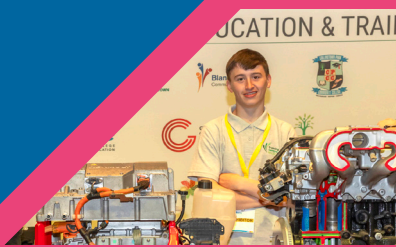




FUTURE FINGAL: FINGAL SKILLS STRATEGY 2024 - 2029



FUTURE FINGAL:
FINGAL
Skills
STRATEGY

IDEAS COLLABORATION ACTION

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INTRODUCTION

Fingal is a driving force in the Irish economy, and its labour force is a critical component. The skills, knowledge and experience available in the county are differentiators and key strengths for the local economy. They have been nurtured over decades, and have supported the development of a broad base of both indigenous and multinational companies.

The importance of skills development is acknowledged by Fingal County Council, the first Irish local authority to develop a Skills Strategy at local authority level, as an action delivered under the Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2016 – 2022, with input from the Economic, Enterprise, Tourism & Cultural Development Strategic Policy Committee (SPC). The implementation of the Fingal Skills Strategy has been driven by the Skills Strategy Implementation Group (SSIG) with members drawn from private industry and education/training providers. This iteration of the Fingal Skills Strategy has benefitted from key inputs from Dublin Regional Skills Forum (DRSF) and the Skills & Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS.

While Fingal's skills base has provided the foundation for strong economic performance, further evolution is required to meet the opportunities and challenges which exist. These include:

1. Globalisation, and increasingly intense international competition for investment and jobs;
2. The ongoing rise of technology, and notably Artificial Intelligence (AI);
3. The imperative to prepare for a green future; and
4. Skills shortages in specific sectors.

This 2024-2029 iteration of the Skills Strategy will build upon the notable achievements of recent years, and will incorporate key lessons in terms of action at local level and international best practice from Fingal County Council's European Partners on the Interreg Project SKYLA.

Skills requirements for Fingal's future economy are constantly evolving. While the 'twin transition' of green and digital have driven skills demands for some time, needs relating to "transversal skills" and those which can complement the rise of AI have emerged with

greater clarity over the past number of years. This iteration of the Fingal Skills Strategy aims to broaden the skills which are available to employers – and potential employers – in the county, thus contributing towards competitiveness. The Strategy aims to support employers by broadening the skills base available, promoting life-long learning and flexible options for upskilling and reskilling. It also aims to equip the local population, comprising employees, students and citizens, with the skills to pursue rewarding careers in the county.

The Strategy addresses these needs and establishes key goals and actions for the years to 2029. It has been devised under the stewardship of the Economic, Enterprise, Tourism and Cultural Development Department of Fingal County Council and the SSIG – based on a rigorous process of engagement and primary and secondary research which incorporated:

- Consultations with key stakeholders, including employers, education and training providers, representative and trade union groups, and Council officials;
- Policy and strategy research;
- Best practice exchange with European Partners through SKYLA; and
- Data modelling to forecast potential skills gaps.

The Strategy is structured around the following four sections:

1. Key Skills Policies and Megatrends;
2. Existing Skills Ecosystem in Fingal;
3. Fingal Skills 2030; and
4. Skills Strategy and Action Plan.

Progress is to be monitored on an annual basis to ensure that meaningful action is being taken, and that both existing and emerging skills needs are identified and targeted.

In sum, people and skills are crucial to the long-term success of the Fingal economy – and this Skills Strategy provides the basis for the further evolution of the county's labour force in the years to 2029.



FOREWORDS



Cllr. Brian McDonagh
Mayor

As Mayor of Fingal I would like to thank the members of the Fingal Skills Strategy Implementation Group for their commitment to implementing the Skills Strategy. This Strategy is a key objective in both the Future Fingal: An Economic Development Strategy and the Fingal Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) and it is wonderful to witness the evolution of the Strategy from the original version in 2019 to this new iteration.

The Fingal Skills Strategy is an excellent example of collaboration in action between the Council, industry and education/training providers. Nowhere is this more evident than in the wonderful collaboration between the stakeholders to deliver the Xplore Your Future TY Expo, a hugely successful collaboration to inspire the students of today to be the talent of tomorrow. Fingal County Council is leading the way in developing supports for the local skills ecosystem and it is clear to see the value not only of collaboration at local and regional levels in this Strategy but international collaboration with the Council drawing inspiration from the best practices of our European Partners in the Interreg Project SKYLA.

The Strategy sets out an ambitious vision for the future of skills development in Fingal, empowering our citizens to reach their full potential and contribute to our vibrant and dynamic county. We look forward to continue working in partnership with our Skills Strategy stakeholders to ensure that we have the right people for the right jobs in Fingal.



AnnMarie Farrelly
Chief Executive, Fingal
County Council

Fingal has experienced substantial population and economic growth over the last number of years and we are home to a growing, young, diverse and highly-skilled population. As the first local authority in Ireland to develop a local Skills Strategy, Fingal has supported the development of a strong collaborative working relationship between industry and academia to address the existing and future skills needs in the county and ensure that Fingal is a prime location to invest and grow a business in with a strong pipeline of talent. Fingal's commitment to working with business and with academia is evident in the successes delivered in the first Skills Strategy, including the Xplore Your Future TY Expo, and that collaborative approach continues in this Strategy.

The development of a skills forecasting model is particularly welcome as it will provide labour market intelligence which will allow the Skills Strategy Implementation Group stakeholders to make strategic interventions in an ever-evolving global environment to address skills gaps in identified sectors and ensure that Fingal's local economy remains strong and resilient. This new Strategy advances delivery on the Council's commitments on key objectives outlined in the Council's Future Fingal: An Economic Development Strategy and the Fingal Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) and builds on learnings from the implementation of the original Fingal Skills Strategy and European best practices.

I would like to acknowledge the tremendous input of Siobhan Kinsella, former Chair of the Fingal Skills Strategy Implementation Group (SSIG) in driving the development of the original Strategy and her valuable insights and contributions in the implementation of that Strategy's recommendations. I also want to thank the current Co-Chairs of the Fingal SSIG Aidan Owens (DDLETB, Baldoyle Training Centre) as the Education Co-Chair and Frank Kilbride of Aramex as the Industry Co-Chair, both of whom have been key stakeholders in the implementation of the original Fingal Skills Strategy. I would also like to acknowledge Natasha Kinsella, Dublin Regional Skills Forum (DRSF) for her continuing valuable support of the Fingal Skills Strategy and Nora Condon of SLMRU in SOLAS for her key insights into Fingal's Skills Forecasting Model.



Aidan Owens
Fingal Skills Strategy,
Education Co-Chair

The Fingal Skills Strategy has been a collaborative process with stakeholders from the Council, education, training and business coming together to identify and address challenges in Fingal. The Group's success in implementing the recommendations of the first Strategy has built strong working relationships between stakeholders, allowing the advancement of objectives together in a way that would not be possible by any one stakeholder alone.

The new Strategy builds on that success and sets an ambitious shared vision for the future of skills development in Fingal, to ensure that Fingal has a skilled workforce to meet the demands of industry and business today and also anticipates the challenges of tomorrow. I look forward to continuing to work with our stakeholders to achieve our shared vision for Fingal and would like to take this opportunity to thank all the stakeholders for their input and for their commitment to and support of the Fingal Skills Strategy.



Frank Kilbride
Fingal Skills Strategy,
Industry Co-Chair

My journey with the Fingal Skills Strategy began through an introduction from the previous Chair, Siobhan Kinsella, who assured me that our involvement would be a worthwhile investment. As a business we try to prioritise meaningful projects and dedicating time and energy to the Fingal Skills Strategy has indeed proven to be exactly that. This initiative has provided a fantastic opportunity to support the future of our business, our employees, and the broader sector through collaboration with education and training providers, who have shown a strong commitment to preparing students for the workforce.

The Fingal Skills Strategy has also allowed us to give back to our community and to support the next generation to explore the many educational and career pathways available to them.

This strategy exemplifies proactive planning, and its implementation highlights the best of collaboration across different contributing groups. I encourage businesses from all sectors to engage with this new strategy, explore how education and training providers can support you, and see the benefits of collective effort. The Xplore Your Future Expo is a wonderful example of this collaboration in action.

My sincere thanks to all participants from business, industry, education, training, and Fingal County Council for their commitment and cooperation in developing and implementing the Fingal Skills Strategy. Your insights and support have been essential to our success, and I look forward to working together as we bring this new strategy to life.

KEY POLICIES

National and local policies and reports which will directly influence Fingal's Skills Strategy.

The Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of Ireland to the year 2040. The framework aims to create a single vision and shared set of goals for every community across the country. This includes the development of skills, talent, and innovation capacity as a priority to promote greater competitiveness and increase productivity.

**PROJECT IRELAND 2040
– NATIONAL PLANNING
FRAMEWORK**

**EASTERN AND MIDLAND
REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
REGIONAL SPATIAL &
ECONOMIC STRATEGY 2019
– 2031**

The strategy sets out the spatial and economic growth plans for the region between 2019 and 2031, covering infrastructure, education, housing, and balanced sustainable growth. It contains a regional strategic outcome to improve education and develop the right skills to attract employers, retain talent and promote social inclusion to ensure opportunities for quality jobs across the region.

The national employment services strategy sets out the overall framework for activation and employment support policy. It identifies a range of priorities including the need to increase the employment of under-represented groups; to respond to the twin challenges of digitalisation and the green transition; and the need for upskilling and reskilling and lifelong learning.

**PATHWAYS TO WORK
2021-2025**

**NATIONAL STRATEGY
ON EDUCATION
FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT TO 2030**

A framework to steer and support the contribution that the education sector makes towards a sustainable future by 2030. From early learning and care to third level education and research, it promotes and supports the development of the requisite skills, knowledge and attitudes for sustainable development. The strategy has a priority to transform learning environments and accelerate local level actions.

KEY SKILLS POLICIES & MEGATRENDS

The overarching framework to support Ireland's economic and societal growth between 2016 and 2025. Through its vision, actions and targets, the strategy supports the development of a well-educated, well-skilled and adaptable labour force, creating and sustaining a robust talent pool across all ages. The Strategy also places a strong emphasis on attracting Irish emigrants back to Ireland and outlines the challenges facing young people and SMEs in skills development.

IRELAND'S NATIONAL SKILLS STRATEGY 2025

CEDEFOP SKILLS FORECAST IRELAND (2024)

CEDEFOP's skills forecast for Ireland offers quantitative projections of future trends in employment by sector of economic activity and occupational group between 2022 and 2035. Future trends in the level of education of the population and the labour force are also estimated. It concludes that employment growth in Ireland over the period 2022-2035 is estimated to be 34,765, and that some 7.8% of employed people will be engaged in the high-tech economy.

THE OECD SKILLS STRATEGY IRELAND (2023)

A project to review Ireland's National Skills Strategy to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The Strategy highlights Ireland's position as 5th in the EU for innovation and a positive trend in engagement in life-long learning. The OECD identifies four priority areas for action and provides tailored recommendations for improving Ireland's skills outcomes – including an emphasis on digital skills, transversal skills and the potential for more collaboration between industry and education providers.

