway and Mayo VECs.	The design of future mainstream programmes needs to ensure that the programmes delivered respond to a recognised market need. Thus, the criteria should include this as a key criteria for selecting programmes
TBG Learning	The TBG Learning programme provides an example of a results-driven programme. Based on the model used in the UK, the results-driven approach focuses on getting people into work and keeping them in employment.	A payment-by-results model should be considered for the delivery of mainstream programmes.
Shannon Consortium	The Shannon Consortium was funded to deliver a range of projects across different NFQ provision levels. It was based on an established partnership between higher education providers with strong links to local social welfare offices, FÁS, the VECs and the local authorities, with a Downtown Centre and online portal in place as an initial access point for individuals in need. Through this integrated approach participants were recruited for locally based (in Ennis and Limerick) NFQ level 5 foundation degree programmes, which facilitated access to level 6 and 7 HE degree and diploma programmes.	This is an example of best practice in how community-based access and support services can link to formal further and higher education providers via a formal partnership approach based around a clear progression pathway.

The projects listed in Figure 4.3 demonstrate some of the key lessons from the LMAF 2010 programme and their potential for mainstreaming. This provides important input for the design, roll-out and management of future programmes. The lessons around matching job-seekers skills with market demand, incorporating structured work placements, aligning delivery with over-arching policy goals, supporting a partnership approach (locally, regionally, nationally and internationally) should feed into the design criteria of any new Government supported programme in this area.

4.2 Analysis of LMAF impacts

In assessing the impacts of the LMAF, it is important to remember that many courses have only recently been completed and impacts will therefore accumulate over the coming months and beyond. Our quantitative assessment of the impact focuses on estimating the value of the employment outcomes rather than attempting to project economic impacts from further education and training. However it is important to acknowledge that there are longer-term dividends from raising skill levels in an economy. There are also benefits to be realised in the stimulation of growth in key target sectors and the potential for these to arise is further discussed under benefits for employers in section 4.2.5.

4.2.1 Income estimates from employment outcomes

In the absence of employment profiles for participants on the LMAF projects, a range of assumptions have been made in order to generate income estimates from employment outcomes. These assumptions are:

Hours worked: The progression statistics from projects do not provide any detail on whether employment outcomes were full time or part time posts. Given this, PA have assumed that the jobs created follow the same ‘usual hours worked’ pattern as the whole economy. This data, from the Central Statistics Office notes the following:

Figure 4.3: Employment Patterns

Usual hours of work	% of employed people who work these hours
1-9	2.8
10-19	7.9
20-29	15.6
30-34	5.6
35-39	35.7
40-44	21.3
45&over	11.1

Source: CSO

PA have assumed the mid point in each range¹² (assuming that for the 45 hours and over category, hours worked are fixed at 45) when calculating the hourly wage impact. For people who progressed to self employment, in the absence of any data to suggest otherwise, the same working patterns as employees are assumed. This assumption serves to provide more conservative impact estimates than if an hourly wage was applied to a full 37 hour working week.

Wage levels: Again, progression statistics have not provided evidence of the salary levels of people progressing to employment. Given the varied nature of the LMAF projects, we use two estimates of hourly wages to ‘drive’ our calculations. These are:

- **Upper bound estimates:** an average hourly earnings figure from the Central Statistics Office of €21.80 per hour.
- **Lower bound estimates:** an average hourly wage of beneficiaries of the Employer Job (PRSI) Scheme. The scheme is open to employers who create new and additional jobs in 2010 and 2011 and the Department of Social Protection have provided hourly wage statistics of over 1,000 people who were employed through this initiative. This is €12.66 per hour.

¹² For the 45 hours and over category, a conservative assumption that hours worked remains fixed at 45 has been applied.

Duration of employment: In the absence of evidence to suggest how sustainable the jobs that participants are progressing into, our calculations do not adjust for leavers over the course of the year.

A total of 1,533 employee jobs and 732 self employed jobs have been created to date as a result of the LMAF. Our income estimates are presented in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: Income Impact Estimates from LMAF 2010

Course level	Employment (including self employed)	Annual wage generated (lower bound estimates)	Annual wage generated (upper bound estimates)
Core Skills Development	322	€7.2m	€12.4m
Accessing Further Education Opps	884	€19.8m	€34.1m
Providing a formal Higher Education platform	486	€10.9m	€18.7m
Industry/Sector Up-Skilling & Re-Skilling	573	€12.9m	€22.1m
Total	2,265	€50.7m	€87.3m

Source: PA Consulting Estimates from LMAF Project Progression Statistics and Wage Estimates Based on CSO and DSP Data

Based on the employment creation to date and the assumptions made to calculate the income earned from these employment outcomes, LMAF participants who have found employment would generate between €50.7mn to €87.3m in additional income per annum. This does not however take account of the fact that some of these participants would have found employment in any event. This is a key consideration in the additionality of the programme, and this is further considered in section 4.2.5.

4.2.2 Benefits for the Government

In addition to the impact generated through wages, the government benefits from employment creation through a reduction in social protection payments and increased tax receipts. It is not possible to fully reflect the different PAYE and tax credits rates without knowing the exact profile of participants (married, single, have dependents etc). For the purposes of this calculation, we have assumed a single person with no dependents and applied weekly wage estimates (based on the work pattern statistics and hourly wages) through a tax calculation model in order to generate ‘tax take’ estimates for the exchequer. Our calculations also reflect a reduction in social welfare payments, based the average weekly benefit payment of €192¹³ per week and reflecting that benefits are still paid on a pro-rata basis for people who work for fewer than 4 days per week. Our calculations also assume that people who are self employed are continuing to receive benefits, under the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme or the Short Term Enterprise Allowance Scheme, which people to become self employed and retain their benefits.

¹³ This was given as an indicative average level by the Department of Social Protection

Figure 4.5: Benefits to Government from Labour Market Activation via LMAF

	Lower bound estimates	Upper bound estimates
Tax take	€6.5m	€21.7m
Savings on benefits	€12.9m	€12.9m
Total benefit	€19.4m	€34.6m

Source: PA Consulting Estimates Based on LMAF Project Progression Statistics and DSP Data

It is clear that the economic benefits realised to date have been significant, with more expected as time progresses. Against a budget of €29.5m, PA estimate the gross additional benefit to the government in terms of tax revenues and reductions to social welfare is between €19.4m and €34.6m. Of course, this assumes that all individuals leaving the live register are only doing so as a result of the LMAF intervention. As noted when assessing the income effects, this does not reflect the fact that a set proportion would have found employment in any event. This issue of additionality is further considered in Section 4.2.5.

4.2.3 Benefits for participants

The Labour Market Activation Fund was established to offer a new and different approach to labour market activation in Ireland. Core to this new approach was the participant-centred ethos that sought to identify opportunities to up-skill people with strong skill sets in declining sectors with employment opportunities in growth sectors. Essentially, it was this identification of skills transfer opportunities to match core skills with growth opportunities that was critical to the success of the programme. Given the dramatic growth and change in demographic profile of the unemployed, it was recognised that the traditional ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach was not the most effective means of up-skilling unemployed people in target sectors. In order to maximise the activation impact of the programme, a flexible, tailored, targeted approach was required to respond to the needs of participants. Thus, the LMAF 2010 sought to match participant need with market demand to create a win-win for everyone.

This was achieved through a combination of softer core skills development combined with specific up-skilling programmes. This combination provided a more holistic approach to labour market activation that offered benefits in terms of building confidence and esteem as well as equipping participants with the skills necessary to return to employment in a similar or related sector or in a completely new and different area.

The over-arching end goal of the programme was to support people to **return to employment** and this is therefore the most obvious benefit for programme participants. For many participants, the courses delivered allowed them to build on their existing skill set and to tailor those skills for related sectors or for completely new sectors. The design and delivery of LMAF courses was specifically tailored to reach a specified target group and to help them to up-skill, re-skill and adapt their skills for a target growth area. For example, Alaymont International’s Passive House Design, Green Construction and Insulation installation courses offered ex-construction workers an opportunity to use their core skills in a related area, where there was a demand for jobs.

For some participants, progression to employment would not have been a short-term goal from participation on an LMAF course and **further training or education** may have been required before labour market participation would be a realistic option. However, in this situation, participation on an LMAF funded courses, has provided a platform for or bridge to further education and training in a different sector. If participants found that a radical change in their career direction was required, participation on an LMAF course would provide a good basis for further education and training which would lead to employment opportunities in the medium term. LMAF courses that were effective in ensuring this continuity included a pathway approach, or at least an element of pathway development to ensure that participants had clear goals and pathway to achieving those goals. The courses delivered by CDVEC sought to provide that platform for further education and training by providing participants with the core skills needed to commit to their chosen path for the medium to long-term.

Aside from the most critical outcome of progression to employment, a range of other benefits for participants were identified during the course of the evaluation. A key attribute cited by participants of the successful projects was **clear communication of the outcomes from participation** and how progression towards employment would be facilitated. The visibility of a potential job was a key incentive for engagement, particularly in the very specific industry focused up-skilling and re-skilling interventions, such as the National Butchery Academy. Motivation was also strongly enhanced by the opportunity to get back into work via the placements offered on some projects.

CASE STUDY ON RESPONDING TO PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK - CULTIVATE AND NICER GREEN WORKS PROGRAMME

The Cultivate programme, Green Works, demonstrates how a programme adopted a flexible approach to delivery by allowing participants to play a proactive role in the design and delivery of their training. The need for training in sustainability, specifically in areas such as green building, green business, land use and sustainable tourism was identified by Cultivate, working in cooperation with NICER. The innovative projects developed in these areas delivered content using modern training methodologies that included class-room based learning, online materials, networking events, peer-to-peer events and clinics. A flexible approach was adopted to allow students to choose their own learning path in terms of the modules that they selected. Students found the courses delivered flexible, relevant to current market need and provided interesting approaches to use and develop their existing skills in related market areas.

I enjoyed every aspect of the 5 courses I attended. The topics were highly relevant to our current universal situation as the fossil fuel era draws to an end. The subjects on the Green Works programme were practical, informative and engaging.

