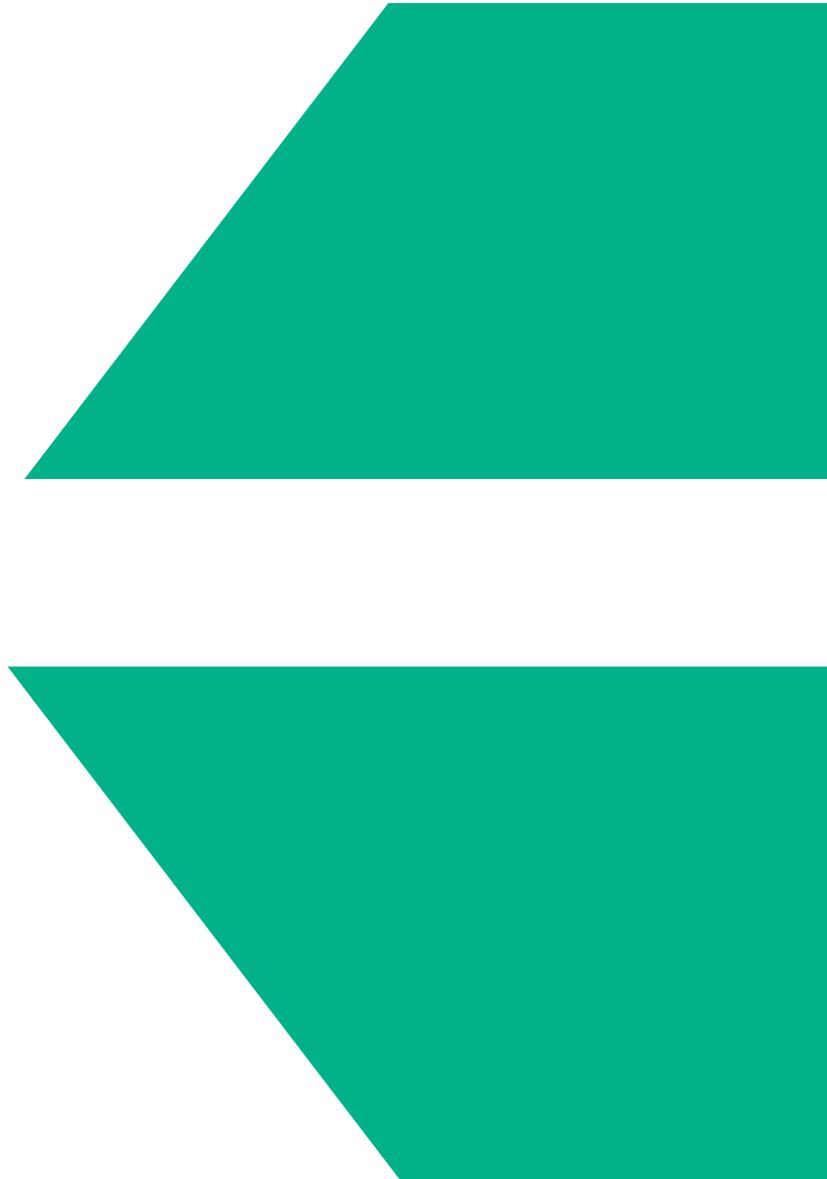




UK COMMISSION FOR
EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

Impact evaluation of the Employer Investment Fund and Growth and Innovation Fund: baseline quantitative findings

Briefing Paper
March 2015



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Briefing paper

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Glossary

Apprenticeship brokerage: The brokerage of apprenticeship places; simplifying the process by which employers find appropriate individuals to fill those places.

Beneficiary: Employers deriving a direct benefit from public sector intervention.

Delivery partners: Organisations in receipt of EIF and/or GIF funding and responsible for the delivery of UKCES investments.

EIF: Employer Investment Fund.

Employment brokerage: The brokerage of unemployed individuals into specific vacancies. These typically take the form of on-line portals.

GIF: Growth and Innovation Fund

Group training activities (GTAs): Delivery of training via groups of employers, such as collective procurement through networks or Group Training Associations.

Networks: Services involving networks of employers and (in some cases) training providers through which the training needs of employers can be articulated and tailored solutions obtained.

Outputs: The immediate deliverables of public intervention (e.g. number of businesses engaged or number of new training courses developed, number of members of employer networks).

Outcomes: Effects realised as a consequence of outputs delivered (e.g. number of workers trained, increases in training expenditure).

Service users: Employers that have used the services funded by EIF and/or GIF.

Skills diagnostics: Support provided to employers to help them understand any skills shortages or skills gaps present within their workforce.

SSC: Sector Skills Council.

Training brokerage: Services provided to employers and training providers to help employers locate providers of appropriate workforce development or training services.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) investment programmes were developed in response to growing evidence that UK skills policy had not always met the needs of employers, and that levels of investment in skills development was insufficient to drive business and economic growth. The investment programmes were developed to stimulate a step change in employer leadership and investment in economically valuable skills through co-investment between employers and Government. Ultimately, the goal was to boost economic growth and productivity in the UK through increased investment in skills.

The **Employer Investment Fund** and then **Growth and Innovation Fund** sought to achieve sustained change in how employers engage with, and invest, in skills in order to raise skills levels, improve access to and deployment of skills, and raise business performance. The investment was limited to skills and employment infrastructure, with limited or no participation funding available; both programmes were time-limited investments, and designed to pump-prime solutions by supporting start-up costs. The core differences between the two funds are detailed below:

- **The Employer Investment Fund** emerged through a process of moving away from a core funding model for SSCs, encouraging them to move to an investment and outcomes focused approach. It was open to SSCs only and UK wide, and had three commissioning phases.
- **The Growth and Innovation Fund** was restricted solely to England and was open to wider employer organisations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce and Local Enterprise Partnerships), with a stronger emphasis on the sustainability of the infrastructure developed. It had four commissioning rounds and later rounds had a development phase prior to full application.

Evaluation

This report presents employer beneficiaries' *self-reported* assessment of the impact of the Employer Investment Fund (EIF) and the Growth and Innovation Fund (GIF). The findings are based on a *baseline* survey of 1,980 employer beneficiaries. The survey is part of a wider three year evaluation which comprises a quantitative impact assessment, detailed qualitative case studies, and review and analysis of management information.

The purpose of the baseline survey report is to present the characteristics of employer beneficiaries, their motivations for participating and self-reported impacts to provide UKCES with an early insight into whether the programme is meeting its objectives. A qualitative report based on case study interviews will be published separately. A full assessment of the impact of the EIF and GIF programmes on employers' skills investment and business activity will be undertaken in 2015/16.

A diverse set of activities directed at employers have received investment funding, using a variety of delivery mechanisms; the survey focuses solely on projects that benefit employers, as recommended in the feasibility report¹. This is to ensure that relevant outcomes and impacts can be more clearly identified and attributed to each intervention.

The activities include:

- **Apprenticeship brokerage:** projects facilitating the brokerage of apprenticeship places; simplifying the process by which employers find appropriate individuals to fill those Apprenticeship places.
- **Employment brokerage:** projects focusing on the brokerage of unemployed individuals into specific vacancies. These typically take the form of on-line portals.
- **Group training activities (GTAs):** Involving the delivery of training via groups of employers, such as collective procurement through networks or Group Training Associations to help pool the risks associated with employment of apprentices.
- **Networks:** projects focusing on the establishment of employer networks to improve engagement with training providers, to act as a collective voice to articulate industry skills needs and, in some cases, to provide a vehicle for collective procurement of training.
- **Skills diagnostics:** projects involving direct and indirect engagement with employers, in order to identify and define their skills and training needs, as a means of encouraging them to implement training solutions.
- **Training brokerage:** Services provided to employers and training providers to help employers locate providers of appropriate workforce development or training services.

¹ Ipsos MORI (2013), UKCES Investments Beneficiary Survey: Feasibility Study

Profile of employer beneficiaries

Findings in this report are based on a survey of employer beneficiaries. The EIF/GIF management information has a limited amount of detail about employer beneficiaries in terms of size and sector. This means that it is difficult to tell how closely the profile of EIF/GIF beneficiaries matches the wider employer population. It also means that it is difficult to tell whether the employers that responded to the survey are representative of the overall EIF/GIF employer population, beyond which delivery partner they were engaged by.

The sample of EIF/GIF survey respondents is diverse in terms of employee size, sector and industry. It is also quite different compared with the UK employer population as a whole. For example, there were significantly fewer small employers: 68 per cent had fewer than 49 employees at the site compared with 95 per cent in the UK employer population (59 per cent of beneficiaries were single site organisations). Correspondingly, medium and large establishments were over-represented (23 per cent of beneficiaries had 50-249 employees and 10 per cent had 250 employees or more). This is partly because larger employers are more likely to have in place systems to detect skills issues among their workforce and to seek solutions.

Employer beneficiaries in the survey were most likely to be in the **manufacturing sector** (35 per cent, mostly engaged with SEMTA), and the majority were for-profit organisations (81 per cent). However, there is over-representation of employers in the charity/voluntary sector compared with the UK employer population (13 per cent compared with nine per cent).

In combination, these characteristics (i.e. large employers and those in charity/voluntary sector) suggest **an over-representation of employers who were more likely than average to provide training to their employees**. This is reflected in the training characteristics of employers in the survey. Most beneficiaries (87 per cent) had arranged or funded training or development for their staff in the previous 12 months. The majority of these said that at least some of their employees were being trained towards a nationally recognised qualification (70 per cent). Around half (53 per cent) of all beneficiaries had a training plan. These incidences are higher than in the UK employer population as a whole which, again, is partly due to the larger size profile of beneficiaries. These findings suggest that it **may be challenging to detect an impact on some training outcomes, especially in the short- to medium-term, since the large majority of employer beneficiaries were already delivering training to their employees prior to their involvement in EIF and GIF activities**.

The sample of beneficiaries covered six types of **programme activity**: Employment Brokerage (20 per cent), Apprenticeship Brokerage (32 per cent), Skills Diagnostics (27 per cent), Training Brokerage (12 per cent), GTAs (3 per cent) and Networks (21 per cent). On average, beneficiaries were involved in a single activity (1.14 activities). Where beneficiaries were involved in more than one activity, this was most likely to include Skills Diagnostics: 40 per cent of Skills Diagnostics beneficiaries were also involved in another activity, most commonly Apprenticeship Brokerage (20 per cent) or Training Brokerage (19 per cent). As outlined below, Skills Diagnostics beneficiaries self-report stronger impacts compared to others and it is likely that this may be the result of the combination of activities.

The most common **delivery partners** with beneficiaries in the survey were SEMTA (31 per cent) and Creative Skillset (14 per cent); together they comprised 45 per cent of beneficiary respondents meaning that **on some measures, the findings relate mainly to the performance of these delivery partners**. This will restrict the ability to generalise about the effectiveness of the activities in subsequent waves of the beneficiary survey.

Motivations for employer engagement

There is evidence that the EIF and GIF have been successful in being “employer-led”: overall, 44 per cent of beneficiaries were involved with the design or set-up of an activity. The national benchmark is 14 per cent² though this is not directly comparable due to differences in employer profile. This level of employer engagement in design and set-up could be seen as a significant achievement given that for many SSCs this represented a new way of engaging with employers within their footprint.

There is also evidence that GIF and EIF have supported employers to collaborate on skills solutions. **Half of beneficiaries (50 per cent) said they had worked with other employers in the previous 12 months**, most commonly to make training more relevant to the needs of their business (42 per cent). Beneficiaries also said that they had worked with other employers to make it easier to access training (38 per cent), improve the quality of training they receive (37 per cent) and reduce training costs (32 per cent). The level of reported collaboration by beneficiaries is higher compared with the 2014 EPS (in which 17% of establishments had worked with another employer in the past 12 months with regards to its training and skills development practices) though the findings are not directly comparable due to differences in employer profile.

2014 Employer Perspectives Survey (EPS) asks a nationally representative sample of employers whether they had “discussed or been involved in the design of new qualifications and training opportunities”.

Beneficiaries' motivations for participating in the programme were consistent with the policy intent. The main reasons for using programme activities were to improve the ability of employees to do their job (73 per cent), to acquire the skills needed to grow their business (72 per cent), and to increase understanding of the skills or training needs of employees (61 per cent).

Self-reported impact

Beneficiaries report a range of positive impacts as a result of their participation. It is important to note that self-reported measures give an indication of *current* perceptions of impact. The impact measurements that form subsequent longitudinal analyses in Years 2 and 3 of the impact evaluation will provide a more robust assessment of impact.

The programme was perceived to have been most effective in enabling beneficiaries to identify and define their skills and training needs, and in addressing information asymmetries in the learning market to enable beneficiaries to implement effective training solutions. For example, the three measures with the highest self-reported impacts were: the organisation's knowledge about how to access relevant training for employees (39 per cent said that this had increased and was at least partially the result of participation), the organisation's understanding of skills and training needs (37 per cent) and the ability of employees to do their job (37 per cent).

For most other measures, around one in four beneficiaries said that there had been an increase that was at least partially due to their participation: the effectiveness of training received by employees (28 per cent), the skills needed to grow the business (26 per cent), the number of apprentices recruited (25 per cent, as noted above) and the proportion of employees receiving training (24 per cent).