Fingal's Economic Development Strategy, published in 2024, outlines a 15-year vision for the local economy. It identifies opportunities, objectives, and actions to achieve the vision for Fingal's economy to be "dynamic, sustainable and inclusive, enabled by strong infrastructure, collaboration and skills". Skills were identified as a key opportunity, given labour and skills availability were found to be two of the biggest challenges to economic development. To address this, the following four objectives were identified: 1. Labour Market Intelligence (to compile up to date records of skills needs); 2. Ensure Appropriate Labour Supply (through partnerships and re-skilling programmes); 3. Skill Up for the Future (by facilitating the development of skills); and 4. Infrastructure (supporting the development of further and higher education infrastructure in Fingal).

FUTURE FINGAL: AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (2024)

In 2024, the EGFSN carried out research, analysis and horizon scanning in relation to emerging skills requirements for sectors including Biopharma, Financial Services and Construction, providing a detailed assessment of current and future skill requirements and projections of the scale and nature of future needs.

THE EXPERT GROUP ON FUTURE SKILLS NEEDS (EGFSN) – SECTOR SKILLS REPORTS (2024)

FINGAL'S LOCAL ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY PLAN (LECP) 2023 – 2028

The plan sets out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic community development of Fingal. The LECP is built around six core themes: Sustainability & Climate Action; Prosperous Economy; Skills for Life & Work; Healthy, Inclusive, Connected Communities; Rich Arts, Culture & Heritage; and Safe, Accessible, Vibrant Places. Under each theme, a series of high-level goals have been derived including: Removing barriers to labour market participation; Stimulating a culture of life-long learning; and Supporting skills development to meet the diverse needs of communities and businesses.

MONITORING IRELAND'S SKILLS SUPPLY, SOLAS (2023)

Produced by the SLMRU, the report is aimed at monitoring the potential supply of skills to the labour market from Ireland's education and training system. By providing an analysis of the skills profile of Ireland's adult population, the report aims to highlight how the State's education and training can contribute to meeting the skills needs of the economy.

A strategic framework for action, the plan sets out the strategic priorities and objectives for achieving the Council's vision for Fingal to be 'a great place to live, work, visit and do business'. It is based around 4 strategic themes of Quality of life; Quality and climate resilient environment; Quality business environment; and Quality in our work. As part of its strategic priority to promote and enable sustainable economic growth, the plan identified the fostering of collaborative leadership in the development of future skills in the county. Further, it aims to support the performance, innovation, competitiveness, productivity and success of business in Fingal.

FINGAL'S COUNTY COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2019 - 2024

The first National Further Education & Training (FET) Strategy for the green transition. Developed by SOLAS and launched in 2024, it identifies critical green skills gaps and ways in which FET can equip learners. Building upon the Green Skills for FET 2021-2030 roadmap, it sets out five strategic priorities including: Increasing awareness of FET programmes and green skills provision; Promoting career opportunities arising from the green transition; Integrating green skills and transversal competences content into all FET programmes; Developing cross-sectoral green compliance, disclosure, and reporting skills; and Supporting FET green skills programmes' design and delivery.

GREEN SKILLS 2030

MEGATRENDS

Global thematic ‘megatrends’ which are forecasted to have a significant impact on skills requirements and are of the greatest relevance to Fingal’s future economy.

TRANSVERSAL SKILLS*

Transversal skills, the versatile abilities which enable individuals to effectively navigate various tasks and job roles, are rising in prominence globally. Problem solving, collaboration, creative thinking, and digital learning are fast becoming essential for employees to navigate dynamic environments and act competently on both cognitive and non-cognitive levels. As the economy evolves rapidly due to factors such as sustainability, automation and AI, there is a need to ensure transversal skills are embedded in Fingal’s labour force.



PLACEMAKING

Placemaking, the multi-faceted approach to creating quality places, directly supports economic success by developing environments where people want to live and work. Fingal’s uniquely attractive location to reside, work and invest will be directly influential in attracting and retaining talent over the coming years.



MIGRATION

The Irish labour market is highly open to international migration flows, making labour supply more responsive to cyclical conditions. Immigration, emigration and return migration will all have an impact on Fingal’s future skills base.



DIGITAL SKILLS

Digital transformation is reshaping Ireland’s economy, with related skills becoming essential for increasingly complex and interconnected societies. To keep pace with technological advancements, basic and high-level digital skills will be required in Fingal.



GREEN SKILLS

Green skills are crucial to addressing climate change and limiting global warming, loss of biodiversity, and pollution. Employment in the green economy in Fingal will become more significant over the coming years, with specialist jobs arising in sectors impacted by climate change adaptation. Embedding green skills across all sectors in Fingal will be required to support in meeting climate goals.



AGEING POPULATION

In Ireland, the number of people of retirement age (age 65+) will increase to 1.4 million by 2045. A concurrent decrease in the population aged 20-64 will result in fewer working-age individuals, and may result in related skills shortages.



GLOBALISATION

To maintain and build a local employment base in a globalised world, Fingal needs to consider firms’ and industries’ positions in the global value chain and their specific needs with regards to the skills of the local workforce.

*Note: Transversal skills are defined by UNESCO as those typically considered as not specifically related to a particular job, task, academic discipline or area of knowledge but as skills that can be used in a wide variety of situations and work settings.

SKILLS IN FINGAL

FINGAL'S SKILLS SUCCESSES & LEARNINGS

In 2015, Fingal County Council adopted its Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) for the 2016 – 2020 period. A key objective was to create a Skills Strategy for the county, with a view to fostering further economic growth. As a result, in 2019 the Council published its Skills Strategy for the period to 2023. The document identified key sectors and potential skills shortages which were forecasted to develop in Fingal, and presented related actions to be taken in partnership with industry and the education and training sector. However, Covid-19 disrupted implementation and brought changes to local skills needs – for example, in accelerating the use of digital technologies. In acknowledgement of this, the Fingal Skills Strategy Implementation Group (SSIG) re-convened in 2021 to review developments in key sectors, reorient the Strategy's recommendations in light of the new post-Covid environment, and drive activities to facilitate skills development and awareness of opportunities post-pandemic, many of which remain relevant today.

To inform the next iteration of Fingal's Skills Strategy, a review of the 2019 – 2023 document was undertaken. This consisted of consultations with key stakeholders who were involved in its development and/or implementation to generate 'lessons learned'. Overall, feedback received on the 2019 – 2023 Strategy was positive, with many stakeholders identifying clear areas of success. Successful stakeholder engagement – bringing together Government, industry, and education providers – was central in this regard. Fostering engagement and further building upon and growing such effective, collaborative relationships remains to the fore in terms of the 2024 – 2029 Strategy.

Further elements of the previous Skills Strategy which were deemed successful included:

- The SSIG and the collaborative efforts of all parties involved in driving action;
- The establishment of Sector Skills Groups;
- Successful collaborations with DRSF, DDLETB, CDET, DCU, TU Dublin, Skillnet and Local Enterprise Office;
- Participation in the OECD consultation process for the Skills Strategy Ireland report (2023);

- Programme development as an outcome of employer engagement;
- The Skills Portal established on the Council website as a one-stop-shop information source;
- Raising awareness of state funded provisions;
- Events, such as Xplore Your Future Expo at the Helix, and the Pavilion Shopping Centre apprenticeship animation;
- Connections built within the education and training skills eco-system in the wider Dublin region;
- Engagement with schools to understand their wants and needs for skills development;
- Accessing EU Funding Programmes, notably participation in the Interreg Project SKYLA; and
- Exchange of best practice with European Partners as part of the Interreg Project SKYLA with inspiration and knowledge exchange between partners.

While recognising the success of the 2019 – 2023 Strategy, stakeholders did note areas of challenge aside from the Covid-19 pandemic and provided recommendations for future iterations, including:

- A more succinct strategy document;
- More granular and regularly reviewed data, and not just baseline information;
- More focused, measurable and achievable actions; and
- Improved monitoring and reporting structures.

Fingal County Council remains committed to growing the skills of the local workforce, building upon the success to-date, and utilising these learnings to inform its actions for the period 2024-2029.

Residents of Fingal are currently served by multiple education and training providers, based both in the county and in close proximity. Associated infrastructure has expanded in recent years, with a number of notable examples, each of which has strengthened the availability of facilities and courses in the wider region.

SKYLA: BEST PRACTICE & LEARNINGS

Fingal County Council has participated in the Interreg Project SKYLA to better inform its skills interventions in the area of Smart Specialisation Skills Ecosystems for the Twin Transition, through the sharing of best practice and learnings with European partners.

To build on the successes of its previous Skills Strategy and support its local economy, Fingal County Council has ambitious plans to:

- Further develop its skills pipeline in identified key sectors of the local economy and in particular focus on skills development for the ‘twin transition’;
- Grow participation in the Fingal Skills Strategy and key sectors for the local economy;
- Increase awareness amongst employers, employees, students and citizens of available skills supports and provisions; and
- Embed a culture of life-long learning in Fingal.

To assist in achieving these objectives, and in recognition of the rapidly changing landscape which is impacting skills – including the emergence of the ‘twin transition’ – the Council has participated in the Interreg Project SKYLA since 2023 to inform the development of Future Fingal: Fingal Skills Strategy and gain best practices, solutions and policy learnings from exchanges with its European partners – ultimately for inspiration and transferability for new initiatives to trial in Fingal.

Funded under the Interreg Europe programme, SKYLA consists of a consortium of 13 regional partners, including organisations from Italy, Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Greece, Belgium, Ukraine and Montenegro. SKYLA seeks to cultivate a smart specialisation skills ecosystem for the ‘twin transition’, with an overall objective to put future skills at the centre of the transition to develop smarter, more sustainable economies. SKYLA aims to achieve this objective by boosting and adapting the role of vocational education and training (VET) in innovation ecosystems and smart specialisation strategies.

Improving provision and access to learning are important elements in developing Fingal’s skills profile to meet current and future demands. The Council recognises the value and importance of best practice and knowledge exchange between its European partners and the Council and the SSIG stakeholders including DRSF, DDLETB, CDET, Fingal Chamber and Fingal Local Enterprise Office (Fingal LEO).

Through participation in SKYLA, the Council and the SSIG stakeholders have identified the following good practices in Fingal which have been shared with SKYLA partners for transfer and adaption to meet needs in the partner cities and regions:

1. **‘Spotlight on Skills’**, a good practice of Enterprise Ireland and DRSF involving skills audits of businesses.
2. **Training Courses in Electric Vehicles - Awards in Electric/Hybrid Vehicles Awareness**, a good practice of DDLETB in Baldoyle Training Centre which showcases the evolution of skills provision to industrial needs in the car industry.
3. **‘STInt’ STEM Teacher Internship Programme**, a good practice developed by DCU to provide leadership in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education. It also influences STEM teaching and learning in Irish schools by providing STEM teachers with summer internships in relevant roles, thus enabling them to go on to influence students across their careers. This good practice has scaled up since inception in 2016 and now involves 7 universities.



From among the good practices put forward by the Interreg Project SKYLA partners, the Council has particularly identified the following which have informed the development of objectives and actions of this iteration of the Fingal Skills Strategy:

- Through the gap analysis conducted as part of the **SKYLA Project methodology**, the Council identified a common challenge with partners in skills forecasting. This challenge inspired the development of a labour intelligence model to identify existing and potential future skills gaps in Fingal. This intelligence can inform the adaption of existing training provision and the development of new provision in response to industry/business demand.

- The Council identified a further challenge in raising awareness of educational opportunities in apprenticeships, FET (Further Education & Training) & VET (Vocational Education & Training) with students at secondary level and with their parents and teachers. The good practice presented by Skane, Sweden in **‘AMK, Arbetsmarknadskunskap’** which communicates labour market insights for youngsters, is informing the Council’s approach under Theme 2 of the Fingal Skills Strategy regarding engagement with secondary school students in Fingal and how insights from its newly developed labour intelligence model can be disseminated.

