

PLANNING AND PRIORITISING FUTURE SKILLS, TRAINING AND BUSINESS SUPPORT NEEDS FOR RURAL BUSINESSES ACROSS THE SELEP REGION

Talent is evenly spread – opportunity is not. Creating more opportunities relies on the ambitions and skills of all ages. Success requires close collaboration.

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A7 Ground truthing survey

As an integral part of the project the early emerging themes were tested against a group of 35 rural businesses, representative of the range found across the SELEP region.

The aim was not necessarily to derive new data, but to test for recognition of the findings amongst business. This survey had to take place mid Covid and confirmed both the need for the higher level of solid employability skills required for businesses to move forward and the re-emerging need for basic technical skills to support new entrants to fill those jobs not filled by predominantly eastern European workers.

Issues with recruitment showed three top problems:

1. Not able to recruit staff with the right level of technical skills – 80%
2. Not able to recruit the right number of staff – 40%
3. Not able to recruit employees with the right employability / problem solving skills – 18%

In aiming to solve the skills shortage, 80% of businesses identified the more local supply of better skilled employees would solve their recruitment problems, whilst better access to more local training was cited by 60%. Surprisingly, only 55% identified more freedom to recruit more overseas labour. However, these responders were likely to be those already recruiting eastern European labour currently.

Nearly 60% of responders cited that they wanted either full or part time courses to train and develop their staff. 9% had no need for training courses whilst 15% had not considered training. Only 12% identified the existing offer as being unsuitable.

In terms of barriers to training uptake, the majority of businesses (80%) said the training wasn't relevant to the sector or workplace and this supports the need for more tailored training provision. Time, location and value for money were cited as important barriers. However, only 33% cited actual cost as a barrier, reflecting the time away from the business was an important consideration.

Approximately a third of businesses were employing apprentices or had employed them previously. A third had not considered an apprentice to fill a skills gap and identifies a potential strand for employer support to raise awareness of the apprenticeship scheme.

The preference of the businesses for training delivery reflected between 50 and 60% wanting a mix of face to face and online delivery, a mix of both long and short duration and the short duration courses to be developed such that they had impact across many employees within the businesses.

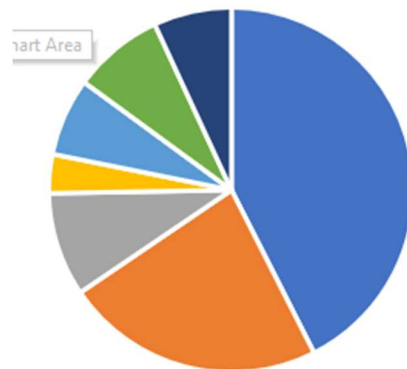
In terms of future skills needs:

- 66% needed employees to have good, basic employability skills and team working abilities
- 64% needed employees with improved technical skills
- 49% required individuals with better problem-solving skills
- 42% need better entrepreneurial skills and business acumen
- 24 need employees with awareness of robotics and automation
- 24% need employees with better English and maths skills

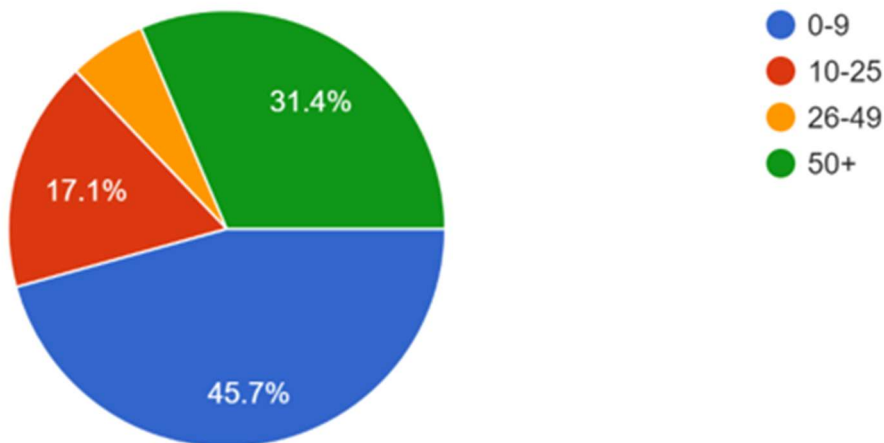
This ground truthing focussed survey has generally borne out the findings of the report and research work, in that for businesses to move forward in the short term, technical skills delivery locally in the workplace is important but for the longer term, the development of strong employability skills and business acumen / entrepreneurship will be pivotal.