A much smaller proportion (nine per cent) said that the ease with which they can attract applicants with the skills they need had increased due to their participation, while three per cent said that there had been a decrease in staff turnover that was the result of participation.

The largest self-reported impacts were among employers involved in Skills Diagnostics activities (these employers were more likely than average to be involved in more than one activity and this is likely to be a contributing factor); employers who were both users of EIF/GIF funded activities and were involved in the design or set-up of an activity; employers in the manufacturing sector; larger establishments (10 or more employees); employers who had reported skills gaps or under-use of skills in their workforce; and those who had SEMTA as a delivery partner. Clearly, there is overlap between a number of these factors. For example, the majority of manufacturing employers are engaged with SEMTA, and larger establishments are more likely to be involved in the design and set-up as well as more likely to experience skills gaps.

There are some differences in reported impact between beneficiaries who were involved in the set-up and design of a service, as well as being consumers of it, compared with those just involved in the design or set-up or just consuming a service, which raise questions about the sustainability of activities. Both EIF and GIF placed an emphasis on activities being self-sustaining (i.e. attractive enough for employers to pay for their use) for the pump-priming funding to be cost-effective and to stimulate the required behaviour change among employers. If those who are service users recognise less impact than those involved in the design and/or set-up, activity could be less attractive to other potential beneficiaries in the future. This will be an important measure of impact for the full evaluation.

There is some evidence of sustained employer engagement. At the time of the survey the majority of beneficiaries had been involved in EIF/GIF funded activities for more than a year (48 per cent started their involvement in 2013 and 30 per cent started earlier), and around half of service users were still engaged in the activity. The key test will be the extent to which EIF and GIF funded projects are sustainable based on principles of co-investment by employer beneficiaries. This will be a focus for subsequent waves of the impact evaluation.

1 Introduction

This report presents findings from a baseline survey of 1,980 employer beneficiaries engaged in activities funded by the Employer Investment Fund (EIF) and the Growth and Innovation Fund (GIF). These survey findings form part of a wider three year evaluation assessing the impact of EIF and GIF. The overall evaluation comprises the following strands:

- An impact evaluation based on three waves of longitudinal survey with employer beneficiaries and a matched comparison sample of non-participant employers;
- Longitudinal qualitative case studies comprising a high level consultation exercise - gathering the views of key national stakeholders - and more detailed case study research to investigate the full range of activities developed and delivered by delivery partners (aligning with the quantitative research outlined above to maximise triangulation activities); and
- A complementary stocktake of investment performance conducted through a review of management information and project level evaluation reports.

The purpose of this report is to provide some initial self-reported evidence of impact on employer beneficiaries including their characteristics and motivations for participating, to inform interim policy development activity for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES). There is a separate report for the qualitative case studies.

1.1 Description of EIF and GIF

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) investment programmes were developed in response to growing evidence that **UK skills policy had not always met the needs of employers**, and that **levels of investment in skills development was insufficient to drive business and economic growth**. Evidence suggested that whilst, there are world class, high performing businesses across the UK, other symptoms related to the supply and demand for skills were holding back investment in skills. The Collective Measures programme of research (see Cox et al., 2009; Stanfield et al., 2009) identified a number of common barriers or market failures to achieving optimal investment in training, these included:

- market failures which inhibit employer investment in skills contributing to mismatches between skills supply and skills sought by employers;
- some duplication of investment in the public and private markets for learning provision; and
- skills products which have in the past been driven by supply rather than demand.

The research also included an examination of the levers that might help to increase investment in skills and the different contexts in which levers for investment could be effective (Collective Measures). This amplified the belief in the (untapped) potential for employers, especially **employer networks**, to take a greater role in the development of skills solutions. The research recommended the introduction of a fund where employer networks could bid for finance to co-invest in skills projects relevant to real demand and employer need.

The Investment Programmes

The investment programmes were developed to **stimulate a step change in employer leadership and investment in economically valuable skills** through co-investment between employers and the UK Commission. Ultimately, the goal was to boost **economic growth and productivity** in the UK through increased investment in skills. EIF and GIF sought to achieve sustained change in how employers engage with, and invest, in skills in order to raise skills levels, improve access to and deployment of skills, and raise business performance.

The funding was limited to skills and employment infrastructure, with no participation funding available (i.e. direct funding for the training of specific employees or individuals). Both programmes were time-limited investments, and designed to pump-prime the building of infrastructure that would develop solutions to address needs in a specific area/sector. The programme invited applicants to submit proposals; and it was non-prescriptive / gave no preference to the nature of problems or solutions it sought to invest in. The programmes sought and assessed project bids that were to be demand-led, innovative, with significant co-investment from employers. The overarching aim of the programmes was to provide employers the opportunity to take the lead in articulating their needs and steering the development of the solutions they needed in and bring about sustainable change in their industry/sector.

The **Employer Investment Fund** was created to stimulate employer investment in skills and to improve the use of these skills in the workplace in the most effective way.

- EIF was a time limited transition fund created to shift reliance of SSCs away from core public funding. It encourage them towards a competitive commercially focused outcomes approach. As a result of this the future sustainability of SSCs would increasingly rest on their ability to serve and secure investment from employers who valued their support.
- The investment programme was UK wide, open to SSCs only and was implemented in three phases.

The **Growth and Innovation Fund** was created to support bottom-up business leadership to leverage greater business investment in skills, enterprise, jobs and growth.

- GIF was restricted solely to England and was open to wider employer organisations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce and Local Enterprise Partnerships), with a stronger emphasis on innovation and sustainability of the infrastructure developed.
- The investment programme open to any employer-led body, and had four investment rounds. Later round included a development phase with investment and / or guidance to shape the project parameters prior to full application.

As of June 2014 (excluding both EIF round 1 and GIF development projects), UKCES had contracted £95 million in pump prime funding to 111 successful investment proposals, leveraging a further £100 million in matched contributions from employers (in kind or cash). Ipsos MORI's initial review of the EIF and GIF programmes (as part of a 2013 feasibility study for a programme level beneficiary survey³) showed a diverse set of activities had received investment funding, using a variety of delivery mechanisms.

The EIF and GIF investment funds have been part of the UK Commission's journey towards greater and progressive employer ownership of skills. Whilst this report focusses entirely on the EIF and GIF portfolio, it is worth providing background on two further funds that have followed EIF and GIF. First, the market-led Employer Ownership Pilot (EOP) builds on the learning of EIF and GIF, and includes an infrastructure component (similar to EIF and GIF) alongside participation funding. It is a competitive fund open to employers to invest in their current and future workforce in England. Rounds 1 and 2 of EOP funding awards have been made and, like EIF and GIF, combine UK Commission resources with a requirement for significant employer commitment of investment (in terms of cash resources and in-kind contributions). Projects, which include a number of industrial partnerships⁴, are mainly led by employers, though may often be backed or supported by intermediaries such as SSCs, who may be the lead contract holders in in the partnership.

³ Ipsos MORI (2013), UKCES Investments Beneficiary Survey: Feasibility Study

⁴ Industrial Partnerships are employer-led partnerships that have been established through EOP funding. Whilst they vary in their size and structures, they have a common broad purpose to set out what is required to ensure that the skills system works for their sectors/sub-sectors and provide leadership and influence to help make it happen.

Types of activity funded through the investment programmes

- **Careers advice and pre-employment support:** A number of investments had involved the development of infrastructure targeted at individuals. The support delivered through these projects was often focused on providing information to individuals pursuing a career within a particular sector (such as the creation of on-line careers pathways), often accompanied by a number of sector specific objectives (such as encouraging graduates or those with technical skills to enter specific occupations where there were skills shortages).
- **Skills diagnostics:** Delivery partners (DPs) had also developed projects involving direct and indirect engagement with employers in order to identify and define their skills and training needs, as a means of encouraging them to implement training solutions. These activities were often combined with training brokerage and had been delivered both on a face-to-face basis, and also via on-line delivery mechanisms. Underpinning these solutions was the theoretical argument that training was often considered as a second order issue to pressing business priorities, and analyses of the Employer Skills Survey series showed that firms without adequate business planning and assessment of staff performance may not have recognised skills deficits and, therefore, may not have been making optimal levels of investment in training (Cox, unpublished review paper of IIP performance for UKCES, 2013).
- **Brokerage mechanisms:** There were numerous examples of DPs using EIF and GIF funding to develop brokerage mechanisms to help employers obtain appropriate training solutions, recruit trainees, or place apprentices. These mechanisms were highly diverse in nature, ranging from establishing new organisations to act as a brokerage vehicle (such as an Apprentice Training Agency), through to on-line mechanisms acting as a marketplace to connect employers with appropriate training provision. These schemes were designed to correct information asymmetries in the learning market and in particular, to help signpost SMEs to suitable sources of skills.
- **Training products:** DPs were using EIF and GIF funding both to accredit training courses and develop new qualifications. In some cases, specific training providers had benefited from accreditation such as being awarded a license to deliver particular training course or being labelled a Centre of Excellence. These interventions were often geared towards addressing market signalling issues and reducing uncertainties relating to the quality of training.

- **Networks:** A number of investments had focused on the establishment of employer networks to improve engagement with training providers, to act as a collective voice to articulate industry skills needs and, in some cases, to provide a vehicle for collective procurement of training to help address adverse economies of scale among firms with limited purchasing power (i.e. because they operate in a niche sector, have low volume skills shortages, or because they employ small numbers of people).
- **Group Training Associations:** Funding had also been used to create Group Training Associations to help pool the risks associated with employment of apprentices. These initiatives had a number of strengths identified in numerous studies; focussing particularly on the power of overcoming collective inertia, reducing barriers to co-operation among organisations in the same sector, enhancing economies of scale, reducing bounded rational decision-making and improving purchasing power with providers (e.g. Cox et al., 2009; Stanfield et al., 2009; Cox et al., 2013).
- **Development activity:** Smaller sums had been utilised by successful applicants for a range of pre-testing, research and development activity. These precursor projects had in many cases led on to the funding of full-scale implementation projects.

The diversity of the investment portfolio created a number of conceptual and practical challenges for assessing the impact of the programme and assessing its performance more widely. The direct beneficiaries included employers, learners, and training providers, and outputs of the activities supported were highly varied, leading to impacts over a variety of timescales. This not only introduced challenges in aggregating the outputs delivered by different types of intervention, but in some instances, the beneficiaries and outputs themselves were highly challenging to observe, particularly where investments involved the creation of public goods which were initially expected to benefit an entire industry.

Therefore, the feasibility study⁵ recommended that the focus for a quantitative impact evaluation should be restricted to those investments involving **direct interactions with employers**, and by doing so, the beneficiaries and relevant outcomes and impacts could be more clearly identified and attributed to each intervention. The activities selected for inclusion in the beneficiary survey were:

- Skills diagnostics;
- Training brokerage;
- Apprenticeship brokerage;
- Employment brokerage;
- Group Training Associations (GTAs); and

⁵ Ipsos MORI (2013), UKCES Investments Beneficiary Survey: Feasibility Study

- Networks.

1.2 Impact evaluation

The purpose of the overall impact evaluation is:

- To learn lessons about the delivery of the two investment funds, in order to enable improvements to the process for UKCES and the investees in building sustainable skills solutions; and
- To provide an assessment of the impact of the funded projects on skills investment and business activity, assessing impact by sector and by region for England and the UK.

These two key aims were further supplemented by four specific objectives:

- To develop an understanding of whether the investment projects were encouraging employers to adopt innovative training infrastructure solutions that more effectively met their skills needs;
- To understand the extent to which employers directly engaged with investment projects, increased their investment in workforce skills and increased their performance over and above what they might have done anyway;
- To assess whether investment projects were sustainable and embedded over the longer term; and
- To inform gaps in UKCES's evidence on outcomes and impact within the logic chain (see Appendix B).

1.3 Baseline survey

The purpose of this baseline report is to provide early insight on the effectiveness of EIF and GIF based on **beneficiaries' self-reported assessments**.

The baseline survey comprised a survey of 1,980 beneficiary employers conducted using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI), with an online option for employers engaged in activities that did not collect telephone contact details.

A number of methodological challenges were encountered during fieldwork – the most significant was the very low sample eligibility. Just 35 per cent of the beneficiary sample recalled engaging with the activity, delivery partner and/or provider. This was mainly caused by poor and inconsistent recording of activity information (including brand names) by delivery partners, though it is also possible that some employers genuinely did not recall the activity due to the indirect nature of the engagement (for example, use of online diagnostic toolkits). There was substantial variation in recall by delivery partner – see Appendix C. The survey screened out those employers with insufficient recall of the activity, delivery partner and/or provider to conduct an interview. The response rate (adjusted for insufficient recall) was 56 per cent. The refusal rate was just 8 per cent.

The survey findings are unweighted since firmographic information (size and industry sector) was largely absent in the sample. However, the distribution of respondents by delivery partner is largely in line with the volume of employer beneficiaries provided by delivery partners (Figure 2.4 in Chapter 2). It is not possible to comment on the representativeness of survey respondents beyond this due to significant differences in sample eligibility across delivery partners, as outlined above.

A separate survey of a comparison group of employers who did not participate in EIF- and GIF-funded activities was also undertaken; this sample was constructed using the UKCES Employer Skills Survey 2013 (ESS). Further detail on the methodology is contained in Appendix A.