- The **'Visioners Academy'** good practice of **Sofia, Bulgaria** is an initiative of the Sports & Youth Activities Directorate at Sofia Municipality which empowers young people to create innovative community projects across thematic areas. This good practice has inspired a new initiative being implemented under the Fingal Skills Strategy in 2024, the Xplore Your Future Competition. Sofia's good practice animates students in a competition to explore innovative projects in certain themes such as Science & Innovation and Environmental Protection. The Council has identified a challenge with encouraging young people to choose to work in certain sectors i.e. Construction and Transport & Logistics. Using this good practice as inspiration, it is exploring an opportunity to encourage young people into careers in these sectors by sparking their interest and knowledge through a competition in which students market careers in that sector to their peers. Elements of Sofia's 'Technological School of Electronic Systems (TUES) at the Technical University', such as the involvement of graduates in specific sectors and industry involvement, may also have value in the further development of the Council's Xplore Your Future Competition and wider engagement with schools under Theme 2 of the Fingal Skills Strategy.
- **Podlaskie's** good practice **'Patronage Class Kan'** involves industry supporting education provision in a specific sector, providing practical weekly classes to students. The Council aims to further explore the transferability of this good practice with the support and involvement of sectoral stakeholders in Fingal. It will include a focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) education under Theme 2 of the Fingal Skills Strategy, engagement with schools on future education/training provision and career pathways and will explore with stakeholders opportunities to deliver future career pathway knowledge and work experience opportunities in schools in Fingal.
- **Skane, Sweden** shared a good practice called **'Mind the Gap'** which is a skills identification tool to identify and analyse existing and future skills gaps in partnership with industry/business. Skane's good practice raises awareness of reskilling and life-long learning opportunities and broadens participation of industry in the skills ecosystem. This good practice mirrors the EI/DRSF 'Spotlight on Skills' good practice which Fingal County Council put forward to partners. The Council and its stakeholders are exploring opportunities for the continuous improvement of both processes through knowledge exchange with Skane.
- **Lithuania's 'Initial VET programme modules for basic and secondary education pupils'** good practice has potential to inform the Fingal Skills Strategy stakeholders' approach to raising awareness and visibility of apprenticeships/ VET/FET opportunities. The good practice offers opportunities for students to trial flexible modules of training and encourages students into professions where there is existing and forecasted future demand. The Council hopes to further explore the potential transferability of this good practice with sectoral industry stakeholders and with education/training providers under Theme 2 of the Fingal Skills Strategy.
- **Tuscany's DIDACTA Fair** good practice demonstrates the value of bringing business, entrepreneurs, innovators, education/training providers and students together for debate and exchange on education which raises awareness of provision and future potential career paths, and facilitates open dialogue and feedback between participants to improve provision. This good practice has informed the inclusion of an action under Theme 1 of the Skills Strategy to host an annual skills summit to highlight key initiatives, facilitate feedback to education/training providers and build participation between business, entrepreneurs, innovators and education/training providers in the skills ecosystem in Fingal.
- The Council aims to explore the potential under Theme 4 of the Skills Strategy for the development of an assured skills programme to encompass academies, apprenticeships and traineeships for clusters with significant need. This action mirrors the good practice put forward by **Tuscany's 'Regional System of ITS Academies'** which identifies and analyses skills gaps and future demands, adapting provision in response to industry needs and increasing the relevance of skills provision through collaboration between industry and education/training providers. The Council hopes to gather best practice knowledge from this case study to inform the development of this action in the Fingal Skills Strategy.
- The Council aims under Theme 5 of the Fingal Skills Strategy to promote and enhance in-work progression through upskilling and reskilling, including micro-credentials and micro-qualifications. This aligns with the OECD Skills Strategy Ireland (2023) report which encourages life-long learning and the Council aims to increase awareness of provision to encourage upskilling and reskilling within the existing workforce to respond in a flexible way to evolving industry needs. The Council shall consider how to incorporate best practice learnings from **Lithuania's 'KURSUOK (Take a Course)'** which approaches life-long learning opportunities in a cohesive way and provides access and information on provision through a digital platform, in the re-development of the Fingal Skills Hub, which is an action under Theme 2.

Fingal County Council will continue to actively participate in and contribute to SKYLA and the advancement of project objectives in the area of Smart Specialisation Skills Ecosystems for the Twin Transition. The Council will continue to work collaboratively with SSIG stakeholders and European Partners on good practice exchanges and transfers, and the implementation of new initiatives in Fingal throughout the duration of the project. It also commits to the continuous improvement of the Fingal Skills Strategy and the implementation of the Strategy's actions.



FINGAL'S SKILLS LANDSCAPE

Fingal's strategic location, major economic assets and strengths, and key sectors with the potential for further development – along with a population which is young, educated and diverse – position the county to excel over the coming years. Skills development will be a key enabler in this regard, and the 2024-2029 Future Fingal: Fingal Skills Strategy will guide this, with emphases on both the demand (expansion and replacement) and supply side of labour and skills availability in the county.

The Strategy will provide recommendations for targeted supports for future skills development in the county. To accurately inform this iteration, it is imperative to assess the skills landscape in Fingal at present. This section of the report will utilise relevant data, consultation and survey findings and the skills gap model to present the current skills landscape, and to assess the skills need over the next 5 years.

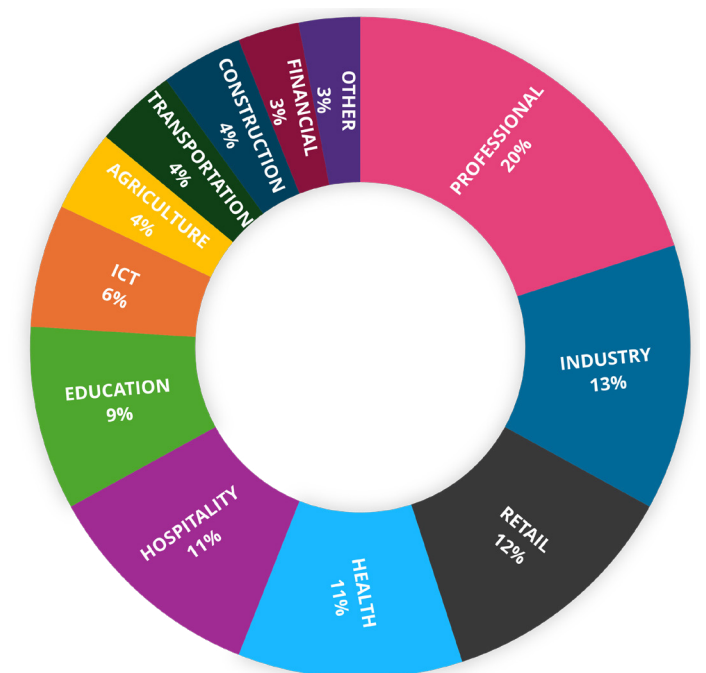
Both qualitative and quantitative information has been analysed to address the following areas:

- Existing and expected skills demand and supply, including considerations of established and emerging sectors' needs;
- Existing education and training options available in Fingal and its surrounding counties;
- Skills development and training models, and the most appropriate options for Fingal;

- Policy and public spending priorities to support future skills development;
- Preparing for the 'twin transition' via digital and green skills development;
- Identification of partnership/collaborative delivery opportunities for the development of programmes/initiatives to grow the local skills base, including those related to economic clusters in Fingal;
- Key strategy components for skills development; and
- General views on the current and future position of Fingal in terms of skills availability and development opportunities.

Fingal has a diverse range of sectoral employment which has also been analysed to gain a further understanding into the local skills landscape.

A BREAKDOWN OF SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT IN FINGAL COUNTY



Note: Professional includes NACE industries of Professional, scientific and technical activities; Administrative and support service activities; and Public administration and defence, compulsory social security. Financial includes real estate.

FINGAL SKILLS 2030

FINGAL'S SKILLS LANDSCAPE

LABOUR FORCE

- Fingal has a labour force participation rate of 65.6%, compared to the national average of 56.1%.
- The highest level of engagement is amongst those aged 25 to 34 years, with 88.3% of this cohort in the labour force.

EDUCATION

- 26.7% of the population are educated to primary/secondary level.
- 6% are educated to vocational level and 4.2% have an advanced certificate or have completed an apprenticeship.
- 31% are educated to degree level and further.

SKILLS

- 27% of the population are employed as professional workers (employers, higher professional and lower professional).
- 40% are employed as non-manual workers.
- 12% are considered skilled workers and 2% unskilled.

POPULATION

- Fingal has a population of 330,506 in almost 108,000 households.
- It is the third fastest growing county in Ireland, recording an 11.6% increase in its population between 2016 and 2022.
- It has a working-age population of 256,458.

EMPLOYMENT

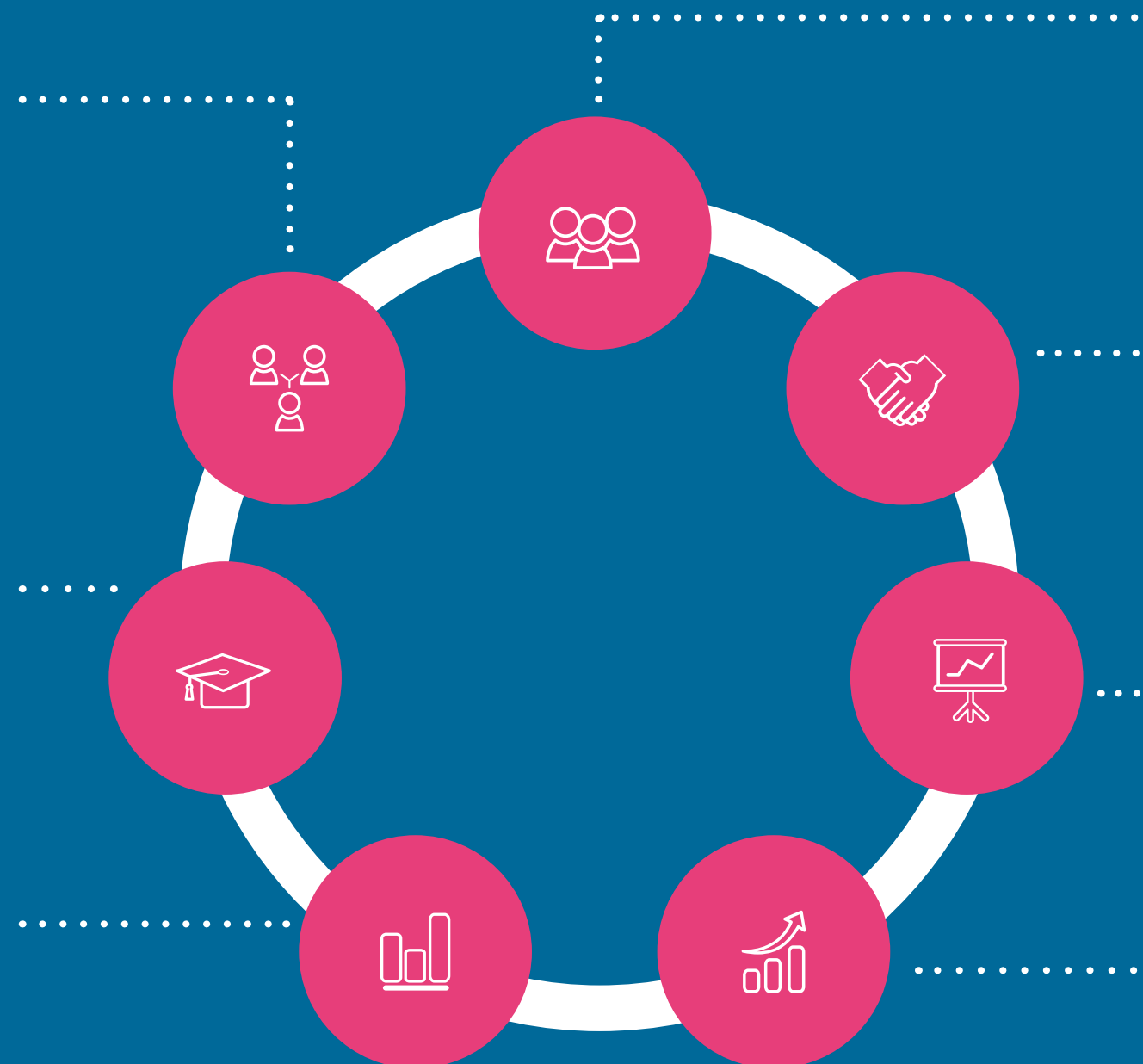
- There are 155,063 people in employment in the county.
- The number of unemployed people is 13,050, equating to 5.1% of the population aged 15 and over. This is in line with the national rate but lower than Dublin City's rate of 5.8%.