The programme engaged industry partners from Cultivate's network of businesses operating in the sustainable and green economy. Partners included the Environmental and Sustainable Construction Association (Easca), Business in the Community and the Irish Green Building Council as well as professional associations, such as the Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland (RIAI), the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) and the Institute of Planners Ireland (IPI). These were partners who understood the business case for sustainability and this practical dimension was of real value to participants.

I enjoyed the course delivery as the tutors were industry based so their knowledge and enthusiasm was

CASE STUDY ON RESPONDING TO PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK - CULTIVATE AND NICER GREEN WORKS PROGRAMME

brilliant. They were able to give practical and current experiences to explain and reinforce the course content.'

The programme has had a significant impact for many of its participants and represents a good value for money investment for the exchequer. Green Works set out to provide training to 1,570 students at a cost of €1,019 per student. The programme actually trained 1,806 participants at a cost of €886 per person representing a 13% saving in terms of value for money.

'Green Works transformed my life – plain and simple'

The opportunity to share issues, ideas and common experiences ensured that **feelings of isolation and disengagement were countered** by a collective commitment to progressing towards the programme outcome. This was very apparent in the projects which were focused on enterprise supports. The First Step project, for example, established regional peer networks as a core aspect of building the skills that would allow the participants to sustain businesses. Many of these networks still survive on a more informal basis post-completion.

The peer-to-peer aspect of **developing confidence and self-esteem** during programme participation was a common theme in feedback from participants and this is an important aspect of activation that is often overlooked. Many people that had long careers, often with the same employer, did not have the confidence or self-esteem needed to apply their skills in new areas, with new employers or in different sectors. People, who thought of their job as 'a job for life' were faced with an emotional and psychological challenge they had never experienced. The emotional and psychological challenge had to be addressed in order to have any chance of overcoming the employment, financial and other difficulties that newly unemployed people faced. The participant feedback gathered as part of this evaluation emphasised the importance of this element of the courses delivered. The courses provided a forum for participants to discuss issues, share ideas, and talk about common problems among each other as well as with tutors and guidance counsellors and this provided invaluable support on both a personal and a practical level. Many courses also offered opportunities to re-engage with the workforce through the work placements offered. This access to a network of people active in the labour market supported people's confidence, self-esteem and prospects for employment.

4.2.4 Benefits for employers and industry

While the employment impacts quantified earlier in this section represent the demand for the skills produced by the projects by employers, it was important to validate such effects and gain a full understanding of the benefits to employers from the delivery of the LMAF. Some of the key benefits which were identified during consultation with employers in the course of the evaluation include:

- The ability of the fund to support short, focused industry-specific up-skilling and re-skilling which potentially facilitated a quick turnaround on their skills needs.
- The ability to actively shape the provision of education and training and ensure it was tailored to meet the skills needs in their industry. This was done both directly by serving as a project provider, by feeding into the design of the project by a provider, by identifying needs via a local network (e.g. a Chamber of Commerce) or through dialogue during agreement to provide work placements.

- The opportunity to ‘test’ the suitability of individuals and their respective skills for potential employment during the work placements which were arranged via the project.

Overall, engagement of employers in the programme provided a win-win mutual benefit and learning opportunity for everyone involved. There were, however, some situations, where the full value of the work placement was not necessarily maximised and there are some key lessons as to what is required for a successful work placement. The key success factors for the design of a meaningful value driven work placement were:

- A robust interview process to ensure a good match between the candidate’s skills and the employer’s particular needs at the time of the placement.
- A clear, specific structured project of work with well-defined outputs and deliverables to be produced within the placement period.
- A designated point of contact with whom participants could raise any concerns or issues and who could provide feedback to participants in relation to their performance and development needs.

One issue which was raised in relation to the above benefits was whether a more coordinated approach could be found to facilitate the reflection of employer skills needs in education and training interventions. While employers were actively engaged across most LMAF projects, the approach to identifying their respective needs was quite ad hoc. To ensure more effective and holistic approaches to meeting needs in future, consideration might be given to the development of central portals or local employers’ forums by bringing more formality and consistency to their role in the labour market activation process. A central portal, held by the Department of Education and Skills, would provide an important source of information to inform evidence-based decision making that would feed into the policy-making process in the design and roll-out of future education and skills programmes. It is also worthwhile examining whether existing structures, such as the City and County Development Boards, would provide appropriate infrastructure or if new structures are required to facilitate more strategic employer engagement in shaping education and training interventions at local level.

CASE STUDY ON BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS – DCU/RYAN ACADEMY BUSINESS INNOVATION PROGRAMME

The Ryan Academy Business Innovation Programme demonstrates the importance of strong employer relations. The Academy had established a network of 70 employers on the programme panel. Forty companies were involved in the delivery of the programme and it produced some major gains for the employers who participated. Some specific outcomes include:

- A team developed a Market Entry Strategy for a small Irish company to enter the Chinese market which has been adopted by the relevant company.
- A team developed a new approach to marketing customer relationship management (CRM) software to new start-up businesses for a multinational

John Eager from Snap said that: *‘The team really brought value to Snap through helping us to develop, prepare and introduce six new products that we identified. They really helped us to get the job done. They integrated themselves into the company and were very dynamic and professional.*

CASE STUDY ON BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS – DCU/Ryan Academy Business Innovation Programme

Willie Kearney and Tom Morrissey from Thermodial stated that participants: *'Have helped us gain a greater insight into our company, our existing and potential customers, competitors and the industry in general through the research they undertook.'*

One of the course participants worked with a company called DCKE Brook Print Innovators. As a result of the market research carried out, DCKE Brook have decided to break into a new market, food packaging, which they had not operated in before the market research was done. From the market research carried out, the participant identified a particular niche in cake boxes and DCK/Ebrook has applied for a patent for the package design developed. DCK/Ebrook has seen the extra revenue this value stream can generate.

A targeted programme like the LMAF, where projects were focused on addressing skills needs in particular areas, can also have knock-on impacts in supporting industry growth. Some of the key projects targeted strategically important growth sectors of the economy. Key examples included:

- In the **food sector**, projects included the NBA addressing skills gaps in meat processing, Meath Partnership building artisan food skills, Focus Ireland ran a programme on the food industry,
- In the **sustainable energy sector**, there were numerous programmes targeting up-skilling and re-skilling, including those delivered by Dun Laoghaire VEC (on Green Technology), Meath Partnership (Wood Energy and Biomass), County Donegal VEC (Renewable Technology) and Alaymont (Green Construction).
- In the high growth and international facing **pharmaceutical manufacturing sector**, the Innopharma Labs project provided targeted and accredited up-skilling for people to access employment opportunities in this sector.
- In the area of **digital media**, a key area of strategic importance which reflects the ambition to continue to move Ireland higher up the 'value chain', IoT Blanchardstown delivered a digital media programme and the Digital Skills Academy provided up-skilling programmes at NFQ levels 4 and 5

By providing a skills pipeline to meet the needs of employers in these key sectors, these projects were helping to address wider skills issues and their success suggests a focused, industry-specific approach can prove effective if clearly targeted and based on a strong employer validated evidence base.

4.2.5 Additionality of the LMAF interventions

As set out in our evaluation framework in Chapter 2, it is important that the **additionality** of the LMAF intervention is fully considered. This means determining the extent to which outcomes and impacts would have been realised without the intervention, validating the added value of the approach. Impact estimates are typically required to be adjusted to reflect those outcomes that would have occurred regardless of the project. Displacement and deadweight are key considerations in looking at the net impact of the interventions. In Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, we identified gross income effects and savings to Government. These do not however take account of the fact that a certain proportion of individuals would have left the live register and entered employment in any event. It is important therefore to make some adjustment for this factor.

While the Department of Social Protection collects data on exit rates from the live register (one year exit rates for the entire register are currently 75%), it is not possible to ascertain from this data the reasons for leaving (i.e. for employment, training or emigration etc). What the exit rate does confirm is that there will undoubtedly be a proportion of people who would have exited the live register over the course of one year, regardless of engagement on the LMAF.

It would not be unreasonable to assume, given the nature of participants (many of whom were long term unemployed, or previously employed in rapidly declining sectors) and the prolonged downturn in Ireland's economic performance, that many of the impacts noted above would not have been achieved without the intervention of the LMAF. However, it is more prudent to reflect deadweight, displacement, leakage, substitutions and multipliers¹⁴ to present net additional income estimates.

In October 2009, Cambridge Economic Associates launched a report which collated and analysed additionality data from over 280 evaluations covering a range of economic development and regeneration interventions across the UK. Of these 280 evaluations, 21 related to programmes which provided level 3 or above qualifications. This study therefore provides a useful evidence framework on which to base additionality calculations for LMAF. The report concluded that the mean net additionality percentage across each of the 21 studies relating to programmes which provided level 3 or above qualifications was 62%. The results of applying this percentage are presented in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.6: Net Additional Impact Estimates from LMAF 2010

	Net Employment (including self employed)	Net Annual wage generated (lower bound estimates)	Net Annual wage generated (upper bound estimates)
Net Employment and Income benefits			
Core Skills Development	200	€4.5m	€7.7m
Accessing Further Education Opps	548	€12.3m	€21.1m
Providing a formal Higher Education platform	301	€6.8m	€11.6m
Industry/Sector Up-Skilling & Re-Skilling	355	€8.0m	€13.7m
Total	1,404	€31.5m	€54.1m
Exchequer Benefits			
Tax take		€4.0m	€13.5m
Savings on benefits		€8.0m	€8.0m
Net Total Benefit		€12.0m	€21.5m

Source: PA Consulting Estimates Based on Progression Statistics, CSO Data and Cambridge Economics Additionality Multiplier

¹⁴ The wages generated through the employment outcomes will generate further economic benefits as people spend their wages on everyday items such as childcare, food, transport and household expenses. In addition, there are wider indirect and induced economic impacts at a local and national level. For example, the disposable incomes that employed people spend will support employment in shops and service providers, thus generating further economic impact. These impacts are captured through Multipliers.

Based on the lower bound estimate, and allowing for net additionality factors, the income generated from people progressing from the LMAF to employment is €31.5m and the net benefit to the Exchequer is €12m. At this early stage, LMAF is progressing well towards delivering a significant positive return on the investment made by the government.