This baseline report focuses solely on the sample of beneficiaries. Findings from the comparison sample will be used in the impact analysis in later reports.

1.4 Structure of this report

The structure of this report is as follows:

- **Chapter 2** examines the **profile of beneficiary employers**, and looks in detail at their business characteristics (such as size and sector), as well as their distribution by delivery partner, broad programme and type of activity. The chapter also provides detail on the nature of their involvement with the programme.
- **Chapter 3** looks at the reasons that employers give for getting involved in programme activities.
- **Chapter 4** focusses on beneficiaries' **perception of the impact of participation** on various aspects of their organisation's performance.
- Finally, **Chapter 5** presents the **conclusion** of the baseline survey and summarises the key messages and findings.

2 Profile of respondents

This chapter examines the profile of beneficiary employers in order to offer potential insight into or highlight points to consider in the wider evaluation. The chapter looks at beneficiaries' business characteristics (such as size and sector), as well as their distribution by delivery partner, broad programme and type of activity, and also their propensity to provide training to their employees more broadly.

It is not possible to comment on the representativeness of survey respondents to the population of employers benefitting from EIF/GIF funded activities. However, to place the findings in context, some references to the UK employer population are included (based on findings from the 2013 Employer Skills Survey and 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey).

2.1 Business demography

This section sets out the characteristics of programme beneficiaries.

2.1.1 Structure and size of employer beneficiaries

Based on the survey responses, more than half of beneficiaries were in single site organisations (59 per cent), while the remainder were multi-site. A third of beneficiaries (34 per cent) had fewer than 10 employees at the site where the respondent was based, and the same proportion had between 10 and 49 employees. One in ten (10 per cent) had 250 employees or more at the site where the respondent was based. As can be seen in Figure 2.1, their size profile for beneficiaries differed markedly to the UK profile; there is an over-representation of large employers in the former. This is partly because larger employers are more likely to recognise a problem in their workforce and to seek a solution to that problem.

Looking at organisations as a whole, more than half (58 per cent) had fewer than 50 employees, while 21 per cent had between 50 and 249 staff, and 21 per cent had 250 or more employees.

Figure 2.1: Number of employees at site and in whole organisation (%)

Number of employees	Site	Whole organisation	Establishments UK
1-9	34	30	95*
10-49	34	28	
50-249	23	21	4
250 or more	10	21	1

Base: All beneficiaries (1,980); * Source: 2013 Employer Skills Survey; this survey groups employer size by 2 to 4; 5 to 24 and 25 to 49

2.1.2 Industry

Across the sample of beneficiaries, employers were most likely to be in the manufacturing sector (35 per cent⁶). Around one in eight (12 per cent) were in the information and communication sector, while seven per cent were in each of the following sectors: construction; professional, scientific and technical activities; and arts, entertainment and recreation. The profile by industry sector is closely linked to the high number of beneficiaries engaging with SEMTA and Creative Skillset⁷ and by type of activity (see Sections 2.2 and 2.3).

Figure 2.2: Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)

Sector	%
A - Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2
B - Mining and quarrying	*
C – Manufacturing	35
D - Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	*
E - Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	*
F – Construction	7
G - Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles	4
H - Transport and storage	4
I - Accommodation and food service activities	2
J - Information and communication	12
K - Financial and insurance activities	1
L - Real estate activities	2
M - Professional, scientific and technical activities	7
N - Administrative and support service activities	4
O - Public administration and defence, compulsory social security	2
P – Education	5
Q - Human health and social work activities	4
R - Arts, entertainment and recreation	7
S - Other service activities	1

⁶ ESS reports manufacturing establishments account for 6% of all establishments.

⁷ 510 beneficiaries (26% of all respondents) were Manufacturing employers connected with SEMTA; 199 (10% of all) were Information & Communication employers connected to Creative Skillset

Base: All beneficiaries (1,980). An asterisk (*) denotes a percentage of less than 0.5 but greater than zero.

2.1.3 Sector

Most beneficiaries were private sector organisations (81 per cent described themselves as mainly seeking to make a profit), while 13 per cent were either a charity or voluntary sector organisation or a social enterprise. The remaining six per cent of beneficiaries were public sector organisations (three per cent central government and three per cent local government). Comparing against data from the 2013 ESS, the beneficiary sample is over-represented by the charity/voluntary sector of which, in the last ESS, 80 per cent of organisations provided training compared with 63 per cent of profit-making businesses.

Beneficiaries which were in the charity or voluntary sector or a social enterprise were clustered in two industry sectors: health and social work; and arts, entertainment and recreation.

Figure 2.3: Operating sector (%)

Operating sector	Survey	ESS
<i>Would you classify your organisation as one ...?</i>	%	%
Mainly seeking to make a profit	81	86
A charity or voluntary sector organisation or a social enterprise	13	9
A local-government financed body	3	3
A central government financed body	3	1

Base: All beneficiaries (1,980)

2.2 Distribution by delivery partner and broad programme

The majority of beneficiaries were involved in an EIF-funded activity (61 per cent), while 38 per cent were involved in a GIF-funded activity, and one per cent were involved in activities funded by both programmes.

Small establishments (with fewer than 10 employees) were equally likely to be involved in an activity funded by EIF and GIF (50 per cent in each case), whereas larger establishments were more likely to be involved in an EIF-funded activity (67 per cent of those with 10 or more employees). This latter observation was primarily driven by the fact that the SEMTA beneficiaries were only involved in EIF-funded activities, and this group included a high proportion of medium to large employers. More broadly, across the survey the GIF-funded investments only covered four of the activity types (see Table 3.9). Of these, two were Group Training Associations (GTAs) and Networks and these had a relatively higher proportion of small employer beneficiaries.

Figure 2.4 shows the distribution of the sample by delivery partner (limited to delivery partners that had dealings with at least 20 beneficiaries in the sample) compared with the population of beneficiaries⁸. A third of beneficiaries in the sample (33 per cent) had SEMTA as a delivery partner, while 15 per cent dealt with Creative Skillset. This is broadly in line with the sample profile. Where there is a significant mismatch between the two – as for Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce - this is because of poor recognition of the activity among employers in the sample (meaning these employers were not interviewed for the survey).

Figure 2.4: Distribution of beneficiaries by delivery partner

Delivery partners	Beneficiaries in survey		Beneficiaries in sample (CATI only)	
	N	%	n	%
SEMTA	612	33%	2,544	30%
Creative Skillset	279	15%	1,526	18%
Gtr Manchester Chamber of Commerce	179	10%	1,464	17%
EU Skills	130	7%	490	6%
SkillsActive	125	7%	602	7%
Creative & Cultural Skills	94	5%	226	3%
Asset Skills	73	4%	292	3%
Cogent	69	4%	211	2%
Cornwall Marine	69	4%	350	4%
People 1st	56	3%	161	2%
Skills for Logistics	55	3%	218	3%
Anglia Farmers	48	3%	138	2%
Black Country LEP	34	2%	124	1%
Skills for Health	26	1%	43	1%
Financial Skills Partnership	25	1%	147	2%
Total*	1,874	94	8,536	97

*limited to delivery partners that had dealings with at least 20 beneficiaries in the sample.

Analysis of employer characteristics by delivery partner⁹ shows that:

- EU Skills (89 per cent), Anglia Farmers (69 per cent), Creative Skillset (64 per cent) and Cornwall Marine (61 per cent) had higher than average proportion of small employer beneficiaries (with fewer than 10 employees at the site)¹⁰.

⁸ The population comprises **all** beneficiary samples provided by the delivery partners including those that were subsequently screened out of the survey because they did not recognise the activity, delivery partner and/or provider delivering the activity. Overall, 35% of the sample provided were eligible to take part in the survey; the eligibility rate varied by delivery partner – see Appendix C

⁹ This analysis is limited to the delivery partners with at least 30 beneficiary responses.

¹⁰ Overall, these proportions are lower than the national profiles for the sectors that these Delivery Partners work with. For example, 94% of enterprises in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector, and 89% of those in the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation Sector have fewer than 10 employees.

- In contrast, Skills for Logistics (38 per cent) and People 1st (29 per cent) had higher than average representation of large employer beneficiaries (with 250 or more staff at the site)¹¹.
- SEMTA engaged with a relatively large proportion of medium-sized employers (45 per cent with 10-49 employees and 30 per cent with 50-249 employees)¹².

2.3 Distribution by activity

Figure 2.5 shows the distribution of the sample across the various types of activity.

Figure 2.5: Profile of activities

Activity type	n	%
Employment Brokerage (EM)	403	20
Apprenticeship Brokerage (AP)	634	32
Skills Diagnostics (SD)	528	27
Training Brokerage (TB)	228	12
GTAs (GTA)	50	3
Networks (NE)	414	21

Base: All beneficiaries (1,980)

Beneficiaries were involved in an average of 1.14 activities. Where beneficiaries were involved in more than one activity, this was most likely to include Skills Diagnostics: 40 per cent of Skills Diagnostics beneficiaries were also involved in another activity, most commonly Apprenticeship Brokerage (20 per cent) or Training Brokerage (19 per cent). This is an important consideration for the impact analysis contained within Chapter 5 as Skills Diagnostics beneficiaries self-report stronger impacts compared to others. Some of this impact might have resulted from the combination of activities.

2.3.1 Analysis of activities, programme and delivery partners

All employers involved in GTAs were benefitting from GIF funding, while the majority of those involved in Skills Diagnostics and Training Brokerage were dealing with EIF-funded activities (92 per cent and 91 per cent respectively), as shown in Figure 2.6.

¹¹ Nationally, employers with more than 250 employees make up less than 1% of enterprises in the Transport & Storage and Accommodation and Food Services sectors.

¹² Nationally, enterprises with 10-49 employees or 50-249 employees respectively make up 20% and 5% of the manufacturing sector.

Figure 2.6: Profile of activities by programme (%)

	Employment Brokerage (EM)	Apprenticeship Brokerage (AP)	Skills Diagnostics (SD)	Training Brokerage (TB)	GTA's (GTA)	Networks (NE)	Total
Base (n)	(403)	(634)	(528)	(228)	(50)	(414)	(1,980)
EIF	38	63	92	91	0	56	61
GIF	62	36	8	9	100	44	38
Both	*	2	*	0	0	*	1

An asterisk (*) denotes a percentage of less than 0.5 but greater than zero.

Figure 2.7 shows the main delivery partners by activity. As can be seen, some activities are dominated by certain delivery partners meaning that **on some measures, the findings relate to the performance of a small number of delivery partners**, and this needs to be borne in mind when explaining differences in impact in subsequent waves of the evaluation.

The key patterns are:

- **Employment Brokerage:** almost half of employers involved in this activity had the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce as their delivery partner (44 per cent),
- **Apprenticeship Brokerage:** SEMTA was the delivery partner for more than half of employers involved in this activity (62 per cent).
- **Skills Diagnostics:** more than half of the employers involved in Skills Diagnostics had SEMTA as their delivery partner (56 per cent), while 27 per cent dealt with Creative Skillset.
- **Training Brokerage:** most employers dealt with Creative Skillset (72 per cent).
- **GTA's:** almost all employers (94 per cent) had Creative Skillset as their delivery partner.
- **Networks:** employers involved in this activity were most likely to have EU Skills as their delivery partner (29 per cent), followed by Creative & Cultural Skills (16 per cent).

Figure 2.7: Profile of activities by Delivery Partners (%)

	Employment Brokerage (EM)	Apprenticeship Brokerage (AP)	Skills Diagnostics (SD)	Training Brokerage (TB)	GTA's (GTA)	Networks (NE)
Base (n)	(403)	(634)	(528)	(228)	(50)	(414)
SEMTA	10	62	56	-	-	-
Creative Skillset	5		27	72	94	13

Greater Manchester CoC	44	-	-	-	-	-
EU Skills	-	-	-	-	6	29
SkillsActive	-	13	-	-	-	10
Creative & Cultural Skills	-	-	-	13	-	16
Asset Skills	12	-	5	-	-	-
Cogent	-	5	8	-	-	-
Cornwall Marine	-	11	-	-	-	-
People 1st	6	-	-	-	-	7
Skills for Logistics	2	-	-	-	-	12
Other DPS	21	9	4	15	0	13

2.3.2 Characteristics of beneficiaries in different activities

Figure 2.8 shows the **number of employees** based at individual sites, analysed by type of activity. This shows that:

- Beneficiaries involved in Employment Brokerage were typically larger: only 23 per cent had fewer than 10 employees at the site (compared with 34 per cent across the sample as a whole) and 16 per cent had 250 or more employees (compared with 10 per cent overall). This is partly because delivery partners with higher numbers of small employer beneficiaries (e.g. Anglia Farmers, Cornwall Marine, Creative and Cultural Skills, Creative Skillset, EU Skills) had little to no involvement with Employer Brokerage activities.
- Employers involved in GTAs were the smallest (70 per cent had fewer than 10 employees at the site). Related to this, beneficiaries of GTAs were most likely to be single site organisations (76 per cent). Those involved in Training Brokerage and Networks were also relatively small (52 per cent and 47 per cent respectively had fewer than 10 employees at the site). This is to be expected given that GTAs and Training Brokerage activities both focus on addressing failures more common to small establishments.
- The profile of employers involved in Apprenticeship Brokerage and Skills Diagnostics was similar to the profile of beneficiaries as a whole.