ECONOMIC STRENGTHS

- Dominant sectors include Agri-Food, ICT, Pharmaceuticals, and Transport & Storage.

BIGGEST SECTOR BY EMPLOYMENT

- Professional Services, which is made up of Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, Financial Services and Information & Communication, accounts for 22% of local employment.



Note: Data has been sourced from the CSO Census 2022 except for Largest Sector by Employment which has been sourced from Grant Thornton's Skills Gap Model.

KEY CONSULTATION & SURVEY FINDINGS

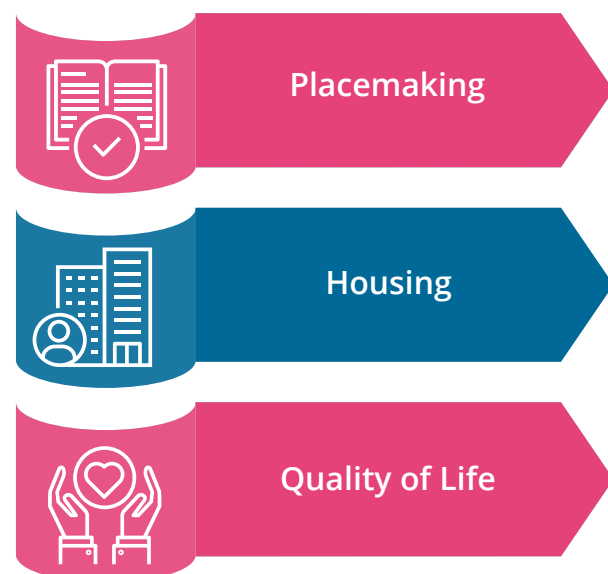
As part of the consultation process for Future Fingal: Fingal Skills Strategy, 24 stakeholders were engaged in one-to-one and group consultations. These stakeholders were from diverse backgrounds including:

- Local Government;
- Private sector companies;
- Education providers;
- Representative and trade union groups; and
- State bodies.

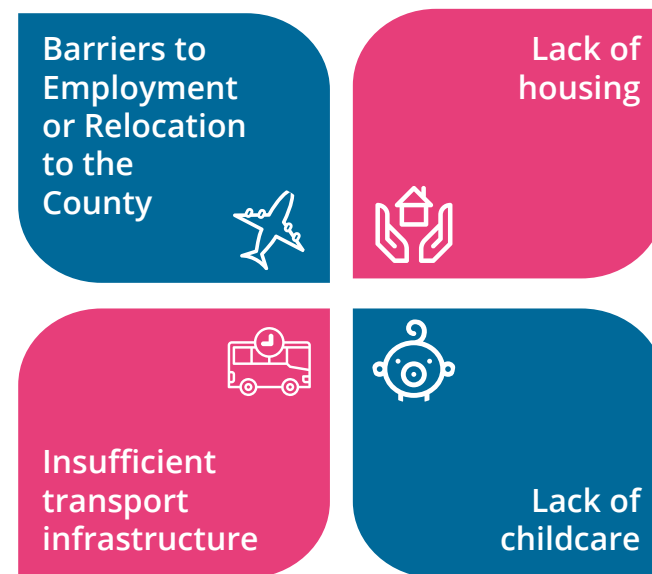
The consultation process sought to identify skills demands, the local skills pipeline, and potential means to expand and develop Fingal's talent pool. A summary of key findings is contained below.

Overall, there was consensus between all stakeholders that a Skills Strategy is critical for the county, with several sectors – including ICT, Pharmaceuticals, Transport and Agri-Food – identified as having a strong existing local skills base.

Stakeholders noted that attracting talent is firstly centred around:



Stakeholders further noted there were barriers to accessing skills, with these obstacles limiting opportunities for employment and/or relocation to the county.



Specific cohorts of businesses and residents in need of support were also highlighted by stakeholders, and are specifically targeted in this Strategy. These include:

- SMEs who require support with their talent management capabilities, upskilling & training, and planning for future skills; and
- Migrants and groups outside of the labour force who face obstacles in accessing employment.

Skills Demand & Gap

- Key sectors identified with notable demands and gaps included Agri-food, Education, Construction, Digital and Technology, Hospitality, Fintech, Life Sciences, Logistics, and Retail.
- There is a lack of transversal skills including people skills; communication; leadership & management; problem solving; and critical thinking.
- There is a need for green skills to be embedded across sectors.

Upskilling & Lifelong learning

- Enterprises need support from DRSF and Enterprise Ireland to map their skills needs and identify steps to build for the future.
- Digital upskilling is required across all industries to keep pace with technological advancements.
- Micro credentials* and hybrid and flexible learning are key for upskilling.
- Upskilling in transversal skills is critical, e.g. management and leadership training.

Training Models

- Focus on early-stage careers and how to acquire specific skillsets.
- Apprenticeships and traineeships are key, but the delivery model needs re-assessing and better promotion.
- A 'Learn and Work' model comprising fact-based teaching and practical learning has been proven to balance the needs of industry with the outputs of the education system.
- Hybrid, flexible learning and course adaptability are vital.

Future Skills

- There is a challenge in forecasting future skills.
- Enterprises and education/training providers need to be able to pivot quickly, be adaptive and agile.
- The ability to transition from one skillset to another within the same sector is required.
- Specific future skills areas identified include: Green; Basic digital literacy; Technology; Construction; Agri-food; and Innovation & Entrepreneurial skills.

Infrastructure

- A centralised system of information on providers, courses, supports to enter the labour force, reskill, upskill, and available grants is required due to a current lack of awareness and alignment and the complexity of the skills ecosystem.
- There is a notable funding gap in the higher education sector.
- Gaps in further education infrastructure and provisions were identified.
- Education providers need to be matched with employers and residents to deliver targeted training.

Collaboration

- Collaboration and engagement are essential across all parties including Government, industry and education & training providers including Fingal County Council, DRSF and the SSIG.
- Fostering stronger links between enterprises and education/training providers is imperative in identifying skills needs.
- Cooperation across the four Dublin Local Authorities and advancing cross-border initiatives would be beneficial.
- There is a need for more training grants.

*Note: Micro-credentials are defined as short courses that provide recognition of skills, knowledge, and experience gained in a specific subject area and provide credit in the form of ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits which are recognised all over the world.

SKILLS FORECASTING MODEL METHODOLOGY

Drawing from national sources such as the SOLAS SLMRU's National Skills Bulletin, and the EU's CEDEFOP, a comprehensive demand and supply skills gap model has been developed for Fingal. The model provides an understanding of projected skills gaps within the Fingal economy for the years 2024 – 2029.

Forecasts of skills gaps across the county consider Fingal's priority sectors of:



The Health and Education sectors have also been included based upon their specific skills needs, Ireland's ageing population, and the increased level of Government funding which is expected to flow to both sectors.

The model can be emulated and reapplied to allow for updates and reassessment as required.

Further to the consultation process, a survey was disseminated to organisations in Fingal to assess the local skills landscape. A total of 31 respondents completed the survey. Respondents were spread across geographic areas, industries, the public and private sectors, and were from organisations of different sizes – from sole traders to companies with thousands of employees.

While the small sample size is of note, the following key findings were identified:

- Specialist skills or knowledge, creative and innovative thinking, and solving complex problems were the top three technical and practical skills lacking among applicants/employees.
- Self-management, management/ leadership, and sales and customer skills were the top three people and personal skills lacking among applicants/ employees.

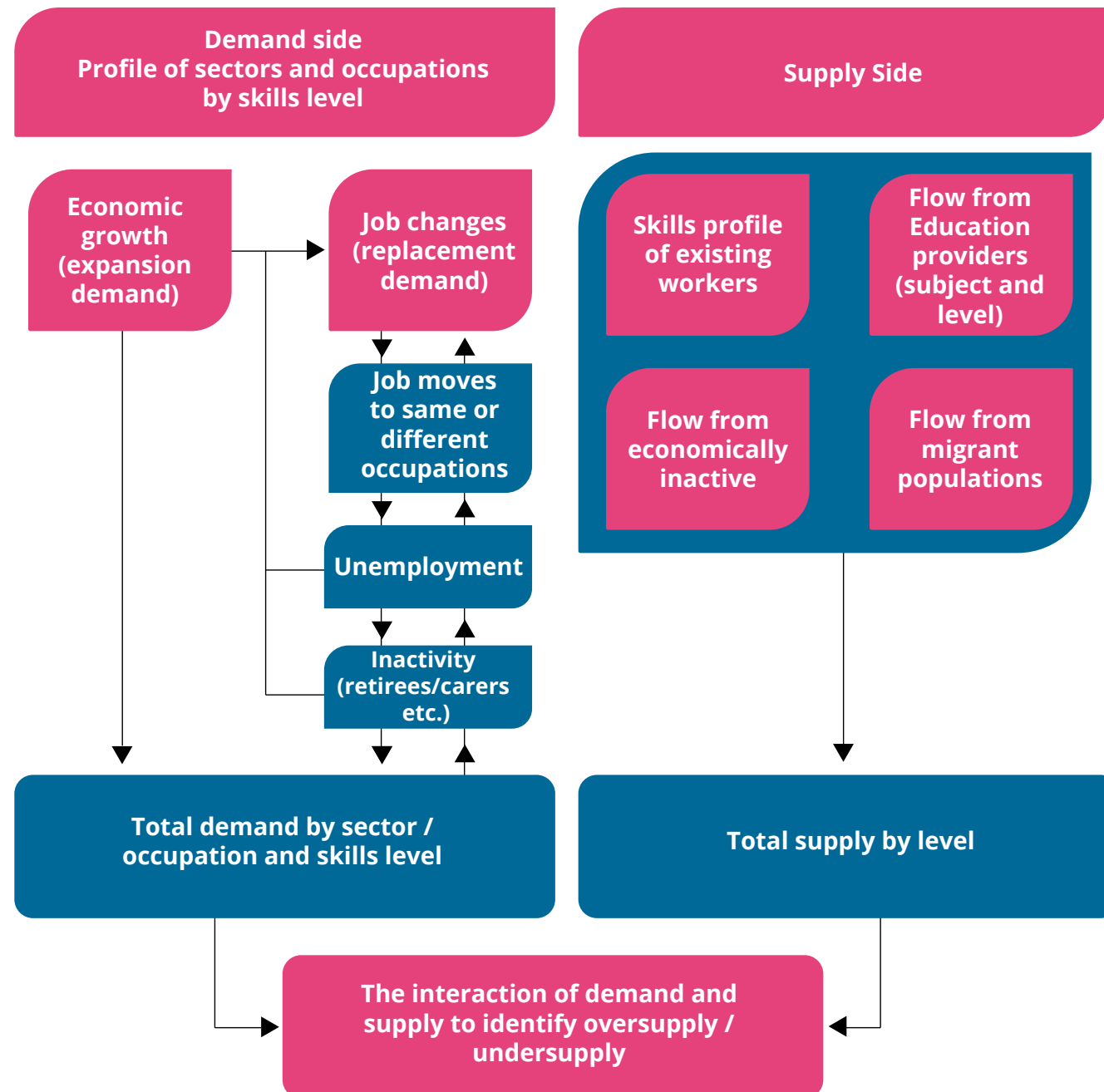
- Meta-skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, communication & leadership; relevant work experience including apprenticeships, and relevant vocational qualifications are critical factors for employers when recruiting.
- Managers and professionals were the top two occupations cited as being most affected by the need for upskilling. The main needs for upskilling were related to the introduction of new technology, new legislative or regulatory requirements, and green/sustainability knowledge/skills.
- The top three areas of focus for the strategy were as follows: Delivering life-long learning, skills and employability courses; increasing the range of apprenticeships and micro-credential courses available; and increasing accessibility to the labour market (i.e. addressing barriers to employment such as childcare and transport issues).