The programmes supported under LMAF provided the direction, focus and support to help people transfer their skills to target growth sectors and to maximise their employment potential. While it cannot be said that LMAF participants would not have gotten any form of employment without the LMAF intervention, the programme's strength in providing tailored, participant-focused training, learning and support was aimed at maximising participants' potential by building on existing skills, transferring them to new growth areas and providing ongoing support and advice, often after the programmes had finished. Each project supported was able to provide strong evidence of need which aligned with wider national skills needs and the identified requirements of local employers and other key stakeholders. It is our conclusion therefore that **deadweight** was minimised as a result of the tailored, participant-centred approach adopted.



5 Learning from the LMAF and other experiences

Having set out the inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the LMAF 2010 intervention, a clear understanding of performance across the individual projects has been developed. A critical aspect of this evaluation is to identify learning which can inform the future planning and funding of labour market activation interventions. In this chapter we firstly consider alternative delivery models to examine options for addressing activation issues. We then bring this analysis together with the assessment of the LMAF performance to identify overall learning moving forward.

5.1 Examining alternative delivery models

5.1.1 Comparison with existing Irish activation interventions

The intention of LMAF 2010 was to support innovative approaches to labour market activation in the hope that such practice could inform the development of future policy provision. It is important when considering the funded projects in this context that alternative delivery models are examined to compare and contrast levels of relative success. As new interventions are designed, developed and rolled-out under the establishment of SOLAS, any learning from LMAF should be incorporated to build on the experience of mainstream provision in recent years by FÁS and the VECs. It is therefore worthwhile looking at how LMAF projects compare with such mainstream provision.

Figure 5.1 provides an overview of specific FÁS and VEC programmes and includes the breakdown of direct programme costs, allowances, the cost per completion (less allowances) and the cost per completion (including allowances). To facilitate like-for-like comparison, this latter cost per completion is analysed in terms of the programme cost per week. The equivalent costs for the LMAF 2010 projects are compared across these indicators.

Figure 5.1 Key Labour Market Activation Programme Performance Metrics, 2010

Programme and Provider	NFQ Level	Average Programme Length	Direct Programme Costs (€Mn)	Allowances (€Mn)	Direct Programme Costs (Excl Allowances)	Cost per completion (Excluding Allowances)	Cost per completion (Including Allowances)	Weekly Cost Per Completion (Including Allowances)
LMAF 2010	Variable	25.2 weeks	29.5	0	29.5	2,903	2,903 (ex IS)	115.37
FÁS Programmes								
Traineeship LT	Variable	48 weeks	33.1	24.5	8.6	3,867	14,923	310.90
Specific Skills Training LT	4-6	36 weeks	73.5	49	24.4	3,622	10,897	302.69
Local Training Initiatives	Variable	52 weeks	37.7	31.1	6.6	2,714	15,431	296.75
Specific Skills Training MT	4-6	24 weeks	73.5	49	24.4	2,415	7,265	302.71
Traineeship MT	Variable	20 weeks	33.1	24.5	8.6	1,611	6,218	310.90
FÁS Bridging Foundation MT	3-4	20 weeks	13.6	9.9	3.7	1,558	5,720	286.00
Local Training Initiatives	Variable	26 weeks	37.7	31.1	6.6	1,351	7,686	295.62
Return to Work	3-4	11 weeks	1.1	0.7	0.4	1,271	3,550	322.73
Specific Skills Training ST	4-6	10 weeks	73.5	49	24.4	1,006	3,027	302.70
Specific Skills Training ST	4-6	8 weeks	73.5	49	24.4	805	2,422	302.75
FÁS Bridging Foundation ST	3-4	8 weeks	13.6	9.9	3.7	623	2,288	286.00
VEC Programmes								
VTOS – Full-time	3-6	52 weeks	78.9	47	31.9	5,595	13,837	266.10
PLC – Full Time	5-6	52 weeks	186.1	48.3	137.8	3,554	4,800	92.31
Youthreach	3-5	Variable	68.4	19.6	48.8	14,494	20,315	n/a
BTEI	3-6	Variable	17	0.6	16.4	587	608	n/a
Adult Literacy	1-4	Variable	26.9	0	26.9	491	491	n/a

Source: Department of Education and Skills; FÁS; PA Consulting Analysis of LMAF Final Reports

The analysis shows that while there is a significant variation in cost per completion across different FÁS and VEC programmes, when this is considered in terms of the weekly cost (including allowances), it tends to even out at around €300 per week, regardless of the length of the particular programme. The LMAF has a much greater level of variation in programme length, spanning short focused interventions of under 10 weeks (e.g. Career Decisions tailored guidance programme, Galway and Mayo VECs industry-focused short courses on tourism, energy, media, and aquaculture) to full-time year long higher education courses (e.g. IoT Blanchardstown's Higher Certificate Sustainable Electrical Technology, Limerick IT's BSc provision). Collectively this amounts to an average programme completion length of 25.2 weeks.

The inclusion within the LMAF of programmes involving varying length and resource intensity, targeted at very different cohorts and with very different delivery approaches (e.g. work placements, mentoring, assessment tools, support structures) is in keeping with its ethos of flexibility to meet specific labour market issues. However it does make it difficult to draw definite conclusions regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of LMAF in comparison to mainstream FÁS and VEC provision. LMAF also includes a base of provision at higher education level where it has been impossible to secure any relevant mainstream cost comparison information.

Nonetheless the weekly cost of completion of €115.37 does suggest that delivery of the LMAF interventions was relatively lean and robust. The lower level is partly explained by the deployment of additional allowance and support costs which allow participants to engage in the mainstream labour market activation measures. These have been built in to the costs of the FÁS and VEC programmes in the table and they are an important tool in widening access to training, education and up-skilling opportunities. The LMAF did not provide any direct allowances in this way but as it drew participants from the live register all should have been in receipt of income support during the programme. It is again difficult to cost this effect as the level of jobseekers benefit is dependent on the participant's earnings in the relevant tax year. The Department of Social Protection estimates that the average income support received is €192¹⁵ per week. This would mean an overall Exchequer weekly cost of around €300, in line with the other interventions when their respective training allowances are taken into account.

This should however only be taken as an indicative guide to comparative cost given project variation and the reliance on the broad assumptions above. It should also be noted that comparing income support contributions is not directly comparable to the training allowance approach deployed across these other interventions. The social welfare payments which are incurred via LMAF participants were in effect 'sunk costs'. These costs would have been realised in any event and the incremental cost of completion therefore remains the €2,903 per overall programme or €115.37 per week of provision as noted above.

The findings reinforce the need for more robust monitoring at participant level to ensure that the full cost of delivery and, most critically, the full cost of realising outcomes, can be calculated in future. However they also indicate that the costs of delivering the LMAF were in line with mainstream delivery

¹⁵ This was given as an indicative average level by the Department of Social Protection

at an absolute level and were comparatively cost effective when Exchequer income support and allowances are taken into account. It is also worth noting that, as new and innovative programmes, many of the LMAF projects involved development costs which added to the cost per completion in 2010, but which would be eliminated on roll-out of the programme in future years.

5.1.2 Payment by Outcomes Activation Models

Outside of the Irish context, it is worth considering the experience in the UK where a number of Payment-by-Outcome programmes are operated. The UK's first Payment-by-outcomes initiative, Employment Zones, was rolled out in 2000. Subsequent programmes, including 'Pathways to Work' and 'Flexible New Deal' have been introduced since and have delivered improved quality service and outcomes for job-seekers.

Payment-by-outcome, also referred to as payment-by-results, is a form of performance management where providers are paid on the basis of outcomes rather than effort. It involves the government transferring increasing levels of risk for the achievement of outcomes to providers by creating an incentive system that clearly specifies the desired outputs or outcomes and payment is made on the basis of achieving those outcomes. This approach encourages providers to deliver outcomes by using financial incentives.

In the public sector, programme objectives are often ambiguous. Payment by outcomes uses measures, standards and incentives as the toolkit for managing performance in a way that takes account of the human dimensions of performance regimes. The challenge lies in knowing how to use performance targets and financial incentives to focus management on a limited number of high-level policy priorities.

Payment-by-outcomes can be applied to employment programmes in different ways, depending on the context that affects its design and operation; population segmentation; selection of measures; price setting; impact measurement; design of incentives and payment for the outputs. Measures, standards and incentives are the primary tools of a performance measurement regime. The selection of **measures** will be closely informed by decisions about the level at which outcomes or outputs are to be commissioned. **Standards** are the targets or levels of acceptable performance that providers are expected to achieve before they are rewarded or sanctioned. **Incentives** are described as the rewards or penalties applied for meeting or failing to meet the agreed standards.

A payment-by-outcomes approach works best in an environment where there are 'known unknowns', where the linkages between inputs and outcomes are well understood and tightly connected in order to ensure that providers are not penalised for issues that arise that were outside their control or rewarded for circumstances to which they made very little contribution. The selection of appropriate measures is key to the success of a payment-by-outcomes approach. Where the linkages between outputs and outcomes are well established and widely agreed, it is easier to select appropriate measures and to design an effective payment-by-outcomes system.

In the design of any payment-by-outcome programme, it is important to be clear about the outcomes and the type of behaviour that the programme is seeking to promote in order to overcome potential pitfalls, for example the risk of targeting those that are most likely to complete at the expense of the

most disadvantaged and farthest from the labour market. It is important that the design of the system safeguards against any such pitfalls. Any move to a payment-by-outcomes approach will inevitably be a process of discovery, with initial mistakes and misunderstandings providing opportunities for learning. Thus, an adaptive system is required that facilitates exploration, amendment and refining in response to lessons learned on an ongoing basis.

Different modes of Payment by Outcomes programmes have been successfully operated in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, France and Germany. Despite some significant differences in how these models have operated, in terms of the policy objectives and how they measured outcomes, this model has been adopted to respond to the particular systems and policies across a range of countries.

CASE STUDY ON AN OUTCOME-FOCUSED APPROACH TO DELIVERY – TBG LEARNING

The TBG Learning model is based on the UK Payments-by-outcomes approach. As TBG Learning is a UK-based organisation, they are used to having a high proportion of their fees related to the success of getting people into jobs, and ensuring that people remain in these jobs once the training is complete. The thinking behind this approach is that if a participant completes training and maintains a job for more than 13 weeks, they have a significantly increased chance of maintaining that employment. Thus, the TBG model involves providing ongoing support to employees and employers after the actual course has finished in an effort to try and secure suitable and sustainable employment for participants.