Figure 2.8: Proportion of employers by type of activity (%)

Number of employees	Employment Brokerage (EM)	Apprenticeship Brokerage (AP)	Skills Diagnostics (SD)	Training Brokerage (TB)	GTAs (GTA)	Networks (NE)	Total
Base (n)	(403)	(634)	(528)	(228)	(50)	(414)	(1,980)
1-9	23	28	30	52	70	47	34
10-49	36	40	37	28	22	21	34
50-249	24	25	27	13	6	19	23
250 or more	16	7	7	7	2	13	10

Base: All beneficiaries (1,980)

Analysis by **industry sector** shows a high concentration of manufacturing organisations in Apprenticeship Brokerage (63 per cent) and Skills Diagnostics (55 per cent); this makes sense as SEMTA is the largest delivery partner and these sectors are covered in its footprint. The majority of employers involved in GTAs and Training Brokerage were in the information and communication sector (68 per cent and 53 per cent respectively). There was less of a clear sector focus for the other activities (Employment Brokerage and Networks).

Beneficiaries that were involved in Apprenticeship Brokerage and Skills Diagnostics were most likely to be **for-profit organisations** (89 per cent and 93 per cent respectively), while employers involved in Networks were most likely either to be a charity, voluntary sector organisation or a social enterprise (21 per cent) or a public sector organisation (10 per cent).

There were variations in relation to **staff profile**. Reflecting the differences by size, employers involved in Apprenticeship Brokerage often had a high proportion of skilled manual workers (33 per cent had 50 per cent or more) and a small proportion of managers (only 9 per cent had 50 per cent or more), whereas employers involved in Training Brokerage, GTAs and Networks all had a high proportion of managers (40 per cent, 56 per cent and 29 per cent respectively). In addition, employers involved in Training Brokerage had a relatively high proportion of white collar workers (16 per cent had more than half of their workforce in 'other white collar' jobs) and a low proportion of employees in skilled manual jobs (only 15 per cent had more than half of their workforce working in skilled manual jobs).

2.4 Workforce development activity and incidence of training

2.4.1 Training provision

The vast majority of beneficiaries (87 per cent) had arranged or funded off- or on-the-job training or development for any of their staff in the previous 12 months. Similar proportions had provided off-the-job as on-the-job training (77 per cent and 75 per cent respectively), with around two-thirds (65 per cent) providing both.

Figure 2.9: Training or development in the previous 12 months

Training	%
Any training or development	87
- Off-the-job training	77
- On-the-job-training	75
- Both	65
None	13

Base: All beneficiaries (1,980)

Both off- and on-the-job training were more common among larger employers (95 per cent of those with 250 or more employees at the site had arranged or funded some form of training or development, falling to 72 per cent of those with fewer than 10 employees). Linked to this, training was less prevalent among employers involved in GTAs (both off- and on-the job training) and Training Brokerage (off-the-job training specifically); employers involved in these activities were typically smaller than other beneficiaries.

Both off- and on-the-job training were more prevalent among beneficiaries than in the UK employer population as a whole. In the 2013 Employers Skills Survey, 66 per cent of employers had arranged or funded training or development for any of their staff in the previous 12 months. This difference can be attributed to the profile of beneficiaries, which were larger on average than employers in the UK population.

Job-specific training was the most common **type of training** provided by beneficiaries (arranged by 92 per cent of those that train). More than two-thirds of trainers had also funded or arranged the following types of training: health and safety training including first aid (82 per cent), induction training (75 per cent) and training in new technology (68 per cent). Less common were management training (54 per cent) and supervisory training (50 per cent).

Figure 2.10: Types of training provided over the last 12 months by employers that train

Type of training	%
Job specific training	92
Health & safety/first aid training	82
Induction training	75
Training in new technology	68
Management training	54
Supervisory training	50

Base: All beneficiaries that provide training (1,715)

Among beneficiaries that had provided induction training and/or health & safety/first aid training, around half (52 per cent) said that this constituted less than 25 per cent of all training, while 19 per cent said that this made up at least half of their training.

The **number of staff** that were trained ranged from just one or two (19 per cent) to 100 or more (16 per cent).

Among those who provided training, the average number of training days per employee was 6.7¹³. Forty three per cent provided **five or more days training** for each employee (on average), while 52 per cent provided no more than four days per employee. Smaller beneficiaries were more likely to provide a larger number of days (58 per cent of those with fewer than 10 employees provided five or more days on average). There were no differences by type of activity.

The majority of beneficiaries that provided training (70 per cent) said that at least some of their employees were being trained towards a **nationally recognised qualification**; this compares to 47 per cent in the 2013 Employer Skills Survey. The proportion was lower in small establishments (55 per cent among those with fewer than 10 employees) and in beneficiaries involved in Training Brokerage (46 per cent). It was highest among those involved in Employment Brokerage (76 per cent) and Apprenticeship Brokerage (78 per cent).

Among beneficiaries who were training employees towards a nationally recognised qualification, 48 per cent were providing training for Level 4 qualifications, while other employers were providing training leading to lower levels of qualification (see Figure 2.11).

¹³ This excluded 19 outliers stating employees received more than 60 training days on average.

Larger employers were more likely to provide training at more/higher levels; for example, the proportion providing training for Level 4 qualifications ranged from 28 per cent among those with fewer than 10 employees at the site, to 83 per cent of those with 250 or more employees. Employers involved in Employment Brokerage were more likely than other beneficiaries to provide training for Level 4 qualifications (58 per cent), while those involved in Apprenticeship Brokerage were least likely to provide training for Level 4 qualifications (39 per cent).

Figure 2.11: Qualification levels of training provided by beneficiaries (%)

Level of qualification	Any training provided	Highest level provided
Level 1	24	6
Level 2	52	17
Level 3	52	23
Level 4	48	48
None/don't know	7	7

Base: All beneficiaries that provide training leading to a qualification (1,202)

The **main sources of off-the-job training** were private training providers (used by 85 per cent of beneficiaries who provided off-the-job training in the previous 12 months) and in-house training (84 per cent). In addition, 53 per cent used Further Education Colleges, 34 per cent non-profit organisations and 33 per cent Higher Education institutions.

Larger employers were more likely to use the various sources, and this applied in particular to HE institutions (ranging from 11 per cent of those with fewer than 10 employees at the site to 72 per cent of those with 250 or more employees). Employers involved in Training Brokerage were less likely to use their own in-house training (74 per cent) or FE colleges (29 per cent).

2.5 Training costs and planning

There was a wide range in beneficiaries' annual expenditure on training, reflecting the variation in size and in the amount of training provided. Among beneficiaries that provided training, four per cent spent nothing, and 48 per cent spent less than £10,000. By contrast, eight per cent spent £100,000 or more.

As expected, training costs varied by the size of the employer (for example, 34 per cent of establishments with 250 or more employees spent £100,000 or more) and the number of employees trained. Overall, training expenditure was higher among employers involved in Employment Brokerage (30 per cent spent £20,000 or more), and lower among those involved in Training Brokerage (62 per cent spent between £1,000 and £9,000). However, there were no significant differences between the activities in terms of expenditure per employee.

Figure 2.12: Annual expenditure on training (last tax year)

Annual expenditure on training	%
Nothing	4
£1,000 - £9,000	48
£10,000 - £19,000	13
£20,000 - £99,000	16
£100,000 or more	8
Don't know	13

Base: All beneficiaries that provide training (1,715)

Figure 2.13 shows training expenditure per employee trained. As can be seen, over half spent less than £1,000 per employee. The average spend per employee was £1,332¹⁴.

Figure 2.13: Annual expenditure on training per employee trained (last tax year)¹⁵

Annual expenditure on training per employee trained	%
Nothing	4
Less than £1,000	58
£1,000 - £1,999	18
£2,000 - £4,999	16
£5000 or more	4

Base: All beneficiaries that provide responses to training expenditure and number of employees trained (1,474)

Just over half of beneficiaries (53 per cent) said they had a **training plan**. Among those that had provided training in the previous 12 months, 58 per cent had a training plan (22 per cent of those who had not provided any training still had a training plan).

Larger employers were more likely to have a training plan. The proportion ranged from 81 per cent of those with 250 or more employees, to 29 per cent of establishments with fewer than 10 employees.

Employers involved in Employment Brokerage (generally larger than other beneficiaries) were more likely to have a training plan (64 per cent), while those involved in Training Brokerage (32 per cent) and GTAs (28 per cent) were less likely to have one.

Summary

The majority of beneficiaries in the sample were involved in **EIF-funded activities** (61 per cent), with 38 per cent involved in GIF-funded activities (one per cent were involved in activities funded by both programmes).

¹⁴ This excluded five outliers stating £37,500+.

¹⁵ Midpoints taken for banded responses.

The majority of beneficiaries were single site organisations (59 per cent). There were **significantly fewer small employers compared with the UK population**: 68 per cent had fewer than 49 employees at the site compared with 95 per cent in the UK population. Correspondingly, **medium and large establishments were over-represented** (23 per cent of beneficiaries had 50-249 employees and 10 per cent had 250 employees or more).

Employers were **most likely to be in the manufacturing sector** (35 per cent which is consistent with the volume of SEMTA beneficiaries), and the majority were for-profit organisations (81 per cent). However, there was an **over-representation of employers in the charity/voluntary sector compared with the UK employer population** as a whole.

In combination, these characteristics (i.e. large employers and those in the charity/voluntary sector) suggest an **over-representation of employers who were more likely to provide training to their employees**. This is reflected in the broader provision of training which was substantially higher than the national average (see Section 2.4) and suggests that it **may be challenging to detect a positive impact on training volume and expenditure**, especially in the short- to medium-term, since these employers are already making above average investments in training their employees.

3 Motivation for employer engagement

The chapter looks at the reasons that employers had for getting involved in programme activities. This offers useful insight into employer expectations of the programme and how these fit with the broader programme objectives.

3.1 Rationale for involvement in EIF/ GIF

Beneficiaries were given a list of up to seven possible reasons for using programme activities (depending on the activities they experienced), and were asked which applied to them. These can be regarded as beneficiaries *expectations* of the activity and these are compared in Chapter 6 to self-reported *impacts*.

Overall, the two main reasons were to improve the ability of employees to do their job (given by 73 per cent of beneficiaries in relation to at least one of their activities) and to acquire the skills needed to grow their business (72 per cent). More than half of respondents said that they used one of the activities to increase their understanding of the skills or training needs of employees (61 per cent) and to prepare employees for changes that will happen in your industrial sector over the next few years (52 per cent).

3.2 Analysis by activity

Looking at each of the activities in turn:

- Acquiring the skills needed to grow the business was the main reason given by employers involved in *Employment Brokerage* (62 per cent) and *Apprenticeship Brokerage* (79 per cent).
- Among those involved in *Skills Diagnostics*, the two main reasons were to acquire the skills needed to grow their business (81 per cent) and improve the ability of employees to do their job (80 per cent). Employers involved in *GTA*s were also most likely to give these two reasons (84 per cent and 80 per cent respectively).
- Employers involved in *Training Brokerage* were most likely to use this activity in order to improve the ability of employees to do their job (73 per cent). Three other reasons were then chosen by approximately equal proportions: to acquire the skills needed to grow their business (61 per cent); increase understanding of the skills or training needs of employees (60 per cent); and prepare employees for changes that will happen in the sector over the next few years (58 per cent).

- Among those involved in *Networks*, four reasons were given by similar proportions: to acquire the skills needed to grow their business (65 per cent); improve the ability of employees to do their job (63 per cent); increase understanding of the skills or training needs of employees (59 per cent); and prepare employees for changes that will happen in the sector over the next few years (59 per cent).

Figure 3.1: Reasons for choosing to use activity (%)

Rationale		Employ-ment Brokerage	Apprentice-ship Brokerage	Skills Diag-nostics	Training Brokerage	GTAs	Net-works	Total
	Base (n)	(403)	(634)	(528)	(228)	(50)	(414)	
Improve the ability of employees to do their job	961	-	-	80	73	80	63	73
Acquire the skills needed to grow your business	1,980	62	79	81	61	84	65	72
Increase your understanding of the skills or training needs of employees	961	-	-	62	60	54	59	61
Prepare employees for changes that will happen in your industrial sector over the next few years	1,980	46	45	58	58	52	59	52
Reduce the difficulty of finding relevant training provision	961	-	-	53	47	42	43	47
Reduce the difficulty of attracting applicants with the skills you need	1,452	41	52	-	42	42	38	44
Reduce staff turnover	1,407	34	-	39	30	22	34	36
None of these	1,980	18	9	7	12	8	11	-

3.3 Programme and delivery partner

As noted earlier, the key difference between the EIF and GIF funds is their coverage. EIF is restricted to Sector Skills Councils and is UK-wide; GIF is open to any industry body level in England only¹⁶. The overall similarity in the funds may have a bearing on there being just two differences in reasons for involvement. Employers involved in EIF-funded activities were more likely than those involved in GIF to say that they got involved in order to reduce the difficulty of attracting applicants with the skills they need (47 per cent compared with 39 per cent) and to reduce staff turnover (39 per cent versus 32 per cent).

There were a couple of differences found by delivery partners¹⁷:

- Employers dealing with SEMTA were particularly likely to have chosen an activity in order to acquire the skills needed to grow the business (87 per cent).
- Beneficiaries connected to EU Skills were also more likely than other beneficiaries to have got involved in order to acquire the skills needed to grow the business (82 per cent), and to prepare employees for future changes (76 per cent).