Methodology

To model Fingal’s forecasted net skills requirement to 2029, the model – depicted in Figure 1 – consists of the two key elements associated with the pipeline: skills demand and skills supply.

Details on the methodology and main assumptions adopted are outlined below.

FIGURE 1: GRANT THORNTON SKILLS FORECAST MODEL METHODOLOGY



SKILLS FORECASTING MODEL METHODOLOGY

Skills Demand

The skills demand element of the model represents the overall need for skills within Fingal’s economy by occupation and sector. This accounts for both:

- Expansion demand; and
- Replacement demand.

Each of these represents differing aspects of skills needs. Expansion demand highlights the expected growth path of each sector over the coming years. More specifically, expansion demand reflects forecasted new jobs which will be created.

The replacement demand element represents skills needs arising from retirements, job/occupation changes, and labour market leavers to unemployment/inactivity/migration. In effect, this sub-element reflects a sector’s skills needs/demand in order to ‘stand still’ and maintain operations in the face of employees’ movements.

Taking these two sub-elements together provides us with a complete understanding of forecasted skills needs by sector/occupation across Fingal.

Skills Supply

To complete the gap model, skills supply was forecasted. This consisted of assessments of two key elements:

1. The current skills stock within the Fingal labour market; and
2. Forecasted future changes in the available skills stock.

To assess the former, the current profile of skills across each sector and occupation in Fingal was analysed. This focused on reviewing the existing skills stock within the resident population of the county, and was based on Census data, including highest qualification level and those still in education.

With regards to forecasted changes in the available skills stock, estimates were derived based on:

- Population and migration projections from the CSO; and
- Future skills flows from the education and training system. These are dominated by university and FET graduates, but also include:
 - Those emerging from primary and secondary education;
 - Those who are already in the labour market, but undertake continued education and training to improve their skillsets;
 - Those emerging from VET; and
 - Those emerging from Apprenticeships.

Taken together, this supply side assessment provides estimates of the current skills stock within the labour market, and forecasted future changes in same – split by sector and occupation.

Total Supply/Demand Interaction (Net Requirement)

Combining the skills demand and supply forecasts provides an overview of the extent to which a sector or occupation is expected to be in a skills deficit (or not) up to 2029.

SKILLS DEMAND

The assessment of expansion demand by sector across Fingal – based upon sectoral trends – is key to understanding skills requirements in the county.

A top-down model has been developed, and utilises national employment forecasts from which estimates for Fingal have been derived.

Expansion demand was firstly forecasted at a national level using an aggregated range of employment forecasts from the Central Bank of Ireland, Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), Department of Finance, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – as captured in Table 1.

TABLE 1: EMPLOYMENT GROWTH (%) PROJECTIONS

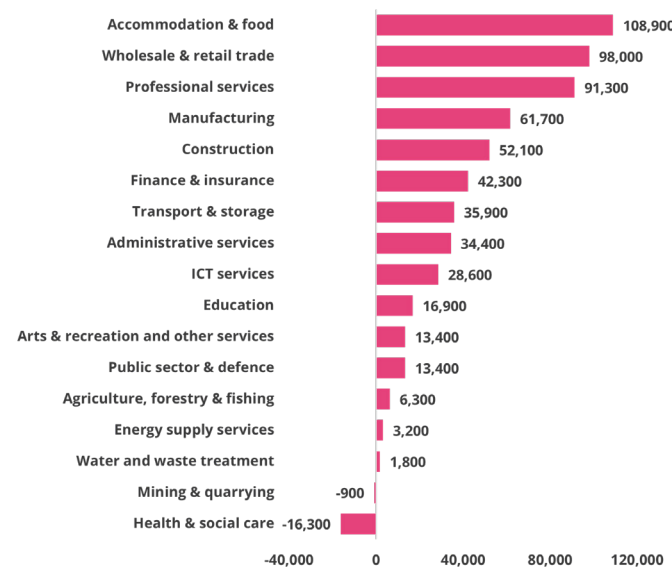
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
IMF		3.4%	1.5%	1.0%	
ESRI			1.8%	0.4%	
Central Bank of Ireland		3.4%	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%
Department of Finance	6.6%	3.4%	1.3%	1.3%	1.4%
Average Growth	6.6%	3.4%	1.5%	1.0%	1.5%

Sources: IMF World Economic Outlook Database (April 2024), ESRI Quarterly Economic Commentary (Summer 2024), Central Bank of Ireland (Quarterly Bulletin June 2024) and Department of Finance (2023).

It should be noted that these institutions do not provide employment forecasts to 2029. The model hence assumes that employment in Ireland between 2027 and 2029 will grow at 1.9% per annum (the average annual growth rate recorded between 1998 and 2022).

To provide sectoral variations on expansion demand, CEDEFOP industry projections for Ireland from 2022 to 2035 have been used. These projections, depicted in Figure 2, provide a basis for forecasted sectoral changes in the country, and reflect factors including future sectoral trends and wider global developments.

FIGURE 2: CEDEFOP SECTORAL FORECASTS OF TOTAL ADDITIONAL JOB CREATION, IRELAND, 2022-2035



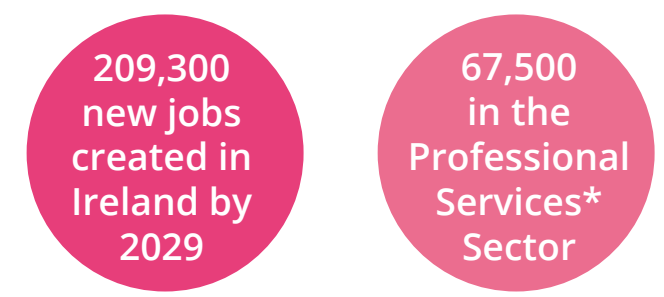
Sources: CEDEFOP Skills Intelligence (2024).

SKILLS MODEL ADJUSTMENT RATIONALE

It should be noted that adjustments have been made to certain sectoral forecasts, including:

- Health & Social Care as CEDEFOP has forecasted a decline in employment in the sector to 2035. This does not reflect current needs or expectations for the sector, especially given the increasing age profile in Ireland which is expected to drive strong demand for care. Forecasts for the sector were thus adjusted to reflect growth in the years to 2035.
- Education where more significant employment growth is forecasted given both expected increases in demand for education places, and Government plans to invest in the sector.
- Accommodation & Food which have yet to recover to pre-pandemic employment levels. Stronger growth is hence forecasted.
- Wholesale & Retail which will be susceptible to technological advancements. Growth forecasts have thus been revised downwards from the levels projected by CEDEFOP.
- ICT services to reflect a stronger basis of growth due to growing demand for developers, data analysts and those proficient in AI.

Based on these adjustments, expansion demand by sector in Ireland and Fingal for the period 2024-2029 is depicted in Table 2.



Using the national forecasts as a basis, estimates of the expansion demand by sector for Fingal have been derived based upon employment concentrations.

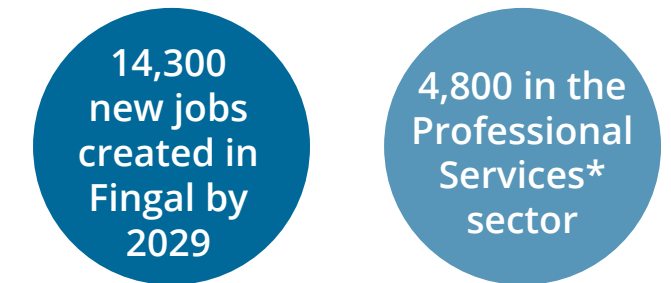


TABLE 2: EXPANSION DEMAND, IRELAND & FINGAL, 2024-2029

	Ireland	Fingal
Professional, scientific and technical activities (M)	28,200	2,500
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G)	27,700	1,700
Accommodation and food service activities (I)	13,400	1,700
Human health and social work activities (Q)	28,100	1,600
Education (P)	19,100	1,400
Industry (B to E)	18,000	1,200
Transportation and storage (H)	12,900	900
Information and communication (J)	13,700	900
Administrative and support service activities (N)	12,400	900
Construction (F)	18,100	800
Financial, insurance and real estate activities (K,L)	13,200	500
Other NACE activities (R to U)	4,100	200
Public administration and defence, compulsory social security (O)	800	100
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (A)	300	0
Not stated	-700	0
All NACE economic sectors	209,300	14,300

Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model.

*Note: Professional Services sector combines Professional, scientific and technical services; Administration and support services; Information and communication; and Finance, insurance and real estate. Total values may not equate to the sum of the individual columns due to rounding.

REPLACEMENT DEMAND

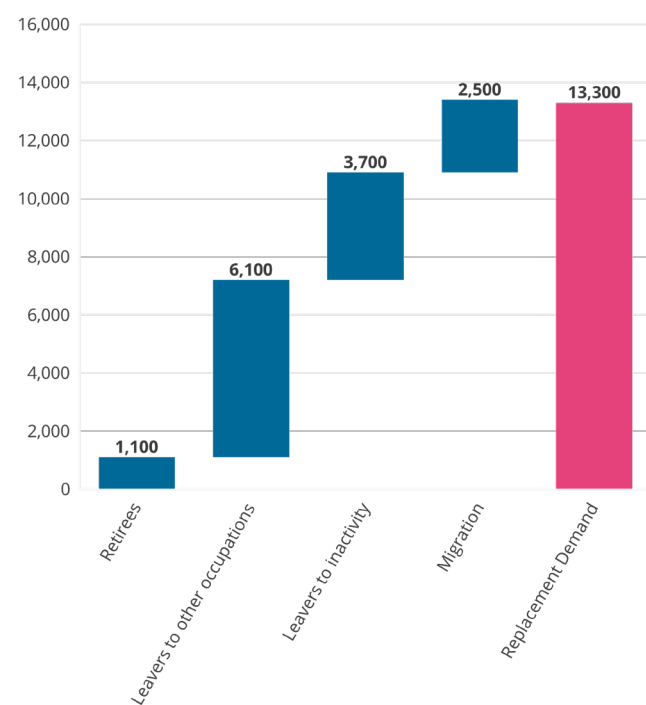
With regards to replacement demand, forecasts have been developed based on workers’ propensities to:

1. Change occupation;
2. Move job;
3. Retire; or
4. Leave the labour market (i.e. through migration, or transitioning to unemployment/ economic inactivity).