TBG Learning ran JobFit for 2,215 participants over an 8 month period on a nationwide basis. It undertook statistical analysis and local market engagements to identify both the most relevant target groups and the nature of interventions required. Thus, JobFit was designed to target long term unemployed people under the age of 35 and educated to NFQ Level 3 (Junior Cert) or below.

JobFit focussed on providing training that would increase its target group's chances of getting a job, by placing a significant emphasis on work placement, while also increasing the level of qualifications held by participants. They sought to identify key local employers and core competencies required by them, with a focus on entry level or low skilled jobs.

In consultation, TBG emphasised the importance of key aspects of programme design:

- The time allowed for the execution of the programme.
- The funding timescales for the programme
- The importance of partnering at a local level, for example working with VECs

JobFit had an initial target of assisting 1,878 participants, but in practice were able to accommodate 2,125. Of these, 1,012 achieved a FETAC level qualification, 488 progressed to employment, and 217 progressed to further or higher education.

There is some concern that a payment by outcomes approach can result in 'cherry picking' with recruitment to activation programmes focused on those participants that have the greatest chance of success. This poses a risk that the most marginalised and most in need miss out on such activation opportunities as places are taken by those that would be more likely to find work in any event. However if eligibility criteria are clearly defined and strictly adhered to in programme delivery, such issues should be avoided.

5.2 Focusing on a progression pathway approach

We have noted that the progression pathway approach was a key principle across the LMAF projects. As our analysis in Chapter 3 demonstrates, while there was a wide variation in the types of project supported, what was common across all was a move beyond a focus on core skills development to link to identifiable labour market outcomes. Traditionally interventions to address social exclusion and labour market activation have concentrated only on the first step towards employability, on working at community level to engage with key target groups and build the core or softer skills which will give them a chance of future employability. Further education and training was often left to mainstream providers such as FÁS and the VECs. However many of the projects examined placed a strong focus not only on building the core and softer skills which are essential to secure employment, but also on how such outcomes would link to other interventions that could ultimately lead to job opportunities. This combining of core skills development with technical training provided a holistic approach to labour market activation that enhanced participants' employment opportunities as well as improving the likelihood that they would stay engaged in further training and education. Supporting and tracking an individual through the different progression pathway steps means that any support issues can be anticipated and managed and a successful outcome ensured. It avoids a danger of individuals 'falling through the cracks' as they move from provider to provider and avoids the risk of disengagement from the prospect of dealing with multiple agencies with confusing remits. By also making clear the prospect of a tangible outcome in terms of employability following progression it provides added motivation for the participant.

The pathway facilitating progress from core skills development and further education and training to being 'job ready' of course only represents the supply side of the labour market activation challenge. Ensuring that demand exists for the skills which have been produced by the projects is key for a successful activation approach. The critical success factor in this regard is the involvement of potential employers early in the project design process to ensure that an intervention is targeting a clear skills gap and that it is delivering a tailored programme of up-skilling which will meet their needs. One of the most significant aspects of LMAF 2010 performance from which learning can be drawn is the involvement of employers in roles including identifying the needs, planning and managing the interventions, delivering the training, providing allocations of work placements and providing additional support post-employment. Without the proactive involvement of employers at an early stage, labour market activation measures are less effective and this must be a key principle moving forward.

CASE STUDY INNOVATIVE APPROACH – NATIONAL BUTCHERY ACADEMY (NBA)

The National Butchery Academy case study demonstrates an innovative approach to delivery, including partnering with a recognised international school of butchering. The NBA was established in response to a specific skills shortage in butchery and knifing skills and demonstrates a targeted approach to provide recognised accredited training to attract and retain skilled butchers in the sector. During the construction boom, there was a mass exodus of skills from the industry as employees moved into construction-related sectors to increase salaries. As a result, staff turnover in meat factories was high and there was a drain on resources as new people had to be trained and up-skilled on an ongoing basis. There was a major skills deficit in the industry. The owner of Garbally Meats and co-founder of the National Butchery Academy (NBA) recognised the patterns emerging and in response established the NBA to provide recognised accredited training in Butchery skills. To achieve this, the NBA:

CASE STUDY INNOVATIVE APPROACH – NATIONAL BUTCHERY ACADEMY (NBA)

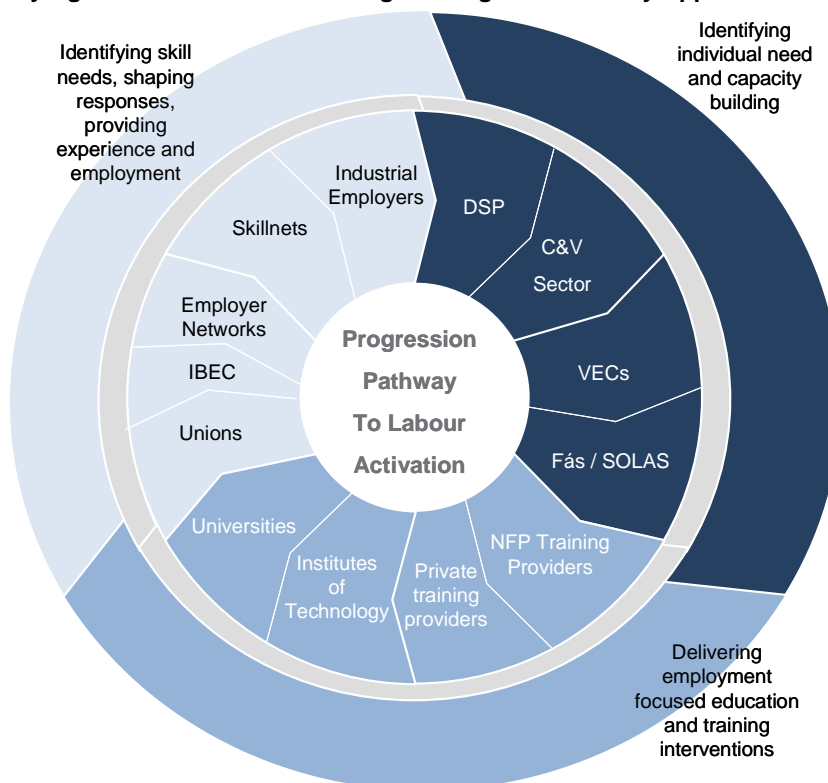
- Established a dedicated training centre, with the necessary equipment (knives, sterilisers, etc.) The centre was regulated by the Department of Agriculture and had to meet all relevant quality control requirements. The NBA established a state of the art training centre that has two facilities, a classroom / conference facility for classes, seminars and conferences and a factory facility to provide the facilities for practical training in knifing and boning. It was important to take staff out of the pressurised production environment and provide them with a learning environment so that they could build up their skills effectively.
- Became a FETAC provider as no funding would be provided unless the centre was established as a registered FETAC provider.
- Worked with a Danish meat training college (Roskilde) – There is no meat training college in Ireland so the NBA worked in partnership with Roskilde, where the co-founders had established links through their own training. As there are no butchery recognised butchery certificates in Ireland, the Butchery cert that participants get is from Roskilde.
- Worked very closely with the 4 major meat factories to establish work placements (Dawn Meats, AIBP, KEPAK, Kildare Meats, Dunbia)

The NBA developed innovative, creative responses to a number of different barriers that they had to overcome. Their state-of-the-art training facility, their partnership with an international training provider and their engagement with the major industry employers all provided a determined and innovative response to any challenges that they encountered.

5.3 An integrated approach to meeting beneficiary needs

The progression pathway approach is only possible if there are strong working partnerships between all of the key agencies involved in helping the individual towards a labour market outcome. There are many important roles and interventions that need to be considered to ensure an integrated pathway approach that meets the needs of individuals. An illustration of the different agencies involved along this pathway is provided in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Key Agencies and their Role along an Integrated Pathway Approach



We discuss some of the key aspects of stakeholder roles taking from the learning of LMAF project experience below:

- The pivotal role of the Department of Social Protection and its social welfare offices and officers as the first point of contact for those experiencing unemployment. Where projects worked most effectively, there was a close relationship between the DSP regional facilitators and the local welfare offices and the providers of education and training, and the officers were able to take on a more developmental role and serve as advisers and brokers which then allowed an individual to access the support and upskilling required. The establishment of networks, personal contacts and information sharing created an integrated approach to beneficiary needs that began with engagement with the social welfare office. However there was feedback that the approach across offices was inconsistent and there is a need to ensure a more holistic approach to this role across the Department outlets. The creation of the National Employment and Entitlements Service (NEES) should assist in this process but clear protocols, principles and guidance should be put in place to replicate the positive experiences of successful LMAF projects.
- Involvement of locally based community and voluntary organisations that can engage with people, particularly from marginalised target groups, to facilitate engagement in activation measures by providing information, advice and support. This was apparent in a number of LMAF projects. Focus Ireland worked closely with other community groups on the ground to engage with the target group. The courses were delivered at Tallaght Local Employment Centre to facilitate access.
- A key role for the VECs in providing the bridge between the development of core and softer skills and access to more formal education and training opportunities. The role of the VECs in key LMAF projects such as City of Dublin VEC Progression Pathways is notable and utilising their expertise and experience is key to putting in place an effective integrated activation model.
- An inclusive model which involves Colleges of Further Education, Institutes of Technology and Universities in considering how access to formal education opportunities in areas of skills need can be facilitated and which also involves all other potential education and training providers to facilitate responsive and fast-tracked approaches.
- Engagement of employers working in partnership with the developers and deliverers of education and training interventions to ensure that provision reflects skills needs, that work placements are available and that a private sector ethos influences the ways in which projects are delivered. Innopharma Labs had strong sector links and developed the course in response to a risk assessment that identified a lack of knowledge as an important business risk for the technology and R&D arms of their business. This analysis was consistent with the findings of the Forfás Report that identified a particular skills gap in the pharmaceutical and medical devices sectors.

