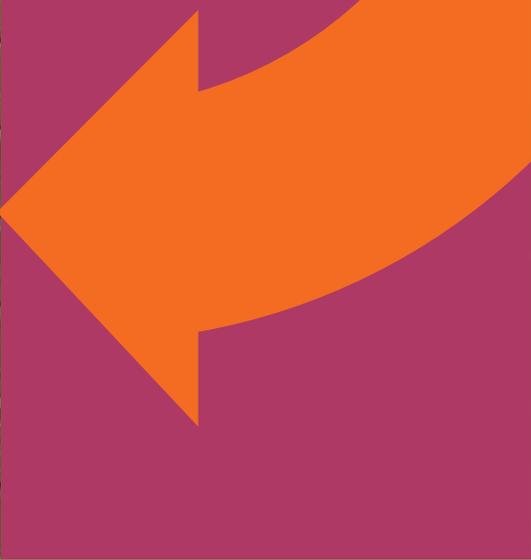




Regional Skills
MID WEST
Partnerships for Skills

2021



ANNUAL
REPORT



Chairperson Foreword

It is a pleasure as Chairperson of the Mid-West Regional Skills Forum to oversee the progress we are making in advising and supporting enterprises of all sizes throughout the region in the development of their talent teams.



With increased challenges in our labour market there is growing concern amongst employers on the availability of skilled talent. Our core activity as a forum involves promoting the range of Government training supports across education providers and state agencies to ensure we have a highly skilled workforce.

Our value proposition as a region is one of collaboration and this is clearly evident in the growing number of business and sectoral networks across Aviation, Manufacturing, ICT, Logistics and Tourism and Hospitality.

The forum plays an integral role in growing and supporting these clusters which enables an agile response to meet the current and changing skills needs of industry. Continuous changes in technology and the need for enterprises to improve the sustainability of their operations will necessitate ongoing learning and development and the Regional Skills Fora are best positioned to advise on appropriate training provider.

Padraic McElwee

Manager Introduction

Despite the challenges and restrictions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic continuing into 2021 the forum increased the number of company engagements significantly during the course of the year.

We hosted a number of on-line webinars in partnership with education & training providers across industry sectors including Life Sciences, Retail, Hospitality, Logistics, ICT and Manufacturing. Increasing awareness amongst industry on Government funding supports to help upskill or reskill employees remains a key priority.



Talent retention in a highly competitive labour market requires talent development and the forum plays a key role in assisting employers to both retain talent and develop employees career pathways.

The establishment and development of industry networks and programme steering committees forms a cornerstone of our work. These networks enable collaboration in terms of addressing skill needs while equally assisting with new programme development.

For example, the Limerick for IT network enabled the development of Ireland's first national apprenticeship in Cyber Security at Level 7 & 8 in partnership with the University of Limerick.

Subject to an easing of restrictions on public gatherings we plan to host a number of events during 2022 including the Mid-West Apprenticeship & Traineeship Careers Showcase.

Joe Leddin

“ Navigating the landscape of education & training providers and their respective programmes is challenging. The Regional Skills Forum plays an important role in our talent development plans by signposting us to the right provider based on our training needs saving us time and resources.