These propensities are based on the analysis of data related to individuals’ current employment status relative to the previous year.

A replacement demand of 13,300 jobs per annum has been forecasted for Fingal for the years to 2029, with a full breakdown by sector contained in Table 3.

FIGURE 3: REPLACEMENT DEMAND (ANNUAL AVERAGE), FINGAL, 2024-2029



Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model

Note: Total values may not equate to the sum of the individual columns due to rounding.

TABLE 3: REPLACEMENT DEMAND (ANNUAL AVERAGE), FINGAL, 2024-2029

	Retirees	Leavers to Other Occupations	Leavers to Unemployment/ Inactive	Leavers to Migration	Replacement Demand
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G)	100	1,000	600	300	2,000
Industry (B to E)	100	800	500	300	1,700
Human health and social work activities (Q)	100	500	400	300	1,400
Education (P)	100	400	300	200	1,000
Professional, scientific and technical activities (M)	100	400	200	200	900
Accommodation and food service activities (I)	100	400	300	100	900
Public administration and defence, compulsory social security (O)	100	400	200	100	800
Financial, insurance and real estate activities (K,L)	100	400	200	100	800
Information and communication (J)	100	400	200	100	800
Construction (F)	100	300	200	100	700
Other NACE activities (R to U)	0	300	200	100	600
Administrative and support service activities (N)	0	300	200	100	600
Transportation and storage (H)	100	300	200	100	600
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (A)	0	100	100	100	400
Not stated	0	100	100	0	200
All NACE economic sectors	1,100	6,100	3,700	2,500	13,300

Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model.

SKILLS DEMAND

The supply side of the gap model presents the current and forecasted future level of available skills in Fingal.

With regards to the current stock of available skills, estimates are based on data from the 2022, 2016 and 2011 censuses.

The estimated future skills pipeline for Fingal is based on forecasts which were informed by:

1. Population and migration projections from the CSO; and
2. Higher Education Authority (HEA) and SOLAS data on higher and further education outcomes.

On the above bases, the model forecasts an average of 4,100 people will enter the Fingal labour force each year to 2029.

Table 4 provides a full breakdown of supply side skills by industry per annum.

TABLE 4: SKILLS SUPPLY (ANNUAL AVERAGE), FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL, 2024-2029

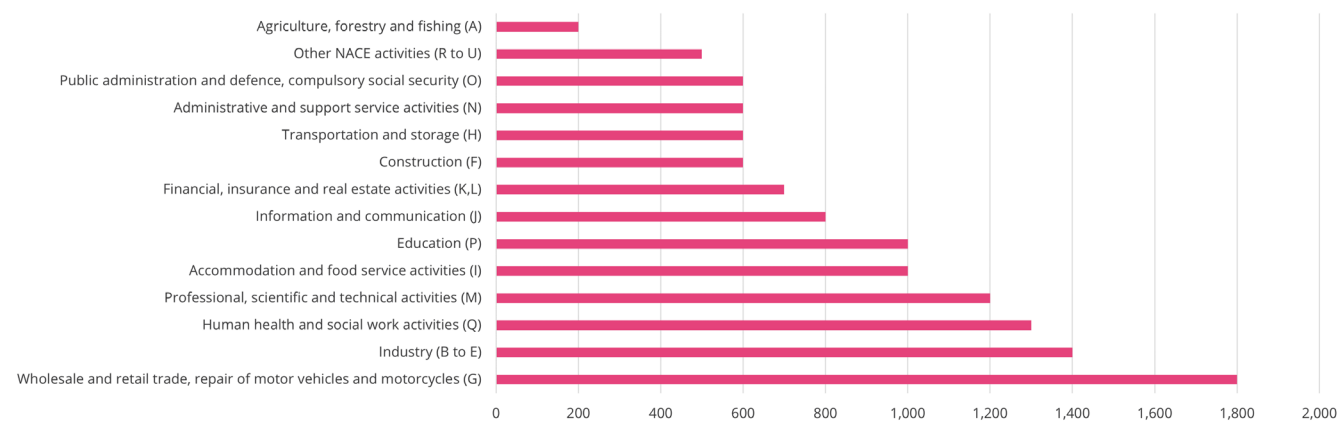
	2024-2029
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G)	500
Industry (B to E)	500
Human health and social work activities (Q)	400
Construction (F)	300
Education (P)	300
Not stated	300
Professional, scientific and technical activities (M)	200
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (A)	200
Accommodation and food service activities (I)	200
Information and communication (J)	200
Administrative and support service activities (N)	200
Public administration and defence, compulsory social security (O)	200
Financial, insurance and real estate activities (K,L)	200
Transportation and storage (H)	200
Other NACE activities (R to U)	200
All NACE economic sectors	4,100

Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model.

FINGAL'S NET SKILLS REQUIREMENT TO 2029

Combining the results from the previous tables, the model provides a net requirement (or 'skills gap') for Fingal of 12,100 jobs per annum. Figure 4 highlights the net requirement for each sector as an annual average between 2024 and 2029.

FIGURE 4: NET SKILLS REQUIREMENT IN FINGAL (ANNUAL AVERAGE), 2024-2029



Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model.

PRIORITY SECTORS

Fingal County Council has identified priority sectors for skills development, focusing on those which have the greatest level of need and which can drive economic prosperity.

Professional Services

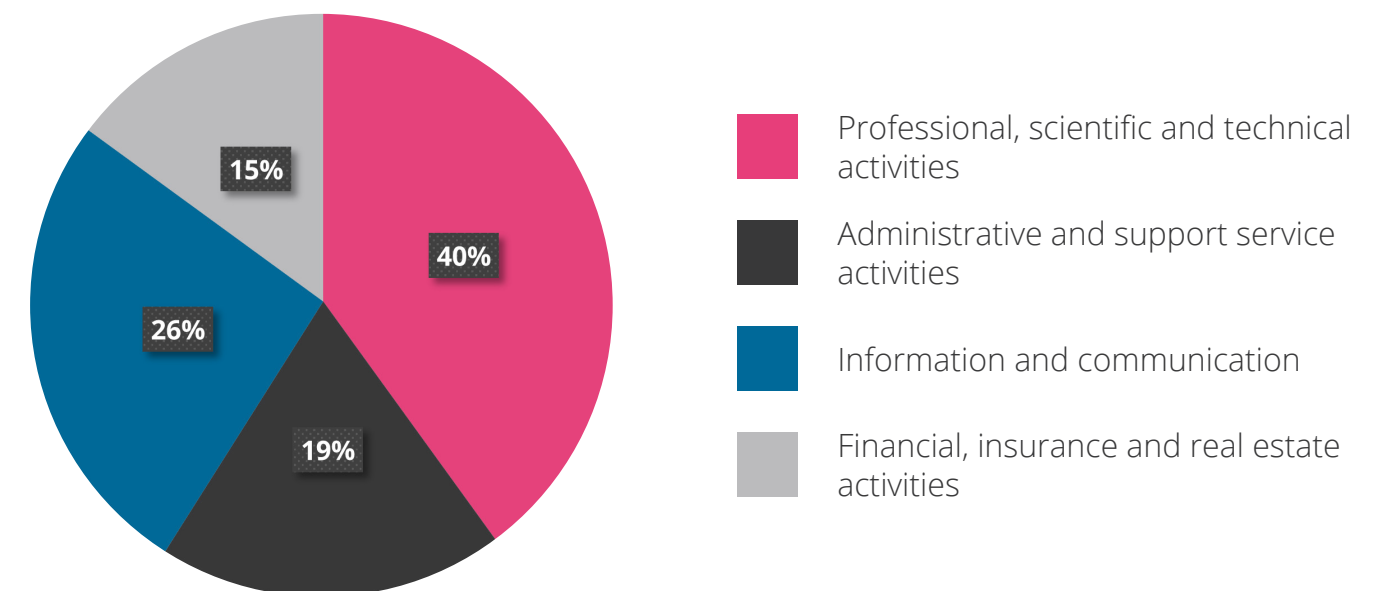
Professional Services comprises the NACE economic sectors of:

- Professional, scientific and technical activities;
- Administrative and support service activities;
- Information and communication; and
- Financial, insurance and real estate activities.

The sector is one which faces several current and future challenges, notably in keeping pace with the rate of technological advancements, regulatory changes, developments in data and data processing, AI, and overall digital disruption.

These drivers are linked, and in combination will dictate the future skills needs of the sector.

Professional Services as a whole is of great importance to the Fingal economy; accounting for approximately 22% of total employment in the county. The overall make-up of the sector is as follows:



Noting the importance of the combined Professional Services sector locally, key elements including digital and technology and fintech were identified in the consultation phase as key future sub-sectors within which there is current demand, and notable skills gaps.

Subsets of the Professional Services sector were further identified for strategic focus in the Future Fingal: An Economic Development Strategy based on their growth potential. ICT was selected as a focus sector given its importance to Fingal's economy, and there is a clear need to align skills profiles with the demands of the sector. Financial Services was also identified as a sector to sustain and grow given its importance as an employer, and the growth of fintech which is expected to become a \$1.5 trillion global industry by 2030.

Additionally, data findings support the prioritisation of the Professional Services sector. The analysis of supply and demand highlights an annual net requirement of over 3,300 people to meet the needs of the sector between 2024 and 2029. This underlines a need for intervention given the clear imbalance of skills supply across the sector over the next five years.

TABLE 5: NET REQUIREMENT (ANNUAL AVERAGE) BY SECTOR, FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL, 2024-2029

	Expansion Demand	Replacement Demand	Total Requirement	Skills Supply (Stock & Future Skills)	Net Requirement
Professional Services	960	3,106	4,065	747	3,319

Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model.

Retail

Retail equates to the NACE economic sector of wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles.

The sector is one which is facing change, notably in the rapid growth of e-commerce, disrupting the traditional bricks and mortar retailers. Technology acceleration – including the evolution of digital channels, the use of AI to displace traditional means thus reducing the need for human input, and the use of analytics – is presenting challenges for the sector. Further, the shift in working practices from traditional office working to working from home has led to a decline in footfall in town centres, decreasing business across many local stores.

The sector also faces financial pressures including rising wage costs, new policy measures, inflation and increased energy costs. These pressures are occurring in tandem with changes in societal demands and consumer expectations including the convenience of online shopping and the shift in consumer preferences to trends including 'conscious consumerism'. While important to Fingal's economy, the sector is one which is traditionally market-led, with success closely aligned with consumer confidence.

In Fingal, the retail sector accounts for 12% of employment and is considered crucial for town centres and driving forward the 'Town Centre First' policy. As the sector continues to develop and adapt digitally, human skills will become increasingly important, such as 'human touch' skills which technology cannot replicate.

The sector therefore needs to balance the changes of the sector with the needs of the consumer, through a workforce that is both skilled and proficient.

Further evidence was collected in the consultation phase, with the sector cited as one which faces current and future skills gaps. Presented with a sluggish talent pipeline, challenges include pay scales and a lack of career progression or known career opportunities within the sector. Transversal skills including people and personal skills were also cited as essential skills which were lacking among applicants/employees.

