



## SMART Communities Need a SMART Workforce



### Small Business Training Highlights

Digital skills development in workforce (re)training provides new ways of talent development for communities. Digital skills are crucial for 21<sup>st</sup> century economic development, employment, and job creation.

Training and skills development is significantly lower in small business than in large enterprises with small business involved in up to 50% less training than larger firms. The pool of small business workers requiring further education and training in technology is significant. However, small business often find it difficult to support formal learning activities due to lack of funding and resources.

### Building SMART Workforce

SMART cloud-based community training platform is a response to fast growing need on leveraging mobile technology training and digital skills development in small businesses - providing small business employees access to much needed training across industries and regions.

Mobile Learning benefits:

- 24/7 access to web-based/mobile training anytime,
- Training is focused on developing SMART skills.

- Acquired skills can lead to better quality of life for citizens, savings in energy and resources, and better competitiveness for the business.
- Training will lead to new markets, variety of new employment opportunities and economic growth.

Factors driving small business training activities:

- Market competitiveness.
- Employability.
- Robust firms with local jobs and new business opportunities.
- Market forces dominate current and future take-up of opportunities for workforce skills development
- Firms and employees seek ways of learning to acquire new knowledge and skills they need, particularly for innovation and entrepreneurial processes.
- Companies report need for technology training and skills development activities.
- The technology skills development is vital especially for both low skilled and highly skilled employees.
- Growth potential small business focus on skills of business planning, management and technical skills.
- Market forces are the main drivers for skills development in businesses, which will result from inhouse demands arising from product development or production needs, as the result of financial adjustments, or from participation in external private sector activities with clients and suppliers.

### Digital skills development is a resource intensive activity for small business

Skill development is a resource intensive activity, attention must be paid to demonstrating the benefits of technology for businesses participating in training activities - in other words, the returns on their training and skills development investments must be sufficient to offset the costs. Investments in training activities are finite and should focus on areas where the return on investment is highest.

Specific areas of SMART workforce training include:

- Coordinating training across local, regional, and national level in order to avoid confusion experienced by small businesses in identifying their SMART training needs and assessing the best options for their business.
- Including evidence gathered from digital training evaluations and/or pilot studies of the benefits of SMART training activities, as part of advice and activities provided to small business.
- Encourages investments in technology to the business receiving training.
- Assessment and advisory services.

Market forces In-house and external market forces are the main drivers for small businesses' digital training activities within their supply-chain or industry.

Where public policy has an objective of requiring an action from small businesses, they are likely to act to make decisions about skills development and training activities within their businesses.

### **Focus on SMART Technology, Business Innovation, and Entrepreneurial skills.**

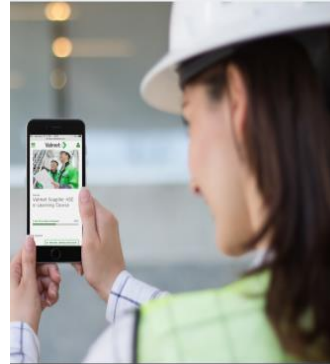
The specific needs of digital skill development vary across local areas and regions and are strongly influenced by industrial concentrations and existing skill levels.

The local context is important when it comes to collaboration between digital skills development activities in small business and training organizations. There are some fundamental skills related to SMART innovation, technology and entrepreneurship, which should become foundation skills sets for all small businesses. Local customization should be encouraged to meet specific local needs.

Digital training program includes:

- Access to an award-winning cloud-based SMART Learning Environment (SLE)
- SMART technology enhancing digital skills is a focus.

- Development of a local digital skills ecosystems - partnerships between SMART technology companies (solution providers), educational institutions, local authorities, industry, trade organizations.
- Make training fit-for-purpose in each community and region.



### **Mobile Learning**

SMART Learning Environments, Artificial Intelligence and social micro learning can help solve today's training challenges of small business.

Micro courses are short, 2–3-minute training sessions which the employees can do while working, at times that best suit them. Add the social element in the form of various discussion forums, chats, video chats and real-time messaging applications, and small businesses have access to what is called social micro learning.

### **A Community of SMART Practice**

The need for regional customization and social micro learning is supported by a community platform of knowledge of how small businesses use training to develop SMART skills within their workforces and what works, does not work and is best practice activity across different regions.

Understanding both variation and best practice is an important task, as it will allow to select a mix of training programs to encourage SMART skills development in specific circumstances and understand why specific training may encourage digital skills development in small business. The establishment of digital skills and growth for knowledge sharing between organizations and regions will allow for the transmission and interpretation of best practices in SMART economic development and SMART growth across U.S. communities.

For more information:

[www.SMARTEducationExchange.com](http://www.SMARTEducationExchange.com)