These findings reflect the nature of the industry sectors covered by SEMTA and EU Skills (engineering, manufacturing, technology, energy and utilities) and the requirement by employers for high level specialist skills.

The next sections look at the rationale for involvement, analysed by different characteristics of the beneficiary. The commentary identifies significant differences between various sub-groups, although in general it should be noted that the overall priorities of beneficiaries were consistent: improving the ability of employees to do their job and acquiring the skills needed to grow the business were the two main reasons given by beneficiaries across the sample.

3.4 Employer size

Larger employers were more likely to give a number of different reasons for their involvement. In particular, larger employers were more likely than smaller employers to say they chose the activity in order to reduce the difficulty of finding relevant training provision (62 per cent of establishments with 250 or more employees gave this reason); reduce the difficulty of attracting skilled applicants (54 per cent); and reduce staff turnover (53 per cent).

¹⁶ Beaver, K. *et al* (2013) EIF and GIF Beneficiary Survey: Feasibility Study. October 2013. UKCES. Wath-Upon-Dearene.

¹⁷ Where sample sizes allowed comparisons to be made.

The main exception was acquiring the skills needed to grow the business: this was less of a priority for larger businesses, particularly those involved in Employment Brokerage, and was more of a concern for small and medium-sized establishments; in particular, many small establishments involved in Networks gave this as a reason (74 per cent of those with fewer than 10 employees). This latter group of small employers was composed primarily of beneficiaries of EU Skills (64%) or Creative Skillset (17%).

3.5 Industry sector

The manufacturing sector was well represented in the sample of beneficiaries, and employers in this sector were more likely than other beneficiaries to give a number of reasons for choosing an activity:

- Improve the ability of employees to do their job (84 per cent), and reduce the difficulty of finding relevant training provision (58 per cent); both reasons were particularly likely to be mentioned by manufacturing organisations involved in Skills Diagnostics.
- Acquire the skills needed to grow the business (87 per cent), especially those involved in Apprenticeship Brokerage and Skills Diagnostics.
- Reduce the difficulty of attracting skilled applicants (55 per cent), a particular concern of manufacturing organisations involved in Employment Brokerage; and reduce staff turnover (47 per cent).

Overall, it is useful to note that the *purpose* of different types of activity is recognised in these differences. So, the data shows a relationship between Skills Diagnostics and improving work skills; Manufacturing beneficiaries of Employment brokerages were more likely to seek activities to help attract skilled applicants. **This suggests that the design of activities was at least partially fit for the purpose intended.**

Employers in the construction sector were more likely than other beneficiaries to give the following reasons: increase understanding of skills or training needs of employees (68 per cent), and prepare employees for future changes in the sector (70 per cent). In each case, construction organisations involved in Networks were mostly responsible for the high figures.

3.6 Nature of involvement

There is evidence that the EIF and GIF Programme have been successful in being “employer-led”: overall, 44 per cent of beneficiaries were involved with the design or set up of an activity. As Figure 3.2 shows, this was highest among those involved in Training Brokerage: 39 per cent were involved in the design or set-up but did not use the service, while a further 24 per cent did both. By contrast, a large proportion of employers involved with Apprenticeship Brokerage were users only (69 per cent).

Figure 3.2: Capacity involved in programme (%)

	Employment Brokerage (EIM)	Apprenticeship Brokerage (AP)	Skills Diagnostics (SD)	Training Brokerage (TB)	GTAs (GTA)	Networks (NE)	Total ¹⁸
Base (n)	(403)	(634)	(528)	(228)	(50)	(414)	(1,980)
Helped with design / set up only	25	9	22	39	26	25	21
Used the service only	56	69	56	36	58	51	60
Both	20	22	22	24	16	24	23

Base: All beneficiaries (1,980)

There were differences in the nature of involvement by employer size:

- Among those involved in Employment Brokerage, Apprenticeship Brokerage and Networks, larger employers were more likely than smaller employers to have been involved in the design or set-up. For example, the proportion involved in the set-up of Employment Brokerage ranged from 37 per cent of those with fewer than five employees to 59 per cent of those with 250 or more staff at the site.
- For Skills Diagnostics, smaller organisations were most likely to have only been involved in the design and set-up (40 per cent of those with fewer than five employees were only involved in design or set-up).
- There were no differences by number of employees among those involved in Training Brokerage. The sample of employers involved in GTAs is too small to identify any differences.

¹⁸ The total column shows the proportion that were involved in each capacity for any of the activities

Employers involved in the design or set-up were more likely than service users to say they got involved in order to prepare employees for future industry changes. This applied in particular to those involved in the set-up or design of Employment Brokerage (51 per cent compared with 40 per cent of service users¹⁹) and Apprenticeship Brokerage activities (52 per cent compared with 42 per cent).

As to be expected, service users were more likely than those only involved in design or set-up to say they chose an activity in order to:

- Acquire skills needed to improve the ability of employees to do their job; this applied particularly to those involved in Training Brokerage (76 per cent of service users compared with 47 per cent of those involved in design or set-up) and Networks (70 per cent compared with 52 per cent).
- Grow the business; this applied to all activities except Apprenticeship Brokerage.
- Increase understanding of employee training needs, especially those involved in Training Brokerage (69 per cent of service users compared with 52 per cent of those involved in design or set-up) and Networks (59 per cent compared with 48 per cent).
- Reduce staff turnover, especially those involved in Skills Diagnostics (40 per cent of service users compared with 31 per cent of those involved in design or set-up) and Training Brokerage (33 per cent compared with 24 per cent).

Other activities were more likely to be given as a reason by employers who were involved in both design/set-up and service use: reduce the difficulty of attracting skilled applicants, and reduce the difficulty of finding relevant training provision. Based on this data, beneficiaries engaged in design and/or set-up had broader expectations of activities.

3.7 Timing of involvement

Figure 3.3 shows when employers began their involvement with the activities. This shows that many beneficiaries started their involvement in 2013, and this was particularly high for Employment Brokerage (62 per cent) and Networks (55 per cent). However, the sample included employers who first became involved before 2012, as well as those who became involved in 2014.

¹⁹ Comparisons between those involved in design/set-up and service users exclude employers involved in both.

Figure 3.3: Year of start of involvement (%)

	Employment Brokerage (EM)	Apprenticeship Brokerage (AP)	Skills Diagnostics (SD)	Training Brokerage (TB)	GTAs (GTA)	Networks (NE)	Total ²⁰
Base (n)	(403)	(634)	(528)	(228)	(50)	(414)	(1,980)
Before 2012	6	14	12	17	28	10	11
2012	15	22	23	12	4	13	19
2013	62	44	37	29	18	55	48
2014	6	6	5	10	16	6	6
Don't know	11	15	23	33	34	17	16

Base: All beneficiaries (1,980)

There is some evidence on sustained engagement. Beneficiaries who were **service users** were asked whether they were still using the service. **Overall, around half were still using the service at the time of the survey.** This was highest for Apprenticeship Brokerage (70 per cent were still using it), and lowest for GTAs (35 per cent). It is not possible to comment on the sustainability of funded projects based on principles of co-investment by employer beneficiaries; this will be a focus for subsequent waves of the impact evaluation. In general, larger employers were more likely to still be using the service, reflecting the volume of employees engaging with the activities. For example, among those involved in Apprenticeship Brokerage, 86 per cent of large employers (with 250 or more staff at the site) were still using the service, compared with 63 per cent of those with fewer than five employees at the site.

Figure 3.4: Whether still using the service (n)

	Employment Brokerage (EM)	Apprenticeship Brokerage (AP)	Skills Diagnostics (SD)	Training Brokerage (TB)	GTAs (GTA)	Networks (NE)	Total ²¹
Base (n)	(304)	(580)	(413)	(138)	(37)	(311)	(1,604)
Yes	55	70	46	51	35	48	57
No	40	27	49	40	62	48	39
Don't know	5	3	5	9	3	4	4

Base: Beneficiaries who were service users (1,604)

There were no clear variations in the reasons for involvement in relation to when beneficiaries first became involved.

²⁰ The total column shows the earliest date that respondents were involved in any activity

²¹ The total column shows the proportion still using any activity

3.8 Working with other employers

One of the key aims of GIF and EIF is to help achieve more collective action by employers through stronger sectors and local networks. In the survey, respondents were asked whether they had worked together with other employers in the previous 12 months. Half of beneficiaries (50 per cent) said they had worked with other employers, most commonly to make training more relevant to the needs of their business (42 per cent). Beneficiaries also said that they had worked with other employers to make it easier to access training (38 per cent), improve the quality of training they receive (37 per cent) and reduce training costs (32 per cent).

The level of reported collaboration by beneficiaries is higher compared with the 2014 EPS (in which 17% of establishments had worked with another employer in the past 12 months with regards to its training and skills development practices) though the findings are not directly comparable due to differences in employer profile.

Larger employers were more likely to have worked with other employers (69 per cent of establishments with 250 or more employees had worked with other employers in some way²²), and working in this way was also more common among beneficiaries involved in Employment Brokerage (57 per cent; these employers also tended to be larger), Training Brokerage (57 per cent; this is consistent with the ways in which employers have collaborated as outlined above) and Networks (56 per cent). Those involved in Apprenticeship Brokerage were less likely to have worked with other employers (43 per cent).

3.9 Employers providing training

Employer beneficiaries that provided training for their staff (either off- or on-the-job training) over the previous 12 months were more likely than those that did not provide training to give a number of the reasons, most notably: improve the ability of employees to do their job (given as a reason by 75 per cent of those who provided training, compared with 61 per cent of those that did not) and reduce staff turnover (39 per cent compared with 21 per cent).

The main exception was reducing the difficulty of finding relevant training provision, as might be expected. On this item, there was no significant difference between employers that provided training and those that did not.

²² Comparable to the 63% of Larger Organisations (with 250+ employees) who reported collaborating via an organised group or formal network in the EPS.

3.10 Skills and recruitment issues

Employers who reported **skills gaps** were more likely to give a number of the reasons for choosing an activity, with the largest differences (unsurprisingly) for reducing the difficulty of attracting skilled applicants (49 per cent of those reporting skills gaps, compared with 38 per cent of those without skills gaps), and reducing staff turnover (42 per cent compared with 30 per cent). The exceptions were acquiring the skills needed to grow the business (no significant difference between those with skills gaps and those without) and preparing staff for future sector changes (again, no significant difference).

Employers who reported **under-use of skills** in their workforce were more likely than other beneficiaries to give a number of different reasons for involvement. The largest differences were for:

- reducing staff turnover (42 per cent of those reporting under-use of skills compared with 29 per cent of other employers), especially among those involved in Employment Brokerage;
- reducing the difficulty of attracting applicants with required skills (48 per cent compared with 37 per cent), especially among those involved in Networks;
- increasing understanding of the skills or training needs of employees.

Employers who said they had **hard-to-fill vacancies** were much more likely than other beneficiaries to say they got involved in an activity in order to:

- reduce the difficulty of attracting applicants with the skills they needed (57 per cent compared with 36 per cent);
- reduce staff turnover (46 per cent compared with 35 per cent), especially those involved in Networks.

Employers who said they had **hard-to-fill apprentice vacancies** were also more likely than other beneficiaries to say they got involved in an activity in order to reduce the difficulty of attracting applicants with the skills they needed (62 per cent compared with 45 per cent).

None of these findings by skills and recruitment issues are surprising; they essentially describe beneficiaries that recognise a problem in their workforce and seek a solution to that problem. However, the findings do suggest that **the design of activities and their promotion was generally successful in providing a potential solution to employers**. The next section of the report goes on to describe any self-reported impacts of these activities.

Summary

Beneficiaries' motivations for participating in the programme were consistent with the policy intent. The main reasons for using programme activities were to improve the ability of employees to do their job (73 per cent), to acquire the skills needed to grow their business (72 per cent), and to increase understanding of the skills or training needs of employees (61 per cent). Larger employers and those in the manufacturing sector were more likely to give a number of different reasons for their involvement.

There was **minor difference between the two funds in relation to employers' reasons for involvement.** Employers involved in EIF-funded activities were more likely than those involved in GIF to say that they got involved in order to reduce the difficulty of attracting applicants with the skills they need (47 per cent compared with 39 per cent) and to reduce staff turnover (39 per cent versus 32 per cent).

There is evidence that the EIF and GIF have been successful in being "employer-led": 44 per cent of beneficiaries were involved with the design or set up of an activity which is an achievement given that this is a relatively new policy concept. The national benchmark is 14 per cent²³ though this data is not directly comparable because of differences in employer profile.

One of the key aims of GIF and EIF is to help achieve more collective action by employers through stronger sectors and local networks. **Half of beneficiaries (50 per cent) said they had worked with other employers in the previous 12 months,** most commonly to make training more relevant to the needs of their business (42 per cent). **Beneficiaries also said that they had worked with other employers** to make it easier to access training (38 per cent), improve the quality of training they receive (37 per cent) and reduce training costs (32 per cent).

There is some evidence on sustained engagement. Overall, around half of beneficiary service users were still using the service at the time of the survey. This was highest for Apprenticeship Brokerage (70 per cent were still using it), and lowest for GTAs (35 per cent). Larger employers were more likely to still be using the service, reflecting the volume of employees engaging with the activities.