The development of networks between all of these different types of stakeholders has been important in delivering an effective progression pathway to participants. Key to the ultimate success of integrated approaches is the flow of information about individual needs, skills development activities, available projects, outcomes and ongoing support required. This must be an important focus moving forward as shared information sources is key to ensuring effective, joined-up delivery and monitoring of success on an ongoing basis. In this regard a means should be explored to facilitate development of more integrated information systems across the activation partners.

5.4 Flexibility in dealing with new cohorts of people

We noted in Chapter 1 when discussing the strategic rationale for the LMAF that this is a time of unprecedented social and economic change for Ireland. While issues of social exclusion and long-term unemployment remain and continue to be concentrated among disadvantaged target groups and areas, there exist new cohorts of people experiencing unemployment for the first time. The difficulties faced by professions such as architecture and banking as a result of sectoral decline mean that there are many formally educated people with skills which no longer provide direct access to employment. Others who are perhaps lower skilled but who had been able to secure reasonably well paid employment in industries such as construction and retailing have found themselves out of work for the first time and without any skills which are applicable in other contexts.

The flexibility of the LMAF in allowing tailored responses to be constructed to meet the needs of these very different groups with different needs was a key attribute and a way must be found to ensure that focused approaches can be developed to deal with specific up-skilling and re-skilling needs. This means a move away from the 'one size fits all' approach. A strong emphasis on needs identification at an early stage and an individualised pathway back into employment provides a tailored, participant-centred approach to labour market activation. Some of those that were previously employed do not need the core skills support that more marginalised individuals required but the lack of exposure to unemployment and the nature of previous, focused roles can bring other challenges such as CV preparation, interview techniques and communication skills which may require development. Future activation policy must therefore ensure that there is a range of different approaches and interventions along the progression pathway that can accommodate very different cohorts.

5.5 Competitive funding has changed culture and behaviours

One key aspect of the delivery of the LMAF has been the introduction of a competitive, multiple provider model for interventions that would typically have been the responsibility of a small body of core funded state agencies. There were mixed views of the degree to which this has improved the effectiveness of addressing labour activation needs from the mainstream delivery model, and it is impossible to conclude with absolute certainty that use of mainstream delivery agencies to progress projects of the type funded across LMAF would not have generated some similar outcomes and impacts. However the benefits of linking different interventions across a progression pathway, an integrated approach to delivery; stimulating employer involvement; offering flexible, tailored responses: and meeting the challenges of assisting new and different cohorts of people have only been realised to the extent found in this evaluation by the deployment of different types of provider models. Labour market activation in this unique economic environment is undoubtedly assisted by the presence of locally and sectorally focused organisations that can get closer to needs on the ground and have ability to fast-track responses.

The competitive funding approach put in place via the LMAF has facilitated the generation of evidence-based innovative responses to labour market activation and a competitive, multiple provider model should be maintained as a key component of future labour market policy. There has been evidence of success of private sector involvement in provision of activation responses and this has introduced a new perspective to the interventions which has facilitated achievement of the ultimate

employment goal. Indeed it is noted that a new competitive labour market fund, Springboard, was launched as part of the Government's Jobs Initiative in May 2011. Under Springboard, which is being managed by the Higher Education Authority on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills, 34 public, private and not for profit providers are delivering education and training programmes for unemployed people leading to higher education awards at NQF levels 6 to 9. While the Springboard Fund is outside of the remit of this evaluation, it is understood a number of the learning points from LMAF 2010 informed the development of that Fund.

Thus competitive funding has begun to shift the culture and behaviours in delivering labour market activation programmes by bringing new players into the market, and also by encouraging existing providers to become more efficient, effective and responsive in delivery. There is early evidence that 'opening up the system' in this way has facilitated new, innovative participant-centred approach to labour market activation.



6 Conclusions and implications for a future activation approach

In this Chapter we set out the conclusions from the evaluation of the Labour Market Activation Fund 2010. These reflect not only an assessment of effectiveness across the projects but also consider the lessons and learning which should be considered in future labour market activation policy. We then conclude the report by defining the principles of a model for delivery of future interventions around an activation progression pathway.

6.1 Conclusions

This evaluation of the Labour Market Activation Fund LMAF 2010 has provided a robust assessment of performance of the supported projects and identified learning emerging from their delivery. Although it is difficult to obtain a full understanding of the outcomes and impacts from the LMAF due to the short timeframe since completion of many projects, there are nonetheless many examples of success in facilitating progression for particular cohorts towards activation. The evaluation has found:

- **A strong strategic rationale for the LMAF intervention** – With Ireland in the midst of unprecedented social and economic change, and with the nature of unemployment becoming much more diverse, there was a need for much more flexible, tailored and responsive measures to address activation issues.
- **A total of €29.5million was invested across 2 phases of LMAF 2010 (in March and August) supporting 55 projects led by 42 providers.** There was significant diversity in the scale, nature and focus of projects, with funding per project ranging from €7,000 to €7.5million. A total of 12,629 participants were supported across the LMAF projects.
- **The LMAF programmes focused on different steps along a progression pathway to activation.** Within the programmes, there was a focus on capacity building and support; core skills development; providing a formal education platform; industry focused up-skilling and re-skilling; and engagement with employers. The flexibility of the Department of Education and Skills in supporting different types of intervention in response to need was a key attribute of the LMAF.
- **A multiple provider model was deployed across the LMAF programmes** – This involved third level institutions; VECs; community and voluntary organisations and private sector providers. The evaluation found that this provided the flexibility to provide tailored, responsive and market-focused interventions. Despite some concern from stakeholders at the involvement of private sector provision, there were notable successes arising from such programmes and there is a rationale for continuing to allow these providers to compete for activation funding on the basis of outcomes.
- **Participant recruitment and completion rates suggested that the LMAF 2010 was delivered efficiently and effectively.** The number of participants exceeded the original target and the overall

completion rate was 80%. There were initial difficulties in the level of awareness within the Department of Social Protection and the fit with existing welfare criteria. Successful programmes generally involved good working partnerships between such offices and DSP facilitators and programme providers and it is important that the Department is involved in the development and roll-out of any future interventions.

- **The most successful programmes were those which focused on clear progression outcomes.** A key characteristic of many of the most effective programmes was the existence of a collaborative approach involving education and training providers, the VEC, community organisations, local authorities, the Department of Social Protection and other relevant organisations (e.g. the CEBs). In keeping with the pathway approach, a focus on employability outcomes was also critical, moving on from programmes which may have prevailed in the past which purely focused on core skills with no end 'product'.
- **Mapping the focus of provision across the projects demonstrates the practical application of the progression pathway approach across the funded projects and the strong focus on accreditation of outcomes.** The importance of provision across the spectrum of NFQ level provision was critical, with projects focused on building capability across a number of levels, mixing core skills development with specific skills building to ensure success.
- **The initial indications of outcomes and impacts are encouraging,** with progression records for 5,361 people (53% of total completions) suggesting that 29% of these participants are in employment, 13% are in self-employment, 43% are in education or training and just 15% are still unemployed. Clear progression outcomes have emerged, with the work placement aspect an important component in facilitating these outcomes. However judging the success of the LMAF intervention has been difficult due to unavailability of progression data for a large base of participants and there is still a cohort of participants that remain unemployed. An important aspect of future activation intervention should be a requirement at the outset for robust and ongoing monitoring of progression outcomes.
- **It is too early to draw conclusions on the impact of LMAF 2010, but there are emerging signs of its value to the State, employers and participants.** Taking account of additionality factors, the employment impact generated from the progression identified to date is estimated to contribute a gross income effect of between €31.5mn to €54.1mn per annum to the Irish economy. The further benefit to the Government as a result of individuals moving off the live register was estimated at between €12mn and €21mn. Employers emphasised the benefits within programmes of a quick turnaround in response to their skills needs (and their ability to shape programme delivery) and the ability of work placements to serve as 'trials' to determine the suitability of potential employees. Participants consulted noted that a clear focus on the progression outcome from the programme was an important motivating factor in participation.
- **There were positive findings on value-for-money across the LMAF 2010 programmes.** The weekly cost per programme completion of €115.37 compares favourably with other FÁS and VEC interventions. The cost per completion does not include the significant additional Exchequer costs of income support and this is difficult to estimate for an intervention which involves such a diverse range of programmes. These are also 'sunk costs' which would have occurred in any event. However by using a broad assumption on average income support levels, we can build this into an

indicative completion cost figure of around €300 per week and this still suggests that LMAF interventions are in line with the costs of mainstream provision (including allowances). The innovative solutions offered to particular skills groups in particular distinct sectors and occupations therefore demonstrate that flexible and tailored responses can be delivered in a cost effective manner.

- **The focus on innovation within the Fund was important given the evolving market context and learning was identified which can inform future labour market intervention.** The focus on a progression pathway approach; an integrated, cross-organisation approach to meeting individual needs; flexibility in dealing with new cohorts of unemployed people; and the competitive funding model which changed culture and behaviours and supported more cost-effective delivery were all found to be key attributes which should be considered in future policy making.

Overall, the evaluation found that the innovative, programme-based approach offered the flexibility required to address the issue of a very different employment environment. The decline in sectors such as construction, manufacturing and retailing and in particular professions such as architecture and engineering has brought new cohorts onto the registered and new, tailored mechanisms are required to facilitate their re-activation. Such is the difference in the issues to be addressed by such groups and those in lower skilled, marginalised groups experiencing longer-term unemployment, there may be a case to consider activation in a separate context for each. Nonetheless the LMAF 2010 has supported successful programmes to address all types of unemployment, and there is a need to ensure that momentum is not lost where interventions have been successful and that funding continues to be available to support programmes which can demonstrate delivery of progression outcomes. Indeed there is potential to realise greater impact through multi-annual funding and continuation of funding on the basis of success.