Elaina Fitzgerald, President of the Irish Hotels Federation



Who we are

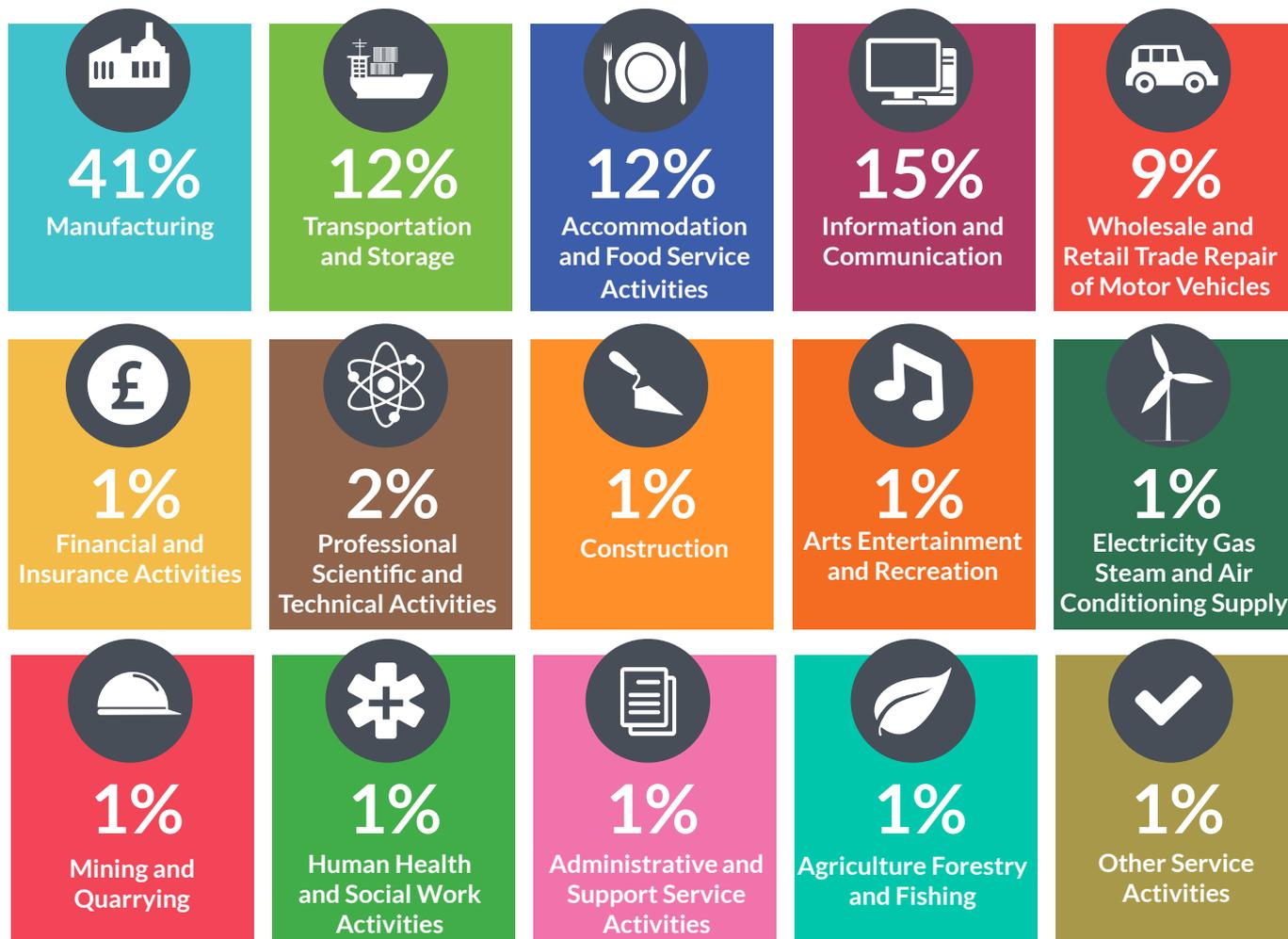
The Mid-West Regional Skills forum (MWRSF) is part of a national network of nine Regional Skills Fora supported by the Skills Planning Enterprise Engagement (SPEE) unit within the Department of Further and Higher Education, Innovation, Research and Science.

The work undertaken by the MWSRF reflects the strong focus by Government to strengthen links between industry and the education and training providers to ensure employees and graduates have the necessary skills to meet new and emerging job roles.

The Regional Skills Forum has three primary functions:

- Engage with industry and create links with education and training providers
- Identify future skills needs and gaps in programme provision
- Implement responses in collaboration with education and training providers