²³ 14% of employers in the 2014 Employer Perspectives Survey (EPS) stated that they had 'Discussed or been involved in the design of new qualifications and training opportunities'.

4 Reported impact on business measures

This chapter examines beneficiaries' perceptions of the impact of participation on various aspects of their organisation's performance. Because the impacts are self-reported, the results should be treated as indicative. Further waves of the evaluation will deliver more robust impact measures. The findings do give a good indication of the benefits of participation from the beneficiaries' perspective.

4.1 Reported Benefits

Beneficiaries were asked about nine aspects of skills and recruitment needs: whether they had seen any changes in the previous 12 months, and whether a positive change was the result of their participation in the relevant programme activity.

Figure 4.1 shows the findings for the total sample of beneficiaries (although it should be noted that not all respondents were asked about each item). The table shows, for each measure, whether respondents thought that there had been a change, and whether any increases were the result of participation – either completely or partially. The final column in the table shows the proportion that said there had been any impact due to participation (either completely or partially)²⁴.

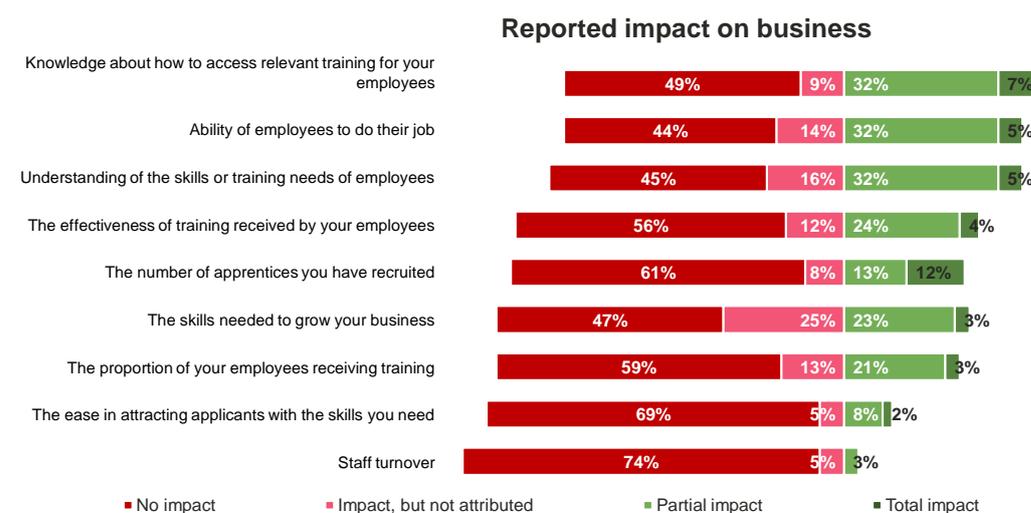
The three measures with the highest self-reported impacts are: the organisation's knowledge about how to access relevant training for employees (39 per cent said that this had increased and was at least partially the result of participation), the organisation's understanding of skills and training needs (37 per cent) and the ability of employees to do their job (37 per cent). In each case, only a small proportion said that the increase was 'completely' the result of participation, although this proportion was higher in relation to the number of apprentices recruited (which was only asked of those involved in Apprenticeship Brokerage): 12 per cent said that the number had increased and that this was completely due to their participation in this activity, with a further 13 per cent saying there had been an increase that as partially due to their involvement.

For other measures, around one in four beneficiaries said that there had been an increase that was at least partially due to their participation: the effectiveness of training received by employees (28 per cent), the skills needed to grow the business (26 per cent), the number of apprentices recruited (25 per cent, as noted above) and the proportion of employees receiving training (24 per cent). A much smaller proportion (nine per cent) said that the ease with which they can attract applicants with the skills they need had increased, and that this was due to their participation.

²⁴ The table shows the proportions who said an increase were completely or partially the result of participation in ANY activity; i.e. if beneficiaries were involved in more than activity, the figures show whether they thought the increase was due to participation in any of the relevant activities.

Figure 4.1: Reported impact on business measures: all respondents

Over the past 12 months, has there been an increase, decrease or no change in...



Base: All beneficiaries involved in Skills Diagnostics, Training Brokerage, GTAs or Networks (1,073); *All beneficiaries involved in Apprenticeship Brokerage (634); ** All beneficiaries except public sector organisations (1,867); ***All beneficiaries except those involved in Skills Diagnostics (1,663); ****All beneficiaries except those involved in Apprenticeship Brokerage (1,461)

Beneficiaries were also asked about staff turnover. In this case, the key measure is whether this had *decreased* as a result of participation. Just three per cent said that this was the case; in fact respondents, were more likely to say that this had increased rather than decreased over the previous 12 months though the proportions citing either is very small. Moreover, one would expect the impact on staff turnover to take longer to materialise compared with some of the measures around training.

4.2 Type of activity

This section looks at the self-reported impact of the programme, analysed by the six types of activity.

Beneficiaries involved in Skills Diagnostics, Training Brokerage, GTAs and Networks were asked about the first five measures shown in Figure 4.1. Employers involved in Skills Diagnostics were most likely to recognise an impact on all measures as a result of an activity.

The difference was largest in relation to the effectiveness of training (34 per cent), the proportion of employees receiving training (28 per cent) and the ability of employees to do their job (42 per cent). In each case, employers involved in Skills Diagnostics were significantly more likely to report a positive impact than those involved in other activities. In relation to two other measures (understanding of skills and training needs, and knowledge about how to access relevant training), the figure for Skills Diagnostics was significantly higher than the one for Training Brokerage, but not compared with Networks²⁵.

²⁵ Some caution should be used in interpreting the figures for GTAs, because of the small number of employers involved in this activity. For this reason, the figures for GTAs are included in the table, but have been excluded from the commentary.

All beneficiaries except those involved only in Skills Diagnostics were asked about the ease with which they can attract applicants with the skills they need. The only significant difference by type of activity was that those involved in Networks were more likely to say there had been an impact due to the programme, compared with those involved in Apprenticeship Brokerage (12 per cent compared with 7 per cent).

Other than those in the public sector, all beneficiaries were asked about changes in the skills needed to grow their business. Employers involved in Skills Diagnostics (32 per cent) and Networks (31 per cent) were more likely to report a positive impact on this measure than those involved in Employment Brokerage (21 per cent) or Apprenticeship Brokerage (21 per cent).

There were no differences by type of activity in the proportions saying there had been a reduction in staff turnover that was due to programme participation.

The proportions that said there had been a positive change that was ‘completely’ the result of their participation were consistently low across the various activities. The only exception was in relation to the number of apprentices recruited. This was only asked of those involved in Apprenticeship Brokerage, and (as noted in the previous section) a relatively high proportion of beneficiaries (12 per cent) said that there had been an increase that was completely due to their participation in this activity.

Differences were also reported by employers who had been involved in more than one type of activity, compared to those that had engaged in a single activity. Employers who were involved in multiple activities were more likely to attribute these impact to their involvement in the activities: effectiveness of training (35 per cent compared with 26 per cent engaged in a single activity), the ability of employees to do their job (44 per cent compared with 35 per cent), the skills needed to grow the business (37 per cent compared with 24 per cent), and the ease of attracting applicants with the required skills (13 per cent compared with eight per cent). There were no significant differences on the other measures.

Figure 4.2: Reported impact on business measures: by type of activity (%)

All increased – completely/ partially as a result of participation	Employ-ment Brokerage	Apprentice- ship Brokerage	Skills Diag- nostics	Training Brokerage	GTAs	Net-works
Base (n)	(403)	(634)	(528)	(228)	(50)	(414)
Your organisation’s understanding of the skills or training needs of employees	-	-	39	31	26	37

Your organisation's knowledge about how to access relevant training for your employees	-	-	42	33	32	37
The effectiveness of training received by your employees	-	-	34	18	20	24
The proportion of your employees receiving training	-	-	28	20	14	21
Ability of employees to do their job	-	-	42	33	28	33
The number of apprentices you have recruited	-	25	-	-	-	-
The ease with which you can attract applicants with the skills you need	9	7	-	10	10	12
(Base) *	(370)	(617)	(517)	(212)	(48)	(374)
The skills needed to grow your business	21	21	32	26	29	31
(Base)	(403)	(634)	(528)	(228)	(50)	(414)
All decreased – completely/ partially as a result of participation	%	%	%	%	%	%
Staff turnover	4	-	3	2	0	4

*Base: All beneficiaries involved in the relevant activities; * All except public sector organisations*

4.3 Programme level

The only difference in self-reported impact at the programme level was that employers involved in EIF-funded activities were more likely than those involved in GIF-funded activities to say there had been a positive impact on the proportion of employees receiving training (26 per cent compared with 19 per cent). Otherwise, there were no differences at the programme level.

4.4 Employer size

On the various measures, small establishments (with fewer than 10 employees) were consistently less likely to report positive impacts from the programme, compared with larger establishments. The largest differences were for the effectiveness of training (18 per cent of establishments with fewer than 10 employees said that this had increased as a result of their participation, compared with at least 31 per cent in other size bands), and the proportion of employees receiving training (15 per cent compared with at least 27 per cent). The one exception was in the skills needed to grow the business, where there were no differences by size.

Otherwise, there were no significant differences by size of establishment (i.e. between those with 10-49, 50-249 or 250 or more employees).

Overall, the pattern seen here (with small establishments less likely to report impact) ties in with the analysis by type of activity: those involved with Skills Diagnostics were typically larger than those involved in Training Brokerage, GTAs or Networks, and were also more likely to say they had seen a positive impact from their involvement.

There were no differences in the proportions who said there had been a change that was *completely* due to their involvement in an activity.

Figure 4.3: Reported impact on business measures: by size of establishment (%)

All increased – completely/ partially as a result of participation	Base:	Number of employees at the site			
		Less than 10	10-49	50-249	250 or more
Base (n)		(412)	(325)	(241)	(95)
Your organisation's understanding of the skills or training needs of employees	1,703	32	38	44	43
Your organisation's knowledge about how to access relevant training for your employees	1,703	35	40	43	42
The effectiveness of training received by your employees	1,703	18	31	36	39
The proportion of your employees receiving training	1,703	15	27	32	33
Ability of employees to do their job	1,703	30	43	42	40
Base (n)		(177)	(256)	(158)	(43)
The number of apprentices you have recruited	634	16	26	30	33
Base (n)		(588)	(550)	(355)	(170)
The ease with which you can attract applicants with the skills you need	1,663	7	9	11	14
Base (n)		(652)	(637)	(421)	(157)
The skills needed to grow your business	1,867	26	24	27	31
Base (n)		(502)	(468)	(334)	(157)
All decreased – completely/ partially as a result of participation		%	%	%	%
Staff turnover	1,461	2	4	3	5

4.5 Industry sector

This section examines self-reported impact, analysed by the most common industry sectors included in the sample of beneficiaries.

On a number of measures, employers in the manufacturing sector were more likely than other beneficiaries to say that they had seen a positive impact as a result of participation. The differences were most pronounced in relation to the proportion of employees receiving training (34 per cent, more than 10 percentage points higher than any of the other main sectors) and the ability of employees to do their job (47 per cent, at least 10 percentage points higher).

The figures for the arts, entertainment and recreation sector were generally similar to the total sample, although employers in this sector were more likely to report a positive impact in relation to the effectiveness of training (44 per cent), compared with most other sectors, and were more likely than manufacturing organisations to report an impact in the ease with which they can attract skilled applicants (13 per cent compared with 6 per cent).

The lowest reported impacts were generally seen in the information and communications sector. Employers in this sector were less likely to report a positive impact in relation to the organisation's understanding of skills or training needs (25 per cent); the organisations' knowledge about how to access relevant training (30 per cent); the effectiveness of training (14 per cent); the proportion of employees receiving training (14 per cent); and the ability of employees to do their job (28 per cent). On these last three measures, the figures for the construction sector were also relatively low: the effectiveness of training (16 per cent); the proportion of employees receiving training (11 per cent); and the ability of employees to do their job (26 per cent).

Once again, these findings are linked to the variations by type of activity. Employers involved in Skills Diagnostics were most likely to report positive impacts, and these were mainly in the manufacturing sector, whereas those involved in Training Brokerage and GTAs (who reported lower impacts) were mostly in the information and communication sector.

Figure 4.4: Reported impact on business measures: by industry sector (SIC) (%)

All increased – completely/ partially as a result of participation	C: Manufacturing	F: Construction	J: Information and communication	M: Professional, scientific and technical activities	R: Arts, entertainment and recreation
Base (n)	(318)	(122)	(204)	(68)	(75)
Your organisation’s understanding of the skills or training needs of employees	43	39	25	28	37
Your organisation’s knowledge about how to access relevant training for your employees	47	37	30	41	37
The effectiveness of training received by your employees	40	16	14	22	44
The proportion of your employees receiving training	34	11	14	24	23
Ability of employees to do their job	47	26	28	34	37
Base (n)	(399)	-	-	-	-
The number of apprentices you have recruited	25	-	-	-	-
All increased – completely/ partially as a result of participation	C: Manufacturing	F: Construction	J: Information and communication	M: Professional, scientific and technical activities	R: Arts, entertainment and recreation
Base (n)	(489)	(143)	(193)	(111)	(144)
The ease with which you can attract applicants with the skills you need	6	11	8	6	13
Base (n)	(683)	(148)	(224)	(131)	(123)
The skills needed to grow your business	26	31	24	26	21
Base (n)	(385)	(134)	(226)	(120)	(88)
All decreased – completely/ partially as a result of participation	%	%	%	%	%
Staff turnover	3	2	*	4	2

An asterisk (*) denotes a percentage of less than 0.5 but greater than zero.