6.2 Defining a future model

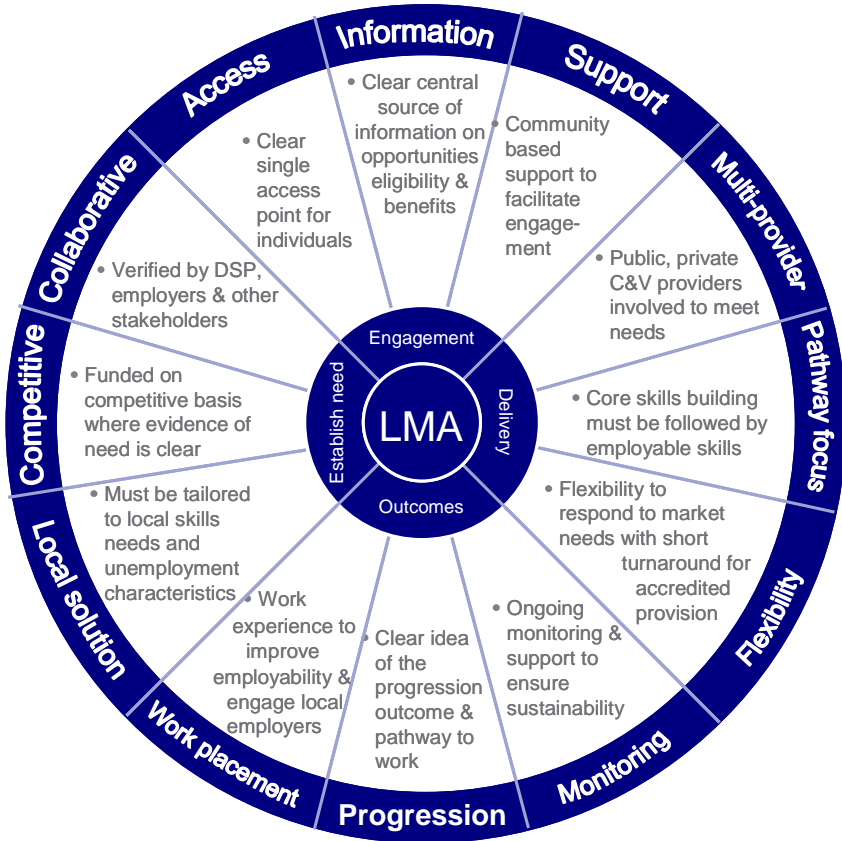
Given the findings from the evaluation of the Labour Market Activation Fund 2010 on its value and the learning from its performance, there is a foundation for contributing to a new model of labour market activation moving forward to reflect the rapidly evolving social and economic circumstances in Ireland. Government has recognised the case for change and the proposed introduction of SOLAS, with the intention to provide a more integrated approach between social protection services and education and training interventions, very much in line with the good practice emerging from the LMAF 2010 experience. The desire for more flexible responses to addressing skills needs and the focus on generic, transferable skills which will facilitate mobility between traditional sectors such as construction and basic manufacturing and higher growth sectors such as services, ICT, medical devices and food is also in keeping with the ethos of the LMAF and flexible, tailored, fast-tracked and market-focused approach of the fund offers a potential mechanism for progression along this path. The introduction of interventions such as Springboard, the National Internship Programme and the work placement initiative are also highly complementary to the LMAF intervention and there could be value in a suite of interventions to underpin a new progression pathway approach. The national internship programme, for example, would seem to offer potential to link to a programme like the LMAF intervention as the next activation 'step' for some of the participants.

Having considered the LMAF 2010 experience, we are able to define a number of key principles which we propose should characterise the future model of labour market activation in the state. This can be broken down into 4 core aspects as follows:

- **Assessment of Need** – Providing locally based solutions that recognise the differing needs of different cohorts among unemployed people in tandem and demonstrate the demand for the targeted skills from local employers and validation of need by all other relevant stakeholders (e.g. DSP, community organisations, local authorities, education and training providers). The competitive funding approach on the basis of need ensures that
- **Engagement** – Ensuring there is a clear, single access point for those experiencing unemployment to understand and apply to participate on an activation measure, with a central source of information available on all the opportunities that exist, the eligibility criteria and the benefits that would arise from engagement. This must be accompanied by appropriate community-based support that recognises and responds to the barriers faced by marginalised target groups to ensure that they can join and complete programmes.
- **Delivery** – Deploying a multiple provider model for labour market activation measures that includes the public; community and voluntary; and private sectors to facilitate flexible, tailored, responsive and market-focused approaches that ensure that all interventions focus on a pathway to employable skills.
- **Outcomes** – Ensuring, as far as possible, a work-based component to the intervention or following the intervention, engaging local employers in provision, with a clear idea of the progression outcome and pathway to work for each individual. Ongoing monitoring and support is critical to ensuring sustainability of such outcomes and tracking efficiency and effectiveness, which will allow the continual improvement of activation measure performance.

Building on these aspects, Figure 6.1 provides an overview of a future labour market activation model.

Figure 6.1: Key Principles of a Future Labour Market Activation Model



All of these principles underpin a progression pathway model which involves integrated working by the key agencies to:

- identify individual need and build capacity to engage in more formal education and training
- deliver market-focused education and training interventions
- identify skills needs, shape response and provide work experience and employment

Agreeing these roles (which were indicated earlier in Figure 5.1) and ensuring that there is clarity about both local and national working relationships should be the first step in pursuing this policy.

6.3 Implications for a future activation approach

There is sufficient evidence from the evaluation of LMAF 2010 to justify the continuation of this type of funding for tailored flexible interventions to address particular labour market activation needs. Moving forward, there is a *strong case for a new Labour Market Activation Fund to be launched*, retaining a competitive approach to selection and funding of activation projects. There are also other key learning points from the evaluation which should have implications for the future approach to labour activation. A number of these reinforce the important recent studies undertaken by Forfás, both in its Review of Labour Market Programmes and in the Guidelines produced for LMAF 2010 itself. The practical experience of projects in demonstrating how these previous proposals around areas such as competitive funding, synergy with national skills needs, multiple provider models and progression monitoring provides a further rationale for future implementation. Other key points include:

- The need for all projects funded under any new Labour Market Activation Fund to demonstrate how they *conform with a defined future labour market activation model* of the kind set out in this report and to future skills needs as identified by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. To ensure a comprehensive approach to meeting particular labour market activation needs, consideration should be given to *splitting any future funds into dedicated theme-based streams*. These funding streams would offer ‘packages’ of funding for which providers could compete based on demonstration of how they would address, for example:
 - A particular activation issue or target cohort
 - Skills needs in a particular sector (or issues arising from decline in a particular sector)
 - Roll-out of a proven activation level at a wider regional or national level
- As a key attribute in LMAF 2010, the *multiple provider model for addressing labour market activation issues should be preserved* in any new Fund with competition between publicly funded, private sector and community and voluntary providers. This was found to *support streaming of LMAF programmes across different NFQ levels of provision*. Most of the projects in LMAF 2010 had some focus of provision on NFQ levels 3 to 6, while linking this to some core skills building at NFQ levels 1 to 2 if required, and in some cases offering the opportunity to progress onto HE courses at levels 7 and 8. This *core focus on streaming around levels 3 to 6 in order to target a specific industry or occupational skills need* should be a key consideration in designing and delivering activation interventions in future. In recognition of the complexities in multi-provider, multi-tier activation model, it is worth considering whether *all project providers should be required*

to progress through a pre-qualification stage before submitting proposals for any new Fund. This stage will provide further quality assurance and ensure robust ongoing monitoring of progression outcomes, validating financial standing, availability of resources to deliver the project and ability to provide accredited training.

- To facilitate a more integrated approach to identifying individual needs, tracking up-skilling (including major, minor and special purpose awards at NFQ level) and recording progression outcomes, the feasibility of *establishing shared databases across the key agencies along the progression pathway* should be investigated, taking full account of data protection implications. It is important that such databases not only record completion, accreditation and progression but also gather robust information on drop outs from programmes. There should be a cohesive *communication strategy for engaging with participants at the outset* of labour market interventions of this kind. This should make clear expectations and progression outcomes from the delivery of the learning, with NEES staff able to fully brief participants prior to referral and further initial guidance given by the project provider on joining.
- A more formal and robust approach to ongoing monitoring of participant progression outcomes should be a key goal in future, requiring *consistent and sustained recording and reporting post-funding* and post-project to ensure that the full value of the public investment can be ascertained. In line with this, consideration should be given to *piloting an outcomes-based funding model* within any future Fund where project providers are rewarded on the basis of meeting specified outcome targets.
- A *multi-annual approach* to funding labour market activation projects should be considered in any future Fund to maximise the impact of interventions which are able to demonstrate success. As part of the approach to funding, potential should be investigated for *setting aside resources to address barriers to participation and engagement* such as travel and childcare barriers, allowing proposals for holistic responses to meet target group needs.

While these points are important in informing the future approach to activation, it is also critical that the potential of the portfolio of projects funded by LMAF 2010 to deliver employment impacts is maximised. This report set out examples of where mainstreaming prospects lie and *an action plan* should be put in place which sets out *how the learning* from the most successful LMAF programmes *can be mainstreamed* into wider labour market activation policy and interventions. If this is progressed, and the implications from the findings noted above are taken into account in planning the future activation approach, there is opportunity to build on the momentum of the work undertaken thus far to begin to realise more significant and sustainable employment outcomes.



Appendix A: LMAF Project Profile

This Appendix provides an overview of the 55 projects provided by 42 different project providers. The table shows the project provider, the NFQ level, the type of provider, programmes provided and a brief project summary. In the majority of cases, programmes delivered successfully against what they set out to achieve. There are very few examples of projects that did not deliver against their targets. There were one or two projects, which targeted very disadvantaged groups and operated in very disadvantaged areas, that proved very difficult to engage and retain participants and completion rates levels were low as a result. Most projects delivered very well against their stated objectives and many said that they could not cater for the high demand for the courses offered.