1. In which business sector are you or your business engaged?

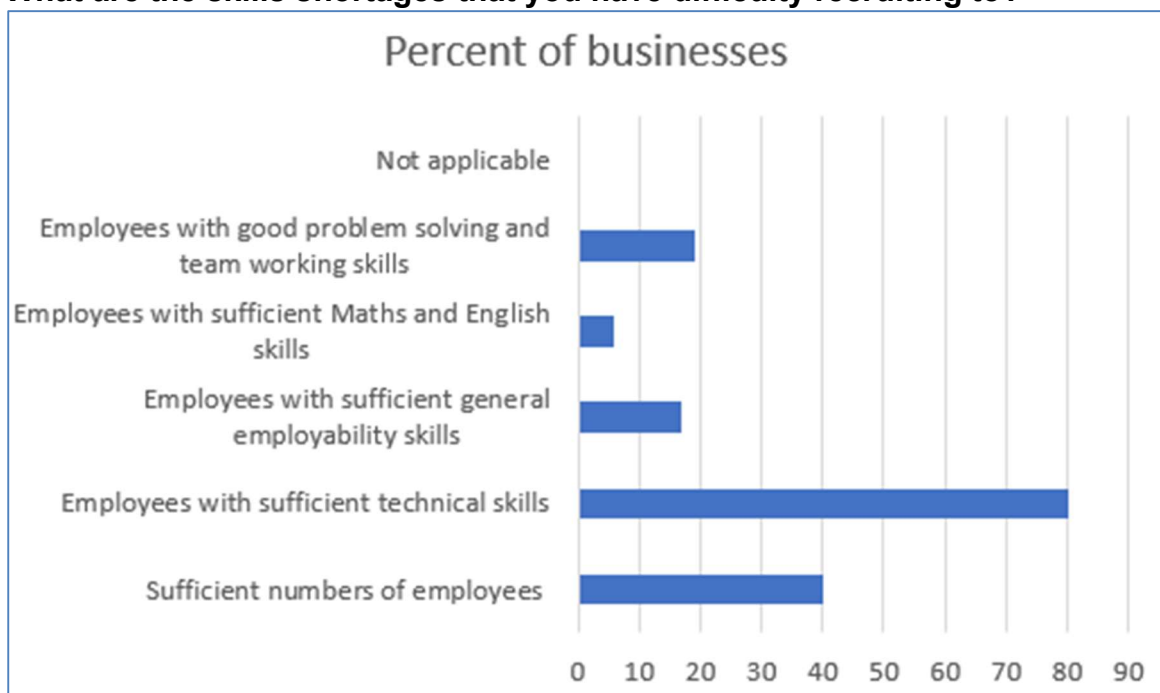
| Business type | Business type (%) |
|--|-------------------|
| Agriculture | 43 |
| Horticulture (vegetables, salads, fruit) | 23 |
| Food and drink processing | 9 |
| Forestry and arboriculture | 3 |
| Amenity landscape | 7 |
| Equestrianism | 8 |
| Viticulture | 7 |