Enterprise Engagement





Explore

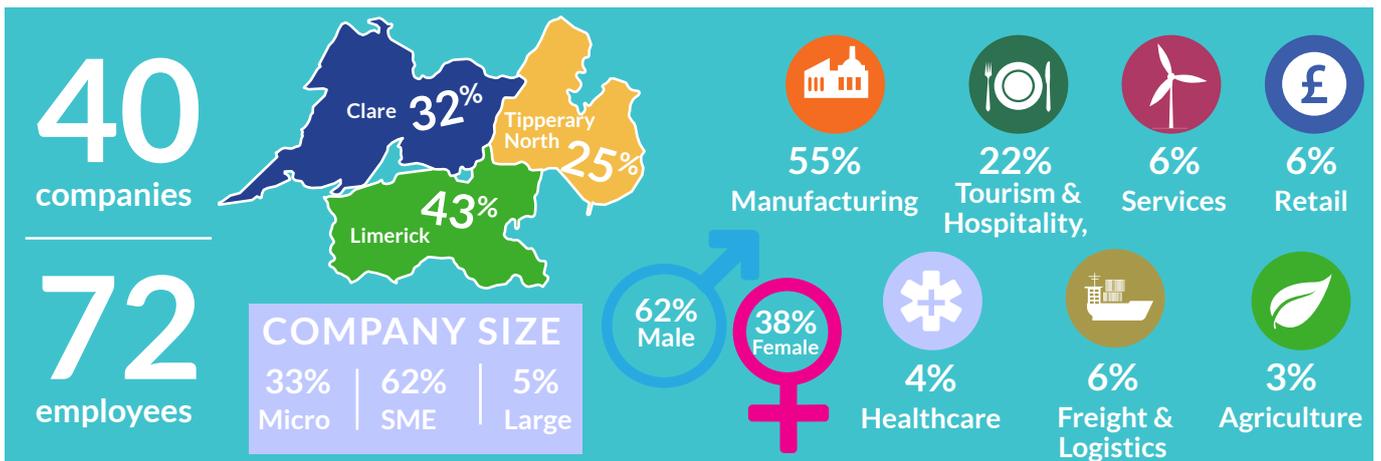
Digital Upskilling for Older Employees

With increased digitalisation in the workplace arising from Industry 4.0 and new technologies a large cohort of older employees are now facing new job tasks that require enhanced digital skills.

The Explore programme seeks to build the confidence of employees who have low digital skills through the use of iPads and various apps that will assist in performing job tasks while also facilitating learning pathways for those seeking further upskilling. The programme initially focused on the manufacturing sector before expanding in 2020 and 2021 to help both Retail and Hospitality employers as they developed an online presence for their business.

Explore is a fully funded digital training programme delivered by the Regional Skills Fora in partnership with Education & Training Boards (ETB's) on behalf of the Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

In 2021, 40 Companies in the Mid-West Region participated in the Explore programme with 72 employees undertaking training in digital skills.



“ As a manufacturing company we are continually investing in new processes and technologies to improve efficiencies. The employees that completed the ‘Explore’ programme greatly increased their confidence in using digital applications as part of their daily work tasks ”

Ollie Ruane, Principal Training Specialist, Microchip Ireland



Digital Skills for the Green Economy

Transitioning to a Green Economy requires a workforce with the right skills and capabilities to undertake new job tasks. The team of RSF managers in responding to the needs of employers to adapt and embrace environmental sustainability designed a short introductory training programme called DigiEco.

DigiEco is about positioning SME's and Micro Enterprises on the first step of their sustainability journey through creating awareness of the Green Economy and the potential impact and opportunities for their business. Following on from the successful pilot programme in 2020, DigiEco was rolled out nationwide in 2021.

In collaboration with Local Enterprise Offices in Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary, 32 Micro Enterprises were identified to take part in the DigiEco programme.

These companies came from sectors including Manufacturing, Retail, Services and Hospitality.

A collaborative learning approach including Limerick and Clare Education & Training Board and Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Mid-West informed learners in the following areas namely, Energy, Resource Management, Emissions and Digital skills.

DigiEco training positions companies on a transition pathway by creating awareness on actions that once implemented will bring about more sustainable operations.

“ The DigiEco programme is going to benefit us so much going forward and we as a company have benefitted hugely from it. We have developed a road map for our own Sustainability Commitment 2021 with both short-term and long-term objectives where we will engage with our suppliers in the move towards more sustainable business practices. ”

Lyndsey Dunne, Dunvara Design

Skills Planning Enterprise & Engagement

Our value proposition in the Mid-West region can best be described as collaboration. The RSF is a key driver and enabler in the development of industry networks. By bringing employers and education and training providers together we can ensure that both current training needs and future skill requirements are identified and addressed.

Over the course of 2021 the RSF hosted a series of collaborative enterprise engagement events including

- Industry Sectoral Network Briefings across ICT, Hospitality, Logistics, Manufacturing
- Talent Development Government Funding Models
- Career Pathway Enterprise Briefings



New Programme Development

New Programme development was a core focus of the Mid – West Regional Skills Forum in 2021 and through continued collaboration and consultation with Industry on our steering groups a number of skills gaps were identified and suitable programmes developed.