	Provider & Project	NFQ Level	Type of Provider	Programmes Provided	Summary of Project
1.	Focus Ireland	Level 3-5	Community / Non Profit	Food Industry Warehousing Social sector	The programmes were designed to meet the learning needs of the most marginalised people in society, the low-skilled and long-term unemployed. Focus Ireland identified a gap in service provision for people who are living independently in long-term housing, who have been homeless, or are vulnerable to becoming homeless, who are low-skilled and long-term unemployed, but who are ready to progress to training and education towards employment.
2.	Institute of Technology, Tralee	Levels 6-8	3rd level institution	Business Science Culinary Arts Engineering	The programmes provided by the Institute of Technology, Tralee were designed to respond to the regional demand for employment. The ITT worked closely with employers in the local area to ensure that the courses funded responded to actual skills shortages, thus improving participants' chances of gaining employment as a result of participation
3.	Career Decisions Ireland	Level 7	Private Sector	CareerStart	The programmes provided by Career Decisions Ireland integrated career development skills, professional qualifications and work placements for job seekers interested in a career in the international financial services sector. The programme was developed by

	Provider & Project	NFQ Level	Type of Provider	Programmes Provided	Summary of Project
					Financial Services Ireland in partnership with the Institute of Bankers School of Professional Finance and represents an innovative approach by the sector in linking people, skills and industry to enhance the employment prospects of the workforce. Despite the current domestic situation, the international financial sector is set to expand and the programme provides a tangible response to identified labour market need.
4.	Career Decisions Ireland	Level 3	Private Sector	Career 2 Fit Career Guidance Programme -	The primary purpose of the Career2Fit™ was to provide individualised and participant-centred career assessment and guidance to help participants to scientifically identify suitable employment / careers, their training and education needs and programmes that address those training needs. The programme used an online psychometric suite of career assessment on www.careerdecisionmaker.com ™
5.	The Shannon Consortium (UL)	Levels 6-8	3rd level institution	Kemmy Business School	The programmes provided by the Kemmy Business School focussed on innovation, flexibility and adaptability to develop key skills of the future that are transferable across sector and industry. The courses were provided on the basis that they would provide the learner with an individual pathway on their journey on the continuum of education. The flexible manner in which courses were delivered, using a blended learning approach, has ensured a high success rate for the programme.
6.	The Shannon Consortium (NCEF)	Level 5-8	Partnership	Certificate Health and Fitness	The Shannon Consortium was established as a partnership between LIT, UL, IT Tralee, and MIC. The programme was designed to provide a vital stepping stone for participants in the mid-west region to progress their education in the areas of health and fitness, general studies

	Provider & Project	NFQ Level	Type of Provider	Programmes Provided	Summary of Project
7.	The Shannon Consortium (Ennis)	Level 5	Partnership	General Studies	The aim of the programme was to engage and support non-traditional learners to access third level education.
8.	The Shannon Consortium (Limerick)	Level 5	Partnership	General Studies	The access centres in Limerick and Ennis provided strategic collaborative outreach initiatives for the third level partner institution (UL, LIT, ITT and MIC).
9.	The Shannon Consortium (Tipperary Institute)	Level 6	3rd level institution	Business Studies Renewable Energy	The fundamental aim of the programme was to combine specialised and relevant module content with the practical skills necessary to meet the needs of business at both local and national level. The programme equips participants with the skills and knowledge to work at operational and management level in the private and public sectors.
10.	The Shannon Consortium (Limerick IT)	Level 7	Partnership	Built Environment	The aim of the programme was to equip participants with the skills and qualifications to progress onto supervisor or management roles. The programmes offered through LIT professional recognition from the Society of Chartered Surveyors (SCS), the Irish Auctioneers and Valuers Institute (IAVI), the Chartered Institute of Building and Engineers Ireland.
11.	Co. Meath VEC		Vocational Education Committee	Sit Smart	The SIT Smart (Science IT Smart) model provides a holistic approach to supporting unemployed people to get back into employment, using the SIT Smart Assessment Tool kit and the SIT Smart Support Toolkit. The assessment toolkit includes a diagnostic literacy and numeracy assessment, an initial IT assessment and a 'Map my Future' career guidance workshop.
12.	Co. Meath VEC	Level 3-5	Vocational Education Committee	Smart Skills	People who are not at an appropriate NFQ level (Level 5) of literacy and numeracy cannot participate on the SitSmart programme. Therefore, a specific programme was designed to provide a more basic education package

	Provider & Project	NFQ Level	Type of Provider	Programmes Provided	Summary of Project
					for those with lower levels of literacy and numeracy.
13.	National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)	Level 3	Community / Non Profit	Write On 4 Work - recognition for prior learning	The Write On 4 Work was a distance learning programme for adults, who wished to include their basic skills and gain a qualification at FETAC Level 3. Participants worked at their own pace, using the learning website, www.writeon.ie . They could enrol directly on to the programme and learn independently or assistance and support was also available over the phone.
14.	Digital Skills Academy	Level 6	Private Sector	WebActivate Programme	In recognition that an estimated 30,000 businesses in Ireland had no effective online presence, the Digital Skills Academy, supported by the Digital Hub. Designed the pilot for the WebActivate programme, to provide small and medium-sized enterprises throughout Ireland with an effective online presence, for free. The programme was delivered in partnership with four leading colleges of further education (St. John's Central College, Cork; GTI, Galway; and Liberties College; St. Kevin's College Dublin) and the Chamber of Commerce in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Dublin).
15.	City of Dublin VEC	Level 3 & 4	Vocational Education Committee	Progression Pathways Programme	Progression Pathways is a suite of education and training programmes to assist unemployed adults who are considering undertaking education and training to meet the academic demands of studying in college. The six separate programmes that make up Progression Pathways were aimed primarily at adults with less than Upper Second Level education, considering or already undertaking further education and training to upgrade their skills and increase their employment prospects.
16.	Counties Galway & Mayo VECs	Levels 3 & 4	Vocational Education Committee	Tourism Energy Media Aquaculture	The programmes run by Galway and Mayo VEC offered four specialisms; energy; media; tourism; aquaculture. The literacy / learning support services

	Provider & Project	NFQ Level	Type of Provider	Programmes Provided	Summary of Project
					were involved in the design and implementation of the Labour Market Activation programmes. A Learning Support Officer was appointed in each area in order to support any issues in relation to literacy and numeracy.
17.	Innovo Training & Development (Bycon)	Level 8	Private Sector	The Enterprise Evolution Programme	The Innovo programme was set up to help currently unemployed graduates and industry professionals up-skill and retain in the area of enterprise and innovation with the primary aim for them to create, start and run their own businesses.
18.	Co Dublin VEC	Levels 3-5	Vocational Education Committee	Labour Market Activation Programme	The County Dublin VEC programmes were delivered on the basis of targeted training needs analysis of the potential learners. Training was delivered at a level tailored to participants' particular needs. The three-stage structure of the programme ensured that early leavers achieved something for partial completion of the course, even if they did not complete the course in its entirety.
19.	JMD Consulting	Levels 3-5	Private Sector	Ecotourism Training - Professional Certification	JMD Consulting worked in partnership with Baltinglass Outdoor Education Centre and Doyle's Equestrian Centre to provide eco-tourism courses for people with low levels of educational attainment who were long-term unemployed and had an interest in working in the eco-tourism sector.
20.	First Step Microfinance	Level 6	Community /Non Profit	10 regional training networks	First-Step Microfinance set up ten regional training networks for unemployed people who were interested in becoming self-employed to support them in setting up their own business. First Step identified a clear progression route from idea to business skills to start-up to launch and mentored support as the steps involved in setting up a business. This progression route provided the framework for supporting micro-enterprises through the stages of

	Provider & Project	NFQ Level	Type of Provider	Programmes Provided	Summary of Project
					business start-up.
21.	Innopharma Labs	Level 7+	Private Sector	Upskilling people for the pharmaceutical industry	Innopharma Labs worked with the Institute of Technology Tallaght and Dublin Institute of Technology to provide an up-skilling programme in response to a skills shortage identified by the EGFSN and Pharmaceutical Ireland. Innopharma Labs used its strong industry links to ensure that the courses were tailored to market need and to provide a network of industry experts which participants could access as required in their search for employment.
22.	Meath Partnership	Level 5	Community / Non Profit	Eco-Tourism & E-business Training Programme - National Certificate in Tourism	The eco-tourism and e-business programme was designed in recognition that the eco-tourism is rapidly emerging as an important agri-diversification activity in the region and as such offers opportunities to sustain employment and support new business ventures
23.	Meath Partnership	Level 5	Community /Non Profit	Wood Energy and Biomass Training programme,	Meath Partnership recognised the need for a lifelong learning supports in Co. Meath. The Wood Energy and Biomass Training Programme provided training and learner supports on an outreach basis at community facilities.
24.	Meath Partnership	Level 5	Community / Non Profit	Artisan Food	Meath Partnership also built on the partnership's experience of supporting and promoting economic and commercial activity in the artisan food sector . Meath Partnership had already invested in state of the art training facilities to accommodate the artisan food courses provided.
25.	Letterkenny Institute of Technology Higher diploma in computing	Level 8	3rd level institution	Higher Diploma in Computing Certificate in Wind Energy Technology	The objective of the Letterkenny Institute of Technology programme was to support graduates who had not studied computing skills as part of their studies by providing training in IT-related disciplines that would be transferable across a variety of different sectors and industries. Completion of the Higher Diploma in computing provides a strong

	Provider & Project	NFQ Level	Type of Provider	Programmes Provided	Summary of Project
					asset to supplement a graduate's core skills, a combination that is attractive to employers who are seeking to employ people with strong IT skills.
26.	ICBE - Irish Centre for Business Excellence	Levels 5 and 6	Private Sector	Begin Again™	The ICBE Begin Again™ programme is a programme of training and directed work placement designed to help out of work professionals return to work. The programme offers a purpose-built strategic intervention designed to meet the needs of enterprise, the community as well as the individuals participating on the programme. The key pillars of the Begin Again™ programme were: Employment and Employability; Resilience and well-being; Enterprise and innovation; and Lifelong learning.
27.	TBG Learning, part of the Rehab Group	Level 3+	Private Sector	Job Fit	The central feature of JobFit was its focus on meeting the specific needs of individual participants through a holistic and flexible programme. This included providing supports in the areas of employability and soft skills, job searching, vocational training and qualifications and work placements. On-the-job support was also provided for participants and the employer.
28.	IOT Blanchardstown	Level 4	3rd level institution	Digital Media Programme	The programmes provided at IOT Blanchardstown were designed in response to the National Skills Bulletins, which identified skills shortages in these particular areas. The courses provided sought to match the skills shortages identified in the National Skills Bulletin with the Institute's in-house expertise to design and deliver appropriate courses and with the profile of unemployed people in the Blanchardstown area.
29.	IOT Blanchardstown	Level 6		Creative Web Communications	
30.	IOT Blanchardstown	Level 6		Electrical Technology	
31.	IOT Blanchardstown	Level 8		Computer Aided Design and Manufacturing	
32.	Dundalk Institute of Technology	Level 6	3rd level institution	Business in Sales and Marketing	The Certificate in Business in Sales and Marketing was provided for people who had no prior attendance at a third level course. The Higher Diploma in Business in Small Enterprise was provided to people who had previous
33.	Dundalk Institute of Technology	Level 8		H.Dip in Science in Computing	