2. How many people work in your business?



3. What are the skills shortages that you have difficulty recruiting to?



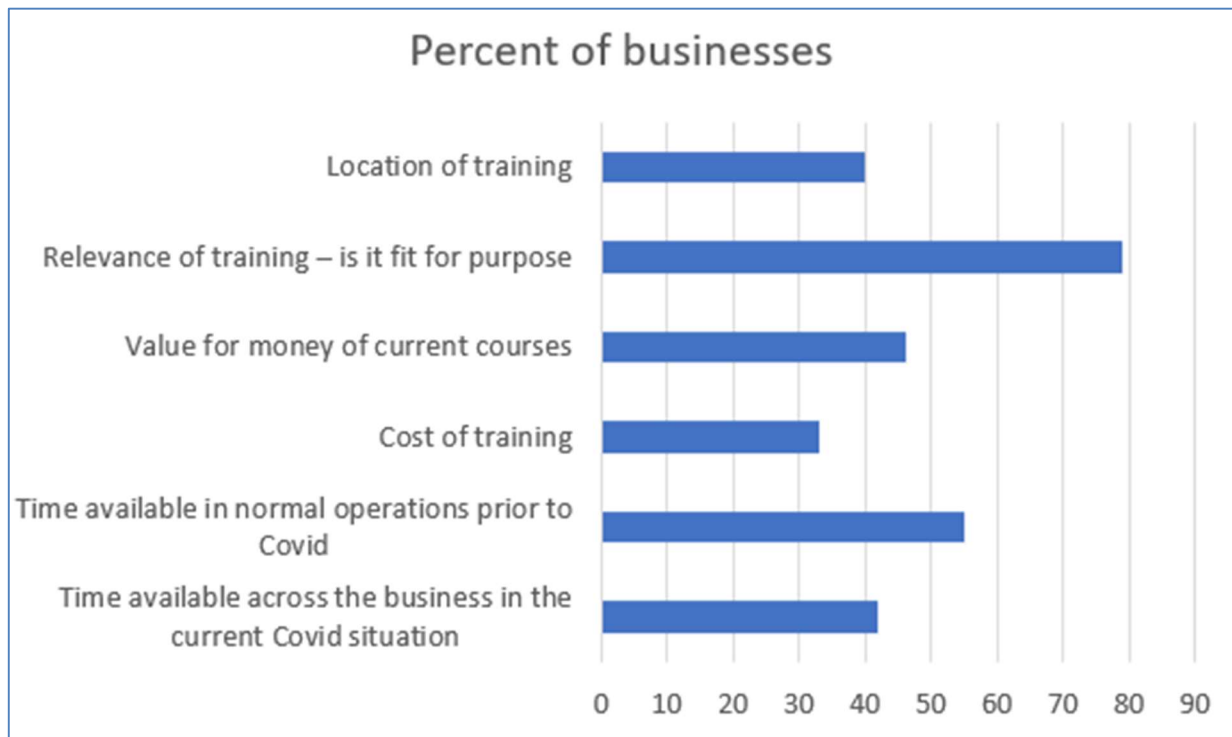
4. What approaches would improve the skills supply for the business?



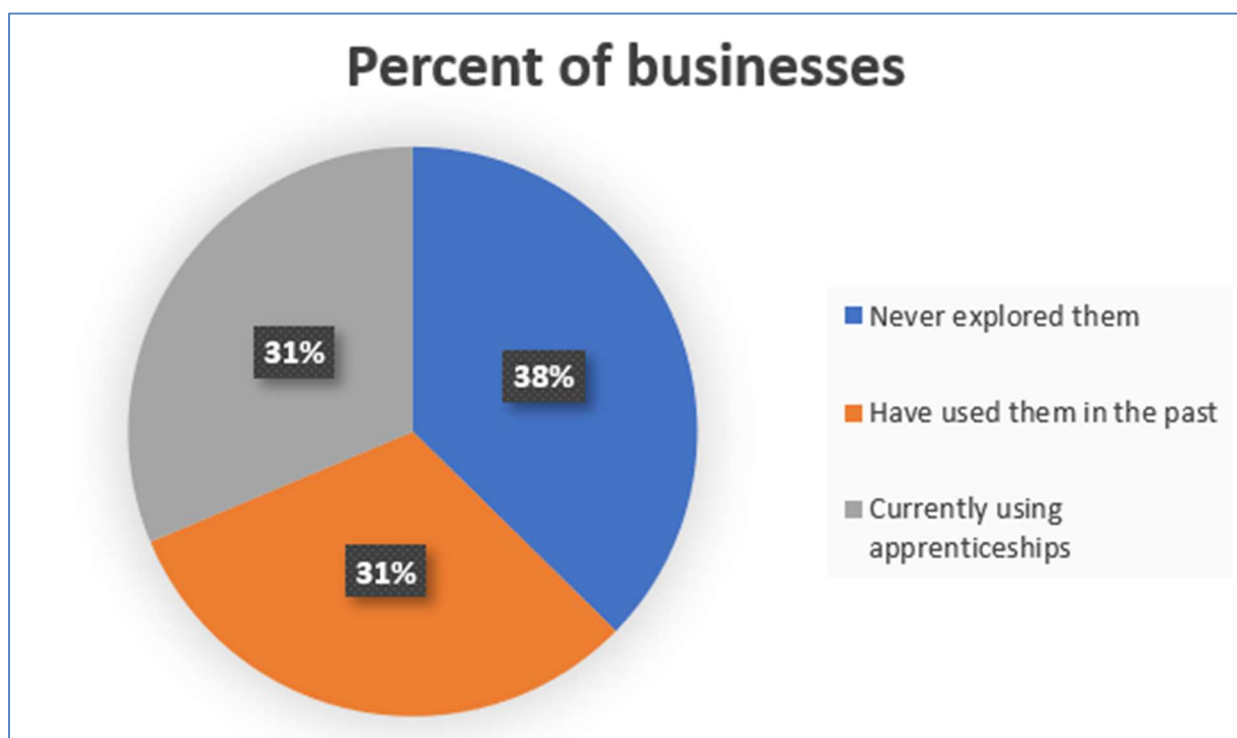
5. Are there full or part-time training courses you want for the staff in your business?