Additionally, data findings support the prioritisation of the retail sector. The analysis of supply and demand highlights an annual net requirement of 1,839 to meet the needs of the sector between 2024 and 2029.

TABLE 6: NET REQUIREMENT (ANNUAL AVERAGE) BY SECTOR, FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL, 2024-2029

	Expansion Demand	Replacement Demand	Total Requirement	Skills Supply (Stock & Future Skills)	Net Requirement
Retail	339	2,033	2,372	533	1,839

Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model.

Tourism & Hospitality

Tourism and Hospitality comprises the NACE economic sectors of:

- Accommodation & Food Services; and
- Arts & Entertainment.

The sector is an important economic driver for Fingal and plays a key role in both rural and urban local economies. Fingal's proximity to Dublin Airport, its cultural assets, coastal towns and heritage drive the sector, which accounts for 11% of employment in the county.

Despite local strengths, the sector was one of the hardest hit during the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequences of the shutdown of these industries are still evident today, particularly in labour shortages and employee retention.

As well as the challenges of staff shortages and retention, the sector has been impacted by the cost of living crisis. Dependent on consumer and business discretionary spending, the sector has been impacted by declines in 'non-essential' spending as households and businesses focussed more on 'essential spending' during the recent inflation crisis.

Inflation has also driven higher operational costs in the sector, particularly around energy costs. Technology disruption, regulatory requirements and sustainability considerations are also influencing the sector.

Hospitality was cited in the consultation phase, with notable skills gaps identified across a wide range of roles, including cleaners, bar/restaurant staff, and management roles. Transversal skills such as communication, leadership, and customer service skills are crucial for many roles in the industry, with these skills cited in consultations as somewhat lacking, further adding to employment challenges.

Tourism was recognised in the Future Fingal: An Economic Development Strategy as offering growth potential. Analysing supply and demand data supports this view, highlighting a net annual requirement of 1,277 people between 2024 and 2029.

TABLE 7: NET REQUIREMENT (ANNUAL AVERAGE) BY SECTOR, FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL, 2024-2029

	Expansion Demand	Replacement Demand	Total Requirement	Skills Supply (Stock & Future Skills)	Net Requirement
Tourism & Hospitality	354	1,271	1,625	348	1,277

Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model.

Transport & Logistics

Transport & Logistics is a significant sector in Fingal by virtue of its proximity to Dublin Airport, Dublin Port and Fingal's strategic location on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

The sector faces current challenges including new legislation around climate change and sustainability, combined with cost volatility, particularly around fuel prices. Further, digital technology, data science and the evolution of smart cities is creating digital disruption across the sector. Labour shortages in the sector were also identified in the consultation phase as a current challenge.

Noting the importance of the sector for future growth in the county, Transport & Logistics was identified as a focus sector in the Future Fingal: An Economic Development Strategy. It noted the sector can take advantage of the shift of supply chains from global to 'closer to home', and the impact of localism on the economy to support significant growth. This is likely to lead to increased demand for labour, with an expected 594 additional people required annually to meet the forecasted growth in jobs to 2029.

TABLE 8: NET REQUIREMENT (ANNUAL AVERAGE) BY SECTOR, FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL, 2024-2029

	Expansion Demand	Replacement Demand	Total Requirement	Skills Supply (Stock & Future Skills)	Net Requirement
Transport & Logistics	176	601	776	182	594

Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model.

Construction

Construction is traditionally market-led and aligned to investor and developer confidence and the availability of capital. Locally, projects including ‘Our Balbriggan’, varied housing developments, MetroLink and other infrastructure developments will all require significant construction capacity availability.

The sector faces key challenges including a shortage of skilled workers, rising costs and uncertainties in project timelines and contracts. These challenges were echoed in the consultation phase.

Noting the importance of the construction sector in Fingal, making up 4% of local employment, it was identified for strategic focus in the Future Fingal: An Economic Development Strategy. It highlighted how the sector should be monitored, and interventions put in place to ensure growth opportunities are taken as they arise.

Data analysis further supports the need for interventions in the sector, which will have a net annual requirement of 573 additional people to fill jobs between 2024 and 2029.

TABLE 9: NET REQUIREMENT (ANNUAL AVERAGE) BY SECTOR, FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL, 2024-2029

	Expansion Demand	Replacement Demand	Total Requirement	Skills Supply (Stock & Future Skills)	Net Requirement
Construction	163	684	848	275	573

Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model.

Agri-Food

Fingal has a strong Agri-Food sector and contributes significantly to the sector nationally, producing 14.5% of national potato output, 47% of field vegetable output and 37% of protected fruits, vegetables and nursery plants – making it one of the most important Irish counties for food production.

However, the unpredictability and demanding nature associated with the sector has resulted in labour shortages. Concerns regarding a significant decline in the number of people entering the sector was cited in consultations, alongside an ageing labour force. The sector also faces significant daily challenges from climate change, demands for high quality food, technological change and increasing inflation leading to rising costs of feed and fertilisers.

Data analysis further supports the need for interventions in the Agri-Food sector and highlights strong replacement demand (600) and a total net annual requirement of 352 people between 2024 and 2029.

TABLE 10: NET REQUIREMENT (ANNUAL AVERAGE) BY SECTOR, FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL, 2024-2029

	Expansion Demand	Replacement Demand	Total Requirement	Skills Supply (Stock & Future Skills)	Net Requirement
Agri-food	36	600	636	284	352

Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model.

Life Science & Pharma

Fingal boasts a large pharmaceutical cluster, hosting many multinational companies and a strong ecosystem of life sciences and technology companies. Given the increases in population and the emergence of new diseases, there is increased demand for medical technologies and pharma products, alongside the growing need for research innovation around the life sciences sector.

The sector currently faces an array of factors that influence the operating context including regulatory changes, digital advancements, increasing consumer needs and competition for talent. Further, as part of these advancements in digitalisation, life sciences have become increasingly integrated with other sectors, with a greater focus on technologies like AI. As a result, the skills required for the sector are broadening, putting pressure on the skills pipeline.

The sector was also identified for focus in the Future Fingal: An Economic Development Strategy based on its growth potential and given there is an opportunity for Fingal to become a leader in the digital health sector by drawing on local talent and capabilities. A net total of 325 additional people will be needed in the sector each year between 2024 and 2029.

TABLE 11: NET REQUIREMENT (ANNUAL AVERAGE) BY SECTOR, FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL, 2024-2029

	Expansion Demand	Replacement Demand	Total Requirement	Skills Supply (Stock & Future Skills)	Net Requirement
Life Science & Pharma	53	378	432	107	325

Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model.

Health

Fingal’s population has grown exponentially in recent years. In 2022, the local population stood at 330,506, having increased by 11.6% or 34,000 people since 2016. Its population is expected to continue to grow and is forecast to increase to 369,000 people by 2031.

This will have a significant impact on the local health sector, as demand will increase for healthcare services, escalating the need for healthcare professionals, facilities, medical equipment and medications.

Efficient planning is vital to addressing the rapid rise in healthcare demands from population growth, with measures including increasing training and recruitment of healthcare workers essential. With a €25.8 billion health budget allocated nationally to facilitate the continued delivery and expansion of quality, affordable healthcare services, increased labour and skills will be required. Data from the Fingal skills gaps model mirrors these findings with a net annual requirement of 1,277 people in the sector.

TABLE 12: NET REQUIREMENT (ANNUAL AVERAGE) BY SECTOR, FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL, 2024-2029

	Expansion Demand	Replacement Demand	Total Requirement	Skills Supply (Stock & Future Skills)	Net Requirement
Health	325	1,352	1,676	400	1,277

Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model.

Education

In tandem with the fastest growing population, Fingal has the youngest population in Ireland, reflected in an average age of 36.2 in 2022, compared to 38.8 nationally. Over a quarter of the population (26.7%) are aged 0-17, with some 63% of the population below the age of 44, compared to 58.3% nationally.

Across the county, levels of educational attainment have been improving. Of those educated to degree level and further in Fingal, 31% had a degree – compared to 28% nationally. An educated population remains a key driver for Fingal’s economy. As such, there is a need to focus on the sector to ensure there exists adequate labour to meet the demands of the sector.

Further, the inclusion of Education as a priority sector was validated in consultations, with a lack of labour cited as a challenge. This was identified across all levels from early years education through to Higher and Further Education. Data analysis affirms this need, with a net annual requirement of 965 people to 2029.

TABLE 13: NET REQUIREMENT (ANNUAL AVERAGE) BY SECTOR, FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL, 2024-2029

	Expansion Demand	Replacement Demand	Total Requirement	Skills Supply (Stock & Future Skills)	Net Requirement
Education	272	997	1,268	303	965

Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model.

FINGAL'S ROADMAP TO GROWING ITS SKILLS PROFILE

To successfully grow the skills of the labour force in Fingal, a series of themes have been identified. Each theme outlined below represents a building block for Fingal to develop and grow its labour force and nurture the skills within the local economy. Themes 1 and 2 are those which are required to inform and implement a successful skills ecosystem. Themes 3, 4 and 5 are those which will grow and drive forward Fingal's skills base.

Actions to develop Fingal's skills base are further explored on the pages which follow.

THEMES:

01

Access to real time labour market intelligence

To better understand Fingal's labour market, and specifically identify existing and emerging skills needs.

02

Increasing awareness

To increase awareness of available skills supports and provisions across the county through targeted marketing and communication.

03

Improving labour market participation

To unlock a wider talent pool by increasing labour market participation and supporting people to enter employment.

04

Sector skills support

To target skills needs in priority sectors, ensuring adequate learning and development pathways are established to meet sectoral skills demand.

05

In-work progression

To support upskilling and reskilling needs and the continuation of lifelong learning, supporting access to skills development initiatives.

SKILLS STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

ACTIONS TO DEVELOP FINGAL'S SKILLS ECOSYSTEM

Actions to address gaps and further develop Fingal's skills base.

THEME 1: ACCESS TO REAL TIME LABOUR MARKET INTELLIGENCE

RATIONALE:

Fingal's labour market needs to be flexible and responsive in order to support ongoing economic growth. Accessing and utilising real time labour market information is essential to guiding meaningful action in this regard. To provide this informational basis, the county will develop local labour market intelligence based on a mix of:

1. Quantitative inputs, including findings from the Fingal's skills gap model and the CSO's Labour Force Survey, SOLAS SLMRU reports and EGFSN sectoral studies.
2. Qualitative information which can be gathered from the county's SSIG and sectoral skills groups.

This intelligence will be used as a basis for Fingal County Council and its key skills stakeholders to make informed decisions on interventions to tackle the county's skills needs to 2029.

ACTIONS:

Action	Responsible Bodies	Timeline
1.1 Undertake a bi-annual survey of employers/recruiters to assess skills and labour market issues.	Fingal County Council, Employers, Recruiters	Bi-Annually
1.2 Maintain up-to-date labour market profiles and an annual skills demand/supply forecast model.	Fingal County Council, SOLAS, Skillnet, Dublin Regional Skills Forum, ETBs, SSIG, third party research providers	Quarterly
1.3 Publish an annual skills barometer for Fingal.	Fingal County Council, Fingal Economic Forum	Annually
1.4 Host an annual skills summit to communicate key initiatives and build employer/learner/education provider links.	Fingal County Council, Employers, Education & training providers, SSIG, Dublin Regional Skills Forum, Business & sectoral representative bodies, Trade Unions	Annually
1.5 Establish a referral system within the SSIG to gauge regular skills needs, utilising the Dublin Regional Skills Forum Skills Audit as a resource to support the identification of skills gaps.	Fingal County Council, SSIG, Education & training providers, Dublin Regional Skills Forum	Quarterly



THEME 2: INCREASING AWARENESS

RATIONALE:

While Fingal's skills stock and profile are strengths and differentiators, awareness and understanding of education and training opportunities, careers support services and routes to employment still lag. To develop the local skills base, there is a need for such information to be available, clear, and easy to access so as to enable those in the labour force – or wishing to enter the labour force – to identify clear pathways. Fingal County Council can play a vital role in working with partners to promote awareness of skills development opportunities and career options.