	Provider & Project	NFQ Level	Type of Provider	Programmes Provided	Summary of Project
					higher education qualifications and found themselves without work. The courses sought to cultivate key creative, innovative and entrepreneurial skills required for business leaders.
34.	DigiMEDIA (Regenerate Media Ltd) - Digital Skills Academy	Levels 4 and 5	Private Sector	Suite of digital media skills courses -	The Digi-Media programme provided a supported progression pathway to participants interested in education and training in the digital media sector. Digi-Media addresses the educational deficit in Dublin RAPID areas by training the unemployed with skills relevant to strong growth sectors.
35.	A V Network Solutions Ltd	Level 6	Private Sector	Air Blown Fibre Optic Cable and Repair Technician Programme	The aim of the course was to up-skill unemployed people for employment in a high-growth sector, installing new fibre optic network infrastructure. The principal employers are UPC, BT and Eircom. Those who have completed the course have had their details logged on the BT maintained register of trained installers.
36.	County Clare VEC	Level 3-5	Vocational Education Committee	Healthcare Renewable Energies Environmental / Ecology Protection and Sectors	Programmes provided practical training and education for people with low levels of educational attainment, with a particular focus on developing the transferable generic skills, including literacy, numeracy, technology, people skills and job preparation skills with the development of specific vocational skills.
37.	Waterford City VEC	Level 5	Vocational Education Committee	Starting a small business in hand-crafted wood pieces with FETAC accreditation at	The programme was organised for a group of unemployed men in a particular area in Waterford City. The programme provided basic woodworking classes and incorporated a Start Your Own Business module.
38.	National Butchery Academy Ltd	Level 5-6	Private Sector	Industrial Butchery Skills Programme	The Industrial Butchery Skills Programme was designed to equip trainees with the essential foundation skills necessary to gain entry into the red meat sector of the Irish food production industry. The programme provided reflected the shifting dynamics in the red meat sector, including a move

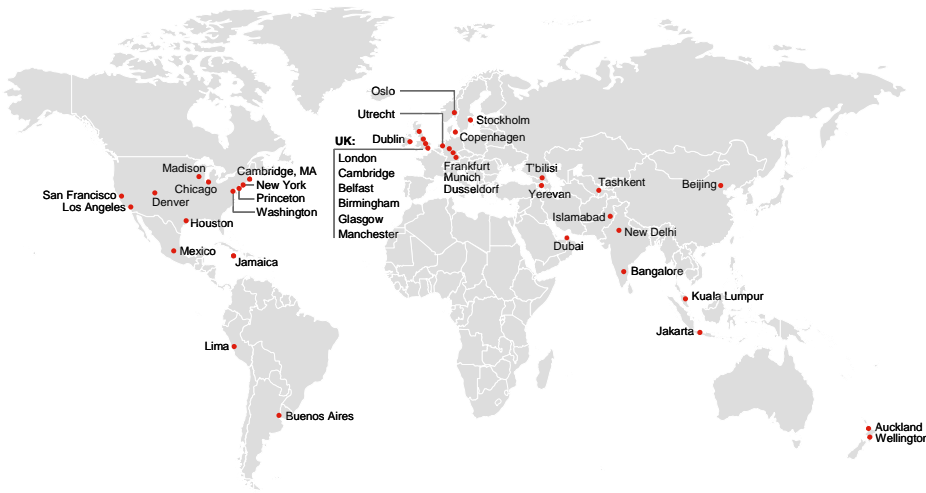
	Provider & Project	NFQ Level	Type of Provider	Programmes Provided	Summary of Project
					away from individual working to team based working. The NBA partnered with an established Danish butchery academy to accredit the technical butchery element of the course.
39.	IBEC - Irish Business and Employers Confederation (FSI)	Level 7	Community /Non Profit	International Financial Services Sector Transition programme	The IBEC International Financial Services Transition Programme is designed to provide participants with the skills, support and experience to enable them to enter the growing IFS sector and access sustainable employment with significant progression opportunities. The programme was designed in cooperation with the financial services industry.
40.	Alaymont	Level 5	Private Sector	Passive House Construction; Insulation Installer; Green Construction	The programme delivered by Alaymont attracted people from across the educational spectrum. While this presented challenges, people with very different backgrounds were determined to engage and to seek out opportunities in this new sector.
41.	County Offaly VEC	Level 5-6	Vocational Education Committee	Working Together to Get Offaly Working	Co. Offaly VEC played a lead role in developing a successful partnership model to delivering training and education in Offaly. The programme in Offaly sought to provide training that offers genuine employment prospects that are local, accessible, and responsive to participant need.
42.	The Business Strategy Programme TBSP	CILT	Private Sector	Career Development with Certificate in Logistics	The programme delivered by the Business Strategy Programme provided course completers with a qualification that is recognised by the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport
43.	An Tochar Adult Education Centre	Level 5	Community /Non Profit	Cert in Hotel and Catering	The programme delivered by An Tochar Adult Education Centre was designed to support local tourism enterprise in the Kerry area. The recruitment of suitable tutors to deliver the modules was key to its success. Tutors brought a strong background in the catering industry, both as educators and professionals

	Provider & Project	NFQ Level	Type of Provider	Programmes Provided	Summary of Project
44.	Dublin City University and DCU Ryan Academy	Level 8	3rd level institution	Business Innovation Programme	The Business Programme was designed to help[find high-quality work for unemployed professionals and to develop in-company innovation skills that should lead to business expansion and job creation. The BIP included training through lectures, workshops and master classes, practical application through group projects, individual research and case studies as well as in-company placements.
45.	County Donegal VEC	Level 5	Vocational Education Committee	FETAC Cert Renewable Technology	The Renewable Technologies scheme targeted unemployed construction workers and those with very low levels of educational attainment. The aim was to up-skill the target group in the renewable energies sector.
46.	Fledglings Education & Training (An Cosan)	Level 5 and High Scope	Community /Non Profit	Early Years Educator and Parent Support Worker Skills and Implementing the High/Scope Approach	Fledglings Childcare is an innovative social enterprise development at An Cosán in Tallaght and Fledglings Education & Training is the childcare training facility. Fledglings has, as its focus, the provision of high quality, low cost early years education and care places for the community of Tallaght West and beyond. The approach used includes the important role of Parent Support Worker to intervene professionally either directly with children and families or indirectly through support for other staff in order to affect beneficial outcomes for vulnerable children.
47.	Sustainable Ireland Co-Op Society Ltd / Cultivate	Level 6	Community /Non Profit	Sustainability and the Green Economy	Sustainable Ireland Cooperative Society worked in partnership with NICER to provide training in the areas of green building, green business, land use and sustainable tourism. The programme also helped to develop skills for eco-entrepreneurs who are interested in creating their own business.
48.	Dun Laoghaire VEC	Level 4	Vocational Education Committee	Introduction to PC Maintenance with	Dun Laoghaire VEC provided courses in PC maintenance and warehouse operations in recognition that these were

	Provider & Project	NFQ Level	Type of Provider	Programmes Provided	Summary of Project
				Warehouse Operations	areas that continued to offer employment opportunities in Ireland.
49.	Dun Laoghaire VEC	Level 4	Vocational Education Committee	Green Technologies	<p>The course provided a platform for further training for un-skilled or low-skilled unemployed people who were seeking to up-skill in this area.</p> <p>The Green Technology and Practice programme was designed to up-skill unemployed construction workers in a broad range of skills and competencies aimed at meeting the needs of the emerging green economy. Dun Laoghaire VEC collaborated with local employers and agencies to explore employment opportunities and to support participants in returning to the labour market.</p>
50.	Tolka Area Partnership	Level 4	Community /Non Profit	Young Peoples Skills Foundation Initiative	The Skills Foundation Initiative was developed in response to the specific needs of early school leavers. The aim of the programme is to facilitate a return to education to enhance employment opportunities of this vulnerable group
51.	Waterford Area Partnership		Community /Non Profit	Make it Your Business Enterprise Programme	Waterford Area Partnership designed and delivered a 'Start Your Own Business' programme to support job seekers who were exploring opportunities to start their own business. The programme delivered focussed strongly on the importance of networking and to support this, the providers continued to provide ongoing support after the programme had officially finished.
52.	Comhchoiste Ghaeltacht Uibh Rathaigh	Level 5	Community /Non Profit	Courses in healthcare support and business administration	Comhchoiste Ghaeltacht Uibh Rathaigh delivered training in healthcare support and business administration in the Gaeltacht area. A particular emphasis was placed on the practical elements of work in the healthcare sector through work placements.
53.	City of Galway VEC	Levels 3-5	Vocational Education Committee	Core Skills - FETAC	The City of Galway VEC provided courses for men between the ages of 21 and 34 who left school early, without

	Provider & Project	NFQ Level	Type of Provider	Programmes Provided	Summary of Project
					having developed fully the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. The core skills development was combined with practical skills development courses in energy conversation, green construction and sustainable development).
54.	Dublin Institute of Technology		3rd level institution	Provision A - 24 programmes; Provision B - HC courses	The DIT was funded for 28 courses together with the provision of advanced entry of individuals to existing programmes. Participants were selected on the basis of a specially designed application form based on the Europass CV template.
55.	National College of Ireland	Level 5-8	Private Sector	Cert. in Bus. Studies, Cert and H.Dip. in Web Technologies, Cert in Entrepreneurship	All of the NCI programmes were managed by a dedicated LMAF team. The team liaised with relevant schools within NCI to ensure a positive learning experience for LMAF students. Each school took responsibility for the day-to-day delivery of LMAF courses, including design and delivery of programme content, assessment, etc.

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