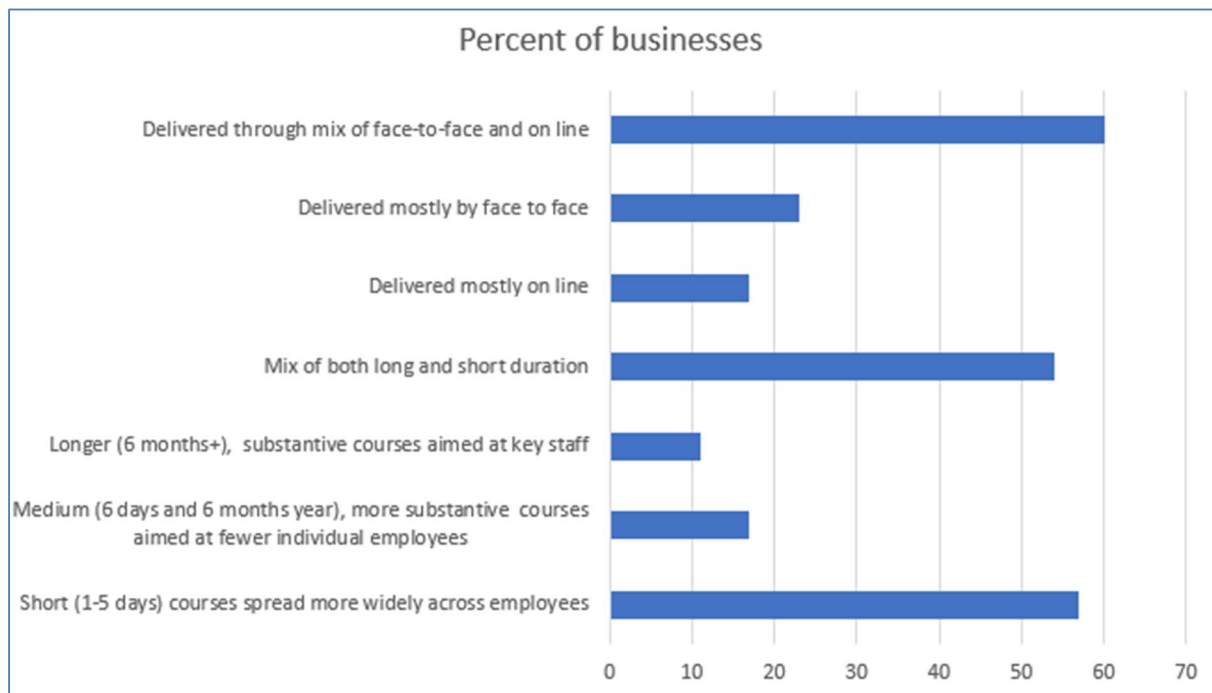
6. What are the barriers to the business engaging with full-time or part-time educational training?



7. Apprenticeships: Do they work for you and your staff?



8. What are the characteristics of training courses that would best suit your businesses



9. Future skills needs. Which skills do you consider will be most limiting to your business over the next 10 years?

