STRATEGIES: Workforce skills development

Workforce skills development refers to activities that aim to identify and/or increase the workforce skills required for both current and future business or industry needs. These activities may include conducting surveys of members’ workforce skills; liaising with researchers and government to identify current and future skills needs; and working with training organisations to design and provide targeted training.

Seventy-seven percent of participants responded that their industry associations implement workforce development strategies.

Most participants from those industry associations regard workforce skills development activities to be very important for all industrial development goals.

- **Firm improvement**: Most participants regarded workforce skills development activities to be very important for developing a firm’s capabilities to improve its current activities.

- **Firm value adding**: Most participants regarded workforce skills development activities to be very important for developing a firm’s capabilities to undertake new, higher value activities.

- **Firm diversification**: Most participants regarded workforce skills development activities to be moderately or very important for developing a firm’s capabilities to enter new industry sectors.

- **Industry development**: Most participants regarded workforce skills development activities to be very important for developing the industry’s collective capabilities to improve its current activities.

- **Industry value-adding**: Most participants regarded workforce skills development activities to be very important for developing the industry’s collective capabilities to undertake new higher value activities.
Institutional development: Most participants regarded workforce skills development activities to be important for improving establishing a more favourable economic, political and/or social operating environment for individual firms and the industry.

Participants were asked which of four workforce skills development activities the industry association undertakes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify current skills shortages</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training for current workforce</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify future skills needs</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training for the future industry workforce</td>
<td>82</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Summary of workforce skills development:

Most industry associations implement workforce skills development activities to improve capabilities for current and future activities of individual firms and the industry sector and for establishing a favourable economic, political and/or social operating environment for individual firms and the industry. Factors that might explain why some industry associations do not conduct workforce development skills could be:

- **The level of representation** – i.e., peak, national, state or regional. In some industries, peak associations represent other industry associations that, in turn, represent members at state or regional levels. In such cases, the regional and/or state associations conduct most workforce skills development activities while the peak organisation focusses on broader aspects of industry and institutional development.

- **The type of members.** In some industries, most members might be larger organisations that conduct in-house workforce skills development training, leaving the industry association free to focus on institutional development activities.

- **Number of industry association staff & resources.** Some smaller industry associations operate with a minimum of volunteer staff who run their own businesses. They may have little time to conduct hands-on activities and lack the financial and knowledge-based resources to do so.