4.6 Nature of involvement

As seen in section 3.6, employers could be involved in activities as part of the design or set-up, as well as being service users. **Employers involved in both the design/set-up and as service users were generally more likely to report a positive impact from participation in the programme**, compared with those that had only used EIF/GIF funded services or were purely involved in the design or set-up. This pattern was most pronounced among employers involved in Skills Diagnostics. For example, 60 per cent of employers that were involved in both the design/set-up and use of Skills Diagnostics activities reported a positive impact in relation to the organisation's understanding of skills and training needs, compared with 35 per cent of service users and 28 per cent of those that were involved only in the design or set-up of Skills Diagnostics activities. The same pattern applied to other measures among employers involved in Skills Diagnostics.

There was a similar pattern among employers involved in Networks, in relation to two measures. In both cases, those involved in both design/set-up and as users were more likely than other beneficiaries to report a positive impact: the organisation's understanding of skills and training needs (50 per cent involved in both design/set-up and as users, compared with 33 per cent involved only in one capacity), and knowledge about how to access relevant training (51 per cent compared with 34 per cent of users only and 29 per cent who were only involved in design/set-up).

In addition:

- Employers who were users only of Skills Diagnostics were more likely than those who were only involved in the design-set up to report a positive impact in relation to effectiveness of training (30 per cent compared with 19 per cent).
- Those involved only in the design/set-up of Apprenticeship Brokerage activities were more likely than those who were users only to report an impact in relation to the skills needed to grow the business (31 per cent compared with 17 per cent).

These findings raise some concerns about the sustainability of some activities. GIF in particular require activities to be self-sustaining (i.e. attractive enough for employers to pay for their use) for the pump-priming funding to be cost-effective. If those who only used services recognise less impact than those involved in the design and/or set-up, activity will be less attractive to other potential beneficiaries in the future. This will be an important measure of impact for the full evaluation.

4.7 Timing of involvement

There were no clear patterns in relation to when beneficiaries first became involved in activities and the impact reported. The only difference was that, among those involved in Networks, employers who got involved in 2012 or before were more likely to report a positive impact in the proportion of employees receiving training, compared with those who became involved in 2013 or 2014 (30 per cent compared with 18 per cent). This may indicate that it can take some time for an impact to be realised on this measure, and will be an important consideration for the second wave of the impact evaluation in 2015.

However, there were clear differences between service users who were still using an activity at the time of the survey and those that had finished their involvement, with continued employer engagement being associated with greater reported impacts. This applies to all impact measures except staff turnover, where there was no difference. The largest differences were in relation to effectiveness of training (42 per cent of those still using an activity reported a positive impact, compared with 17 per cent of those no longer using an activity) and understanding of skills or training needs (51 per cent compared with 27 per cent). These findings reflect positively on Apprenticeship Brokerage activity which comprised the largest group of current service users.

4.8 Reasons for involvement

In general, **beneficiaries who became involved in an activity for reasons that were related to a particular measure were more likely to report a positive outcome for that measure.** This applied to:

- The reported impact on staff turnover (47 per cent among those who chose an activity in order to reduce staff turnover, compared with 21 per cent of those who did not become involved for that reason);
- Knowledge about how to access relevant training (49 per cent among those who chose an activity in order to reduce the difficulty of finding relevant training provision, compared with 28 per cent of other beneficiaries);
- Effectiveness of training (36 per cent among those who chose an activity in order to reduce the difficulty of finding relevant training provision, compared with 17 per cent of other beneficiaries; 36 per cent among those who got involved in order to increase their understanding of skills or training needs, compared with 10 per cent of other beneficiaries);

- The proportion of employees receiving training (30 per cent among those who chose an activity in order to reduce the difficulty of finding relevant training provision, compared with 16 per cent of other beneficiaries; 29 per cent among those who got involved in order to increase their understanding of skills or training needs, compared with 14 per cent of other beneficiaries);
- The ability of employees to do their job (42 per cent among those who chose an activity in order to improve the ability of employees to do their job, compared with 17 per cent of other beneficiaries);
- The ease with which beneficiaries could attract applicants with the skills they need (13 per cent among those who got involved in order to reduce the difficulty of attracting applicants with the required skills, compared with five per cent of those who did not get involved for this reason);
- The skills needed to grow the business (30 per cent among those who chose an activity in order to acquire the skills needed to grow the business, compared with 11 per cent of other beneficiaries);
- Staff turnover (seven per cent among those who got involved in order to reduce staff turnover, compared with one per cent of other beneficiaries).

The one exception was in the reported impact on the number of apprentices recruited, where there was no difference between employers who got involved in order to reduce the difficulty of attracting applicants with the required skills, and other beneficiaries.

4.9 Organisations that work with other employers

On most measures, beneficiaries that said they had worked together with other employers in some way over the previous 12 months (as described in section 3.8) were more likely to report positive impacts. The largest difference was in relation to acquiring the skills needed to grow the business (34 per cent of beneficiaries that had worked with other employers reported this as an impact of their involvement, compared with 20 per cent of those that had not worked with other employers).

The two exceptions were the ability of employees to do their job and staff turnover. On these measures, there was no difference in reported impact between those that had worked with other employers and those that had not.

These findings highlight the positive contribution to a business that collaborative working can make.

4.10 Skills and recruitment issues

Employers who said they had **skills gaps** were more likely to report positive impacts on a number of measures. The largest difference was for the effectiveness of training (36 per cent of those with skills gaps reported this as a positive impact resulting from their involvement, compared with 21 per cent of those with no skills gaps).

The exceptions were the number of apprentices recruited, and the skills needed to grow the business (no significant differences on these measures).

Employers who reported **under-use of skills** in their workforce were more likely than other beneficiaries to report positive impacts on most measures. The one exception was in the proportion of employees receiving training (no significant difference).

Employers who said they had **hard-to-fill vacancies** were more likely than other beneficiaries to report a positive impact in their organisation's understanding of their workforce's skills and training needs (44 per cent compared with 37 per cent), but otherwise there were no differences on the various measures.

There were no significant differences between employers who said they had **hard-to-fill apprentice vacancies** and other beneficiaries. It should be noted that small base sizes made it more difficult to detect differences on this issue.

In the main, these findings indicate that activities do result in some positive self-reported impacts for beneficiaries with specific workforce issues.

Summary

EIF and GIF activities were perceived to have been most effective in enabling beneficiaries to identify and define their skills and training needs, and in addressing information asymmetries in the learning market to enable beneficiaries to implement effective training solutions to address identified needs. For example, the three measures with the highest self-reported impacts were: the organisation's knowledge about how to access relevant training for employees (39 per cent said that this had increased and was at least partially the result of participation), the organisation's understanding of skills and training needs (37 per cent) and the ability of employees to do their job (37 per cent).

On most measures, **beneficiaries that said they had worked together with other employers in some way over the previous 12 months (as described in section 4.9) were more likely to report positive impacts.** This highlights the positive contribution to a business that collaborative working can make.

There are indications that the nature of employers' involvement is linked to the likelihood of them reporting positive impacts: **employers involved in both the design/set-up and as service users were generally more likely to report a positive impact** from their participation in the programme, compared with those who were just users or only involved in the design or set-up.

These findings raise some concerns about the sustainability of some activities. GIF in particular require activities to be self-sustaining (i.e. attractive enough for employers to pay for their use) for the pump-priming funding to be cost-effective. If those who are service users recognise less impact than those involved in the design and/or set-up, activity will be less attractive to other potential beneficiaries in the future. This will be an important measure of impact for the full evaluation.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Key messages

This report has examined the impact of participation on beneficiaries, from their own perspective. As noted earlier, because the impacts are self-reported, the results should be considered less robust than the impact measurements that will form subsequent longitudinal analyses in Years 2 and 3 of the impact evaluation.

However, these findings give an indication of the benefits of participation from the beneficiaries' perspective, as well as flagging up some important issues for the impact analysis.

Firstly, it is notable that **a substantial proportion of employers reported positive impacts as a result of their participation**. For example, 39 per cent said that there has been an impact on their ability to access relevant training, and a similar proportion reported an impact on their organisation's understanding of skills and training needs (37 per cent). As would be expected, employers were more likely to report a positive impact where there was a direct link to their motivations for participation. Furthermore, there appears to be a link between depth of engagement and reported impact, with beneficiaries involved in the set-up and design of a service, as well as being consumers of it, more likely to report a positive impact compared with those just involved in the design and set-up or just consuming a service.

Secondly, there is evidence that **EIF and GIF have been successful in being “employer-led”**; this is a key achievement given that many SSCs have had to adopt new ways of engaging with the employers within their footprint. Overall, 44 per cent of beneficiaries said they had been involved in the design and set-up of an activity.

Thirdly, a key aim of GIF and EIF is to help achieve more collective action by employers and **50 per cent of the beneficiaries reported that they had worked with other employers in the previous 12 months**, most commonly to make training more relevant to their needs, to improve access and quality; and to reduce costs.

However, it should be noted that the self-reported impact findings in this report are something of a blunt instrument: beneficiaries are asked to indicate whether participation has resulted in a positive impact, and whether this was completely or partially due to participation. As a result, the differences between sub-groups, particularly different types of activity, are smaller than one might expect.

Employers involved in Skills Diagnostics are more likely to report impacts, compared with those involved in some of the other types of activity (they are also more likely to be involved in more than one activity which is likely to be a contributing factor). However, the differences are relatively small. Furthermore, the differences between the various measures are often quite small: among those involved in Skills Diagnostics, for example, between 28 per cent and 42 per cent of employers say there has been an impact on six different measures.

However, it is not appropriate at this stage to try to gauge more precisely the scale of the impact from participation. The self-reported measures are likely to include a general sense as to whether involvement has been worthwhile and is bringing, or is likely to bring, some improvements to the organisation. In this sense, the self-reported measures can be seen as indicating respondents' satisfaction with their involvement, rather than an objective assessment of impact.

The impact analysis will be able to be much more precise on the size of the impacts, and will also be more clinical in assessing any change resulting from the programme.

5.2 Considerations for the evaluation of impact

The findings in this report highlight some important issues for the impact evaluation.

5.2.1 Explaining differences in impact

The analysis in this report indicates that there are differences in reported impact by delivery partner, activity and by type of beneficiary. For example, the analysis suggests that impacts are more likely in the manufacturing sector, and are less likely among small employers. The impact analysis will look to test the validity of these sub-group findings where possible, and will also try to assess more precisely the scale and nature of the variation.

In examining the findings for different sub-groups of employers, it is clear that there are patterns that overlap. For example, employers involved in Training Brokerage are larger than those involved in some of the other activities, and are more likely to be in the manufacturing sector. All of these groups (those involved in Training Brokerage, larger employers and those in the manufacturing sector) are more likely than average to report impacts. It will be important for the impact analysis to try to isolate the impact of participation, in relation to different characteristics; in this way, it will be possible to understand what are the key features of participation that are leading to a positive impact.

Where possible, the impact analysis will also be able to identify the process in which beneficiaries have seen a positive impact, following the logic model that has been produced for the two programmes, distinguishing outputs, outcomes and impacts (see Appendix B).

5.2.2 Implications of the respondent profile on the impact evaluation

The sample of beneficiaries is quite diverse in its characteristics. For example, it includes very small organisations with fewer than five employees, as well as large multi-site employers. The sample is also spread across different industry sectors. Conversely, the sample is dominated by a handful of large delivery partners: three delivery partners alone account for 58 per cent of survey responses (SEMTA - 33 per cent; Creative Skillset – 15 per cent; and Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce – 10 per cent). There are three implications that arise from this:

- Firstly, it is important to recognise this diversity when generalising about the impact of the programmes. While it is important to assess the overall impact of the programmes, any analysis will need to identify differences between employer sub-groups where possible.
- Secondly, linked to the above point, for some activities findings reflect the performance of handful of delivery partners only, restricting ability to generalise about the effectiveness of the activity.
- Thirdly, some of the sub-group sample sizes are quite small. For example, the sample includes only 50 employers involved in GTAs, and many industry sectors contain fewer than 50 respondents. This will make it more difficult to identify impacts for some sub-groups.

5.2.3 Implications of the timing and nature of beneficiary involvement on the impact evaluation

Beneficiaries first got involved in activities at different times: some before 2012, some only in 2014. This means that the evaluation will be measuring the impact on beneficiaries at different points in time, relative to their involvement. While this is unavoidable, it is important to be aware of this issue when examining impact, particularly where impact is likely to be longer-term (e.g. in relation to staff turnover). Where possible, the impact analysis should try to analyse impact relative to timing of involvement.

We have also seen that some beneficiaries (around half of the sample overall) have been involved in the set-up or design of activities, while some have solely been users, and some have done both. In assessing impact, it will be important to consider the nature of beneficiaries' involvement in activities. This raises a broader point about the types of intervention and involvement associated with different types of activity. Some types of activity are more intensive than others, and it will be important to examine impact in the context of what is a likely or reasonable outcome.