ACTIONS:

Action	Responsible Bodies	Timeline
2.1 Deliver promotional campaigns to maximise awareness of education and training opportunities, careers support services, and routes to employment within Fingal.	Fingal County Council, Department of Education, Education & training providers, employers, SOLAS, Skillnet, Dublin Regional Skills Forum	Short - Medium
2.2 Through the 'Xplore Your Future' brand, deliver an annual expo targeted at school students.	Fingal County Council, SSIG	Annually
2.3 Proactively engage with schools in Fingal on education/training options and future career opportunities.	Department of Education, Employers, Education & training providers, ETBs, SICAP	Short - Medium
2.4 Explore models to deliver work experience opportunities.	Employers, Department of Education, ETBs	Short - Long
2.5 Update and remodel Fingal County Council's Skills Hub and map existing provisions based on priority sector groups.	Fingal County Council, Education & training providers, ETBs, Fingal Chamber Skillnet, Fingal Local Enterprise Office, Dublin Regional Skills Forum	Short - Medium

THEME 3: IMPROVING LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION

RATIONALE:

A high rate of labour market participation is vital for meeting current and future skills needs, yet this remains a challenge for economies globally. Labour markets often consist of gender, age, education and racial imbalances. To meet the local skills requirements, Fingal County Council and its partners will expand its labour market and skills pool by:

- Supporting the economically inactive to (re) enter the labour force; and
- Removing barriers to work.

Interventions to boost involvement in education and training programmes, and facilitate labour market participation will remain to the fore.

ACTIONS:

Action	Responsible Bodies	Timeline
3.1 Continue the development of interventions which address the economically inactive.	Fingal County Council, Education & training providers, SICAP, SOLAS, Department of Social Protection	Short - Long
3.2 Through the LCDC engage to design and implement a labour market participation programme which assesses barriers to participation including gender and ability barriers.	Fingal County Council, LCDC, SICAP, Education & training providers	Short - Long
3.3 Work with education providers and government agencies to facilitate robust qualification conversion courses for newly arrived immigrants.	Fingal County Council, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Education & training providers, migrant representative bodies, Quality and Qualifications Ireland	Short - Long
3.4 Support the improvement of basic digital literacy to enhance work readiness.	Fingal County Council, Dublin Regional Skills Forum, Education & training providers, Fingal Chamber Skillnet, SOLAS, Irish Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, SICAP	Short - Medium

THEME 4: SECTOR SKILLS SUPPORT

RATIONALE:

To ensure the supply of skills meets demand, it is important that Fingal County Council prioritises sectors where significant needs exist. This will include targeting sectors with the largest skills gaps and those which will drive future economic prosperity.

Actions will involve driving awareness and tailored development opportunities so that these sectors have the requisite skills to maximise their potential in the years to 2029.

ACTIONS:

Action	Responsible Bodies	Timeline
4.1 Facilitate and expand participation of sector skills groups, acting as communication channels between employers and education providers.	Dublin Regional Skills Forum, SSIG, Employers, Education & training providers	Short - Medium
4.2 Explore the development of an assured skills programme to encompass academies, apprenticeships and traineeships for clusters with significant need.	Fingal County Council, SSIG, business representative bodies, employers, SOLAS, Fingal Chamber Skillnet, Dublin Regional Skills Forum	Medium
4.3 Launch a ‘Back to Fingal’ campaign targeted at diaspora for sectors with significant skills needs.	Fingal County Council, employers, business and sectoral representative bodies, Fingal Chamber, Balbriggan Chamber, Department of Foreign Affairs	Short - Medium
4.4 Work with anchor employers/cluster groups to develop tailored skills solutions in collaboration with education/training providers including regional bodies such as DRSF.	Fingal County Council, Education & training providers, SSIG, Dublin Regional Skills Forum, employers, business and sectoral representative bodies	Medium
4.5 Explore future collaboration and innovation opportunities in skills development between enterprises and education and training providers.	Fingal County Council, Dublin Regional Skills Forum, Employers, Education & training providers	Medium
4.6 Support the development of further education infrastructure in Fingal, including DDLETB’s College of the Future in Swords.	Fingal County Council DDLETB, education and training providers, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	Short-Long

THEME 5: IN WORK PROGRESSION

RATIONALE:

To future proof skills and encourage sustainable employment, a focus on retention and progression in employment is vital. In-work training, life-long learning and career progression can lead to increased productivity, innovation, staff retention, career satisfaction – and a higher quality of life. These pillars are crucial to the well-being of Fingal's residents, and to driving strong economic performance. Specifically for local employers, cross-skilling and up-skilling allows enterprises to address current and potential skills gaps, and prepare employees to progress internally – for example, into leadership roles.

ACTIONS:

Action	Responsible Bodies	Timeline
<p>5.1 Develop up-skilling and re-skilling programmes including micro-credentials and micro-qualifications to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote & embed a culture of life-long learning with employers and employees; and • Address specific needs around transversal skills i.e. management and leadership, compliance, and regulation, to improve business processes and productivity. 	Education & training providers, Dublin Regional Skills Forum, ETBs, Higher Education Institutions, Employers, Trade Unions, SOLAS, Fingal Chamber Skillnet	Medium - Long
<p>5.2 Promote the delivery of education and training initiatives that embed digital skills, green skills and transversal skills to target future skills development.</p>	Education & training providers, Dublin Regional Skills Forum, ETBs, Higher Education Institutions, Employers, Trade Unions, SOLAS, Fingal Chamber Skillnet	Medium - Long
<p>5.3 Provide focused support to SMEs in delivering learning and development functions through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of tailored online courses; • Piloting an SME training fund which reduces cost barriers; • An awareness campaign to ensure SMEs are accessing state funded provisions; and • The identification of upskilling needs and supports to promote staff retention. 	Fingal County Council, SMEs, Representative bodies, Small Firms Association, Education & training providers, Dublin Regional Skills Forum	Short - Long

Note: Micro-qualifications are a FET offering to future-proof businesses, with programmes comprising of short, stackable accredited qualifications tailored to fit employees' work schedules and provided at little or no cost to employers. They are fully accredited and can lead to a maximum of Level 4, 5 and 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1 – NACE CLASSIFICATIONS

The below table outlines each of the NACE classifications used in this report and what is included as part of these codes.

TABLE A.1: NACE CODE CLASSIFICATIONS

NACE Code	Classification
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (A)	The Agriculture sector comprises of the management of Crop & Animal production, Hunting, Logging, Forestry activities and Fishing & Aquaculture activities.
Industry (B to E)	This sector includes the operations from Mining & Quarrying companies, Utility companies including Electricity, Gas and Water Supply/Waste Management companies and all Manufacturing activities.
Construction (F)	The Construction sector definition includes the Construction of Building, Civil Engineering, Demolition & Site Preparation, Electrical; Plumbing & Other Construction Installation activities, Building Completion & Finishing, Roofing activities and Other Specialised Construction activities.
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G)	The Wholesale & retail trade sector is made up of the wholesale/retail trade of motor vehicles/motorcycles, general wholesale and wider retail trade.
Transportation and storage (H)	Transport & Storage is comprised of Land Transport operations, Water Transport operations, Air Transport operations, Warehousing and Postal & Courier activities.
Accommodation and food service activities (I)	The Accommodation and Food Service sector is made up of Hotels, Holiday & Other short-stay accommodation, Camping Grounds; RV & Caravan Parks, Other Accommodation, Restaurants & Mobile food services, Event Catering, Beverage serving activities.
Information and communication (J)	The Information & Communication sector comprises of a wide range of operations including: Publishing activities, Motion Picture; Video & Television programme production, Sound Recording & Music Publishing, Programming & Broadcasting activities, Telecommunications, Computer Programming, Consultancy and Information Service activities.
Financial, insurance and real estate activities (K,L)	The Finance & Insurance sector comprises activities related to Financial Services including Activities of Holding Companies and Trusts/Funds, etc. This sector also includes the operations related to Insurance, Reinsurance and Pension Funding. The Real Estate activities sector includes all operations and activities related to the buying and selling of own real estate, the operation & rental of own or leased real estate, Real Estate Agencies and Management activities of real estate on a fee or contract basis.

NACE Code	Classification
Professional, scientific and technical activities (M)	The Professional services sectors is made up of Legal, Accounting, Management Consultancy activities, Head Office activities, R&D, Scientific, Advertising & Market Research, Veterinary activities, Architectural & Engineering activities and Other Professional; Scientific & Technical activities.
Administrative and support service activities (N)	The Administrative & Support Service sector includes operations from Rental & Leasing, Employment Placement Agencies, Temporary Work Agencies, Travel Agents & Tour Operators, Security Operations, Building & Landscape activities and Office Administration/Support including Business Support.
Public administration and defence, compulsory social security (O)	The Public Administration sector is defined by the operations of the Administration of the State and the Economic and Social Policy of the Community as well as Foreign Affairs, Defence Activities, Justice & Judicial activities, Public Order & Safety activities, Fire Service activities and Compulsory Social Security activities.
Education (P)	The Education sector includes all activities related to Pre-Primary, Primary, Secondary, Higher Education, Educational Support activities, Sport & Recreation education and Other Education.
Human health and social work activities (Q)	Human Health consists of the general human health activities, residential care activities and wider social work not including accommodation.
Other NACE activities (R to U)	This sector comprises of the operations from the Arts, Entertainment & Creation sector. The Other Service Activities sector and the activities from Households and Extraterritorial Organisations/Bodies.

APPENDIX 2 – NET SKILLS REQUIREMENT IN FINGAL

NET SKILLS REQUIREMENT IN FINGAL (ANNUAL AVERAGE), 2024-2029

	Expansion Demand	Replacement Demand	Total Requirement	Skills Supply (Stock & Future Skills)	Net Requirement
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G)	300	2,000	2,400	500	1,800
Industry (B to E)	200	1,700	1,900	500	1,400
Human health and social work activities (Q)	300	1,400	1,700	400	1,300
Professional, scientific and technical activities (M)	500	900	1,400	200	1,200
Accommodation and food service activities (I)	300	900	1,300	200	1,000
Education (P)	300	1,000	1,300	300	1,000
Information and communication (J)	200	800	1,000	200	800
Financial, insurance and real estate activities (K,L)	100	800	900	200	700
Administrative and support service activities (N)	200	600	800	200	600
Construction (F)	200	700	800	300	600
Public administration and defence, compulsory social security (O)	0	800	800	200	600
Transportation and storage (H)	200	600	800	200	600
Other NACE activities (R to U)	0	600	600	200	500
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (A)	0	400	400	200	200
Not stated	0	200	200	300	-100
All NACE economic sectors	2,800	13,300	16,200	4,100	12,100

Source: Grant Thornton Skills Gap Model.

Note: Total values may not equate to the sum of the individual columns due to rounding.

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