Industry Steering Groups	Programme	Sector	Provider
HGV Motor Technology (mechanics)	Traineeship	Logistics	LCETB
Façade Design Glazing	Traineeship	Construction	LCETB
Manufacturing & Data Integration	Apprenticeship	Manufacturing	LIT
Manufacturing Electronics	Traineeship	Manufacturing	LCETB
Cyber Security	Apprenticeship	ICT	UL
Women in Coding	Diploma in Software	ICT	Code Institute
HGV Driver	Traineeship (IRHA)	Logistics	LCETB

“ A thriving logistics sector is at the core of a growing and successful economy. Ensuring we have a pipeline of next generation talent is essential and the Regional Skills Forum are a key partner in helping us achieve that objective. ”

Eugene Drennan, President of the Irish Road Haulage Association

Cyber Security Apprenticeship



Cyber Security is one of the greatest challenges facing companies today. Cyber-crime cost Irish businesses almost €10 billion in 2020. The cyber-attack on the HSE computer system in May 2021 highlighted the vulnerabilities in computer systems that hackers are able to exploit which can cause huge reputational and financial damage to companies.

Through discussions with industry in the form of the Limerick for IT network, the Regional Skills forum identified a specific skills gap in cyber security specialists and in collaboration with Limerick for IT and the University of Limerick developed Ireland's first Cyber Security Apprenticeship at Level 7 and 8.

This national programme which will launch in early 2022 will assist companies build resilient cyber teams to help combat the growing threat of increased cyber-crime.

"This national cyber apprenticeship will be a critical tool towards equipping companies with the necessary knowledge & skills to mitigate their IT networks against cyber breaches. Thanks to the Regional Skills Forum for facilitating and bringing together the necessary stakeholders in the delivery of this apprenticeship programme."

Denis Kelly, Chair Apprenticeship Industry Group & Former VP DELL EMC

Women in Coding Pilot

Gender diversity in ICT is a significant challenge for tech companies. The Regional Skills Forum in collaboration with Limerick for IT, Limerick Clare Education & Training Board and the Code Institute designed a 12-month Software Development programme to include 3 months industry work placement.

Following a selection process 20 women who were previously out of the workforce were selected to take part in the programme. Funding was provided through the Skills to Advance initiative from Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board. Industry mentorship was provided to all learner by participating companies including, Analog, HR Locker, Becton Dickinson, Jaguar Land Rover, General Motors, Fi-Serv, Transact Campus, Dell, WP Engine and Action Point.

The upskilling programme has been hugely successful with funding secured to deliver the training again in 2022.

"As chair of Limerick for IT and site lead with Transact Campus, talent development, gender diversity and responding to new skill needs is of paramount importance to the development and attractiveness of the Mid-West region. The regional skills forum is an integral part of the skills architecture in supporting industry address their training needs."

John Gleeson, Site Lead, Transact Campus



“Did You Know?”

You can upskill your employees on the new range of apprenticeship programmes.

Apprenticeships are available in a wide variety of sectors including:

Engineering, BioPharma, Hospitality, Sales, Finance, ICT, Logistics, Hairdressing

Work Based Learning

Government Funded Training Opportunities

More details can be found at www.apprenticeship.ie or by contacting the Mid-West Regional Skills Manager **Joe Leddin** on **086 816 0569** joeleddin@regionalskills.ie

Engineering



BioPharma



Hospitality



Retail & Sales



Finance



ICT



Logistics



Hairdressing





 **Regional Skills**
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Year in Review





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Padraic McElwee (Chairperson)

Mary Ryan

Tom McGrath

Mairead Crosby

Ciara Markham

Graham Burns

Tom O'Connor

Gerard Murray

Eva Hartigan

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IDA

Irish Hotels Federation Mid-West

Dept of Social Protection

Limerick City & County Council + LEO Limerick

Chairperson Head of Enterprise Clare LEO

Tipperary Local Enterprise Office

Retail Employer Representative

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Logistics Sector - Leatrans

Limerick Chamber

MD Conack Construction & Mid-West CIF

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