Appendices

Appendix A - Survey Methodology

The survey was multi-mode using both CATI and online methods (for employer records without a telephone number). The number of online responses was low (12 interviews out of a total of 1,980). The adjusted response rate was 56 per cent and the co-operation rate was 73 per cent.

Sampling – beneficiary survey

The sampling method used for the beneficiary survey differed to that initially proposed because sample eligibility (i.e. the percentage of beneficiary employers who recalled using the activity) was much lower than anticipated (see A2 - Fieldwork). The original design was for random probability sampling with disproportionate stratification by delivery partner. However, low sample eligibility combined with poor contact details meant that the baseline survey was based on a census approach.

Sample volumes and de-duplication

The beneficiary sample was sent to Ipsos MORI using secure file transfer protocols from the 28 delivery partners identified during the feasibility and scoping phases. Ipsos MORI designed a sample template and then collated all the data sent by delivery partners.

There was significant duplication *within* delivery partners' samples and, to a much lesser extent, *between* delivery partners. Sample *within* a partner's database was prioritised by first looking at the earliest engagement, and then by selecting those with useable contact details over those without.

The de-duping process *between* delivery partners prioritised those with the lowest volume of beneficiaries. The only exception was duplications across Cornwall Marine and SkillsActive. These were allocated to Cornwall Marine because they deliver SkillsActive's Apprenticeship scheme.

There was also some crossover between the beneficiary and comparison sample (sourced from the 2013 Employer Skills Survey), especially for larger employers. As no company registration number is held on the Employer Skills Survey, employers were de-duped using a combination of postcodes, company names and telephone numbers.

After de-duping, the beneficiary sample contained 10,859 leads. However, not all of these leads had complete contact details. Telephone tracing was run on all leads which had a postal address but no phone number. Two sample files were produced:

1. A main sample file of 8,830 CATI leads with a telephone number, which included 120 leads identified using telephone tracing. In addition, midway through fieldwork, SEMTA also sent additional leads which, after de-duplication, resulted in a further 34 leads.
2. An online sample of 604 online survey leads that had an email address but no telephone number.

Sample structure

Delivery partners worked with single-site enterprises, and both branches and headquarters of multi-site organisations. As a result, the beneficiary sample comprised a mix of types of employers. In order to be consistent between beneficiary employers (and non-participant employers in the comparison group), the questionnaire was designed to collect data at the branch (establishment) level. In cases where the delivery partner activity affects all sites of a business, the survey collected information only about the Head Office, or for an establishment of that multisite business nominated by the interviewee.

Fieldwork

The CATI beneficiary questionnaire was piloted with 84 beneficiaries between 10 and 17 April, 2014. An online pilot was also run although no interviews were achieved. The pilot questionnaire was longer than anticipated resulting in substantial cuts post-pilot.

The mainstage fieldwork for the beneficiary survey took place between 15th May 2014 and 23rd July 2014.

Overall, 1,980 beneficiaries completed the survey and a further 24 quit the survey part way through. Just 12 interviews were completed online. The unadjusted response rate was, therefore, 23 per cent. The adjusted response rate was 56 per cent and there was just 8 per cent refusal rate.

The **sample eligibility was just 35 per cent**, meaning nearly two-thirds of listed beneficiaries with whom contact was made did not recognise the listed activity, delivery partner or provider (there was, however, substantial variation by delivery partner as shown in Appendix C). This was mainly caused by poor and inconsistent recording of activity information (including brand names) by delivery partners, though it is also possible that some employers genuinely did not recall the activity due to the indirect nature of the engagement (for example, use of online diagnostic toolkits).

During fieldwork, it also became apparent that there was inconsistency in how delivery partners defined beneficiaries; some employers reported to have received information about the activity but had not engaged with it. A full breakdown of response rates is provided in Appendix C.

Final sample status	Total sample used (N)	Total sample used (%)
Completed/partial	2,004	23
Refusal	731	8
Unknown outcome	1,517	17
Ineligible	3,715	42
Dead numbers	863	10
Total sample	8,830	100
Unadjusted response rate		23%
Adjusted response rate		56%

Data processing and analysis

The need for data editing was minimised through the use of CATI which incorporated a number of 'logic checks', prompting interviewers to check inconsistent responses during the interview.

In addition, a series of background 'soft' checks ensured that respondents were routed through the correct questions on the questionnaire (depending on their answers at previous questions). Much of the questionnaire routing is based on answers at one or more previous questions; in these cases, the CATI system automatically checks these previous answers which trigger the correct routing. The questionnaire routing was extensively tested by the Ipsos MORI executive team prior to the pilot and mainstage.

Coding

The raw verbatim responses to open-ended and 'other-specify' questions were processed manually by Ipsos MORI's Coding department and assigned to codes in a code-frame. The accuracy of the coding was verified by the Ipsos MORI researchers, who checked and approved each new code proposed.

The 'other-specify' answers were back-coded or given new codes as required, depending on the total number of mentions (if ten per cent or over selected the 'other' category).

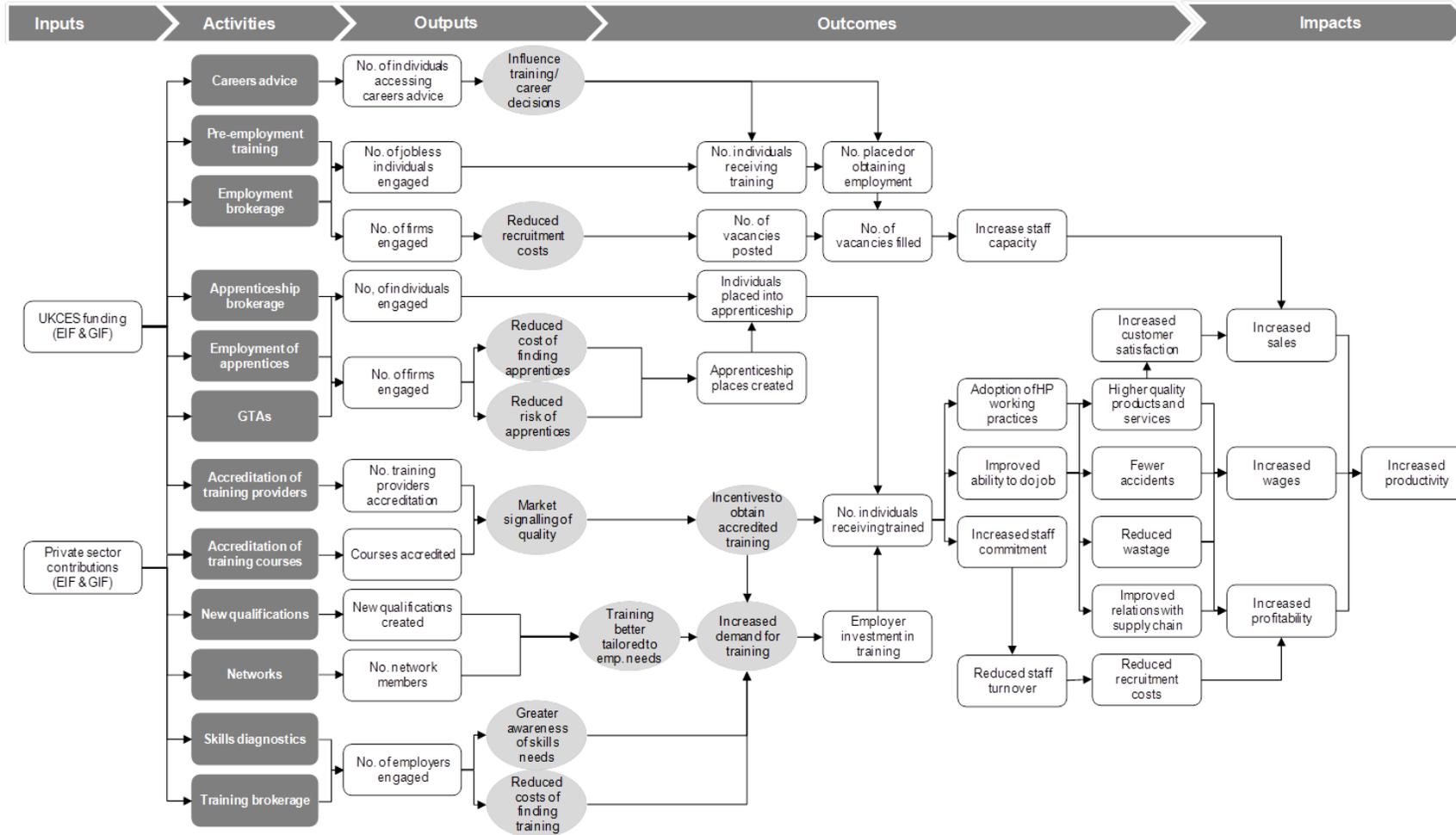
Weighting

The beneficiary survey is unweighted due to the absence of reliable firmographic information about the population (more details are provided below). Therefore, it is unknown whether the survey findings are representative of the eligible population on key characteristics such as size, industry sector and activity type. However, the respondent profile by delivery partner is largely consistent with the sample distribution (Figure 2.4 in Chapter 2).

The sample provided by delivery partners contained very limited detail on business demographics; whilst the overall sector footprint can be implied from delivery partners which were Sector Skill Councils, data on business size (number of employees) and sector were largely absent. Any data that was provided was also not consistently available between delivery partners. Furthermore, it was not possible to match this data using other sources because of poorly populated contact details.

The only viable weight that could be devised was delivery partner volumes. This could theoretically balance findings based on the number of beneficiaries per partner. However, the overall poor quality of the population sample may result in a weighting scheme which exacerbated rather than corrected non-response error. As shown in Appendix C, eligibility varied markedly between delivery partners and by activity. Weighting by activity was also not possible since this flag was inconsistently used across delivery partners.

Appendix B: Theory of change model



Appendix C: Survey response rates – CATI Survey (colour coding denotes relationship to the “Total”)

Delivery Partner	Total	Complete	Unknown	Refused	Dead	Ineligible	Eligibility	Refusal	Unadj RR	Adj RR	Co-operation rate
Anglia Farmers	138	48	21	8	5	56	46%	6%	35%	71%	86%
Asset Skills	292	74	56	20	45	97	43%	7%	25%	54%	79%
Black Country LEP	124	35	30	16	5	38	48%	13%	28%	52%	69%
CIPP	35	12	6	2	3	12	50%	6%	34%	65%	86%
Cogent	211	70	45	16	11	69	50%	8%	33%	61%	81%
Cornwall Marine	353	70	33	42	33	175	29%	12%	20%	53%	63%
Creative & Cultural Skills	230	94	37	15	18	66	59%	7%	41%	67%	86%
Creative Skillset	1531	288	227	125	201	690	29%	8%	19%	53%	70%
Employment Related Services Association (ER)	36	18	10	1	3	4	82%	3%	50%	61%	95%
EU Skills	491	132	127	40	34	158	46%	8%	27%	54%	77%
Financial Skills Partnership	152	25	23	25	11	68	27%	16%	16%	42%	50%
Gtr Manchester Chamber of Commerce	1466	181	252	127	212	694	21%	9%	12%	45%	59%
Improve	44	9	9	7		19	32%	16%	20%	48%	56%
Institute of the Motor Industry	30	12	9	2	2	5	71%	7%	40%	55%	86%
Lantra	13	8	2			3	73%	0%	62%	85%	100%
North Staffordshire CoC	32	12	8	2	1	9	57%	6%	38%	63%	86%
NSA Food & Drink	34	13	11	2	3	5	72%	6%	38%	52%	87%
People 1st	161	58	34	19	10	40	59%	12%	36%	56%	75%
SEMTA	2545	618	414	202	134	1177	34%	8%	24%	61%	75%
Skills for Care & Development	30	5	18			7	42%	0%	17%	40%	100%
Skills for Health	43	27	7	3	3	3	90%	7%	63%	69%	90%
Skills for Justice	26	11	13	1		1	92%	4%	42%	46%	92%
Skills for Logistics	218	58	43	18	27	72	45%	8%	27%	54%	76%
Skills Third Sector	4		1			3					
SkillsActive	607	125	94	37	100	251	33%	6%	21%	55%	77%
West of England	18	6	6	1	2	3	67%	6%	33%	49%	86%
Total	8,830	2,004	1,517	731	863	3,715	35%	8%	23%	56%	73%

Key	
Total	Total number of leads in final sample
Completed / partial (quit)	Number of completed and abandoned interviews
Unknown	Leads where eligibility is unknown
Refused	Refused to take part in the interview
Dead	Unusable / disconnected phone numbers
Ineligible	Not eligible to take part in the interview because they did not know if they had been involved in the activities (and there was no one else to speak to), or they did not recognise the activities / Delivery Partner, or they had only had contact with the Delivery Partner
Eligibility %	Completed or Quit / (Completed or Quit + Ineligible)
Refusal %	Refused / Total
Unadjusted Response Rate	Completed or Quit / Total
Adjusted Response Rate	Completed or Quit / (Completed or Quit + Refused)) + eligibility * (unknown + dead)
Cooperation %	Completed or Quit / (Completed or Quit + Refused)

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) is a publicly funded, industry-led organisation providing leadership on skills and employment issues across the UK.

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