

ECITB Customer and Stakeholder Research Short Report

ECITB

13 December 2023



1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 In 2020, the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) commissioned IFF Research to conduct an annual survey of its Stakeholders and Customers to understand and track perceptions of its performance, relevance and value, and satisfaction with its services. This year is the third year of the study, with the previous carried out in 2020 and 2021.
- 1.2 The purpose of the research was to gather robust quantitative data and information that can be used to measure if ECITB is meeting its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and corporate objectives, and to help identify how and where it could improve its performance against these.
- 1.3 The research covered the following three groups: in-scope Employers (referred to as 'Employers'); Approved Training Providers and Approved Centres (referred to as 'Providers'), and Stakeholders. The Stakeholders group included representatives of external organisations that did not fall into either of the other groups such as central and local government, clients, trade associations / federations, business groups, and academics in the field.
- 1.4 Questionnaires shared a range of similar questions around key areas of the customer and Stakeholder experience. These were primarily around views on ECITB's objectives, added value to the industry, communication, and perceived value of the relationship with ECITB. Where questions differed across the three questionnaires, this reflected the different nature of the audience and their specific relationship with ECITB.
- 1.5 Table 1.1 overleaf sets out ECITB's KPIs for 2023, and whether they were met. There were no specific KPIs for Providers.

Table 1.1 ECITB’s Key Performance Indicators and whether they were met (2023)

	KPI	Met?
1	<p>The % of Employers and other Stakeholders supportive of ECITB work to prepare industry workforce for Net Zero. KPI: >65% agreement in 2023</p> <p>69% of Employers and 85% of Stakeholders agreed (76% overall). This measure remained consistent for Employers between 2021 and 2023.</p>	✓
2	<p>The % of Employers and other Stakeholders who say ECITB is positively influencing skills policy. KPI: >65% agreement in 2023</p> <p>77% of Employers and 75% of Stakeholders agreed (76% overall). This measure has remained consistent between 2021 and 2023.</p>	✓
3	<p>The % of Employers and other Stakeholders who say ECITB is positively influencing diversity and inclusion. KPI: >50% agreement in 2023</p> <p>68% of Employers and 63% of Stakeholders agreed (66% overall). This measure has increased significantly for both groups between 2021 and 2023.</p>	✓
4	<p>The % of Employers reporting that ECITB support has helped address skills shortages and gaps. KPI: >60% agreement in 2023</p> <p>52% of Employers that had experienced skills shortages/gaps agreed. This measure has remained consistent between 2021 and 2023.</p>	✗
5	<p>The % of Employers and other Stakeholders who say they value ECITB’s labour market intelligence. KPI: >70% agreement in 2023</p> <p>67% of Employers and 83% of other Stakeholders agreed (73% overall). This measure has remained consistent for Employers. It increased significantly for other Stakeholders between 2021 and 2023.</p>	✓
6	<p>The % of Employers who use ECITB products that say they meet their needs. KPI: >90% agreement in 2023</p> <p>81% of Employers on average said products met their needs. This measure has remained consistent between 2021 and 2023.</p>	✗
7	<p>The % of Employers satisfied with the quality, accessibility and affordability of training and assessment KPI: >90% agreement in 2023</p> <p>90%¹ of Employers on average were satisfied. This measure has remained consistent between 2021 and 2023.</p>	✓

¹ Of all Employers who gave a response (excluding ‘don’t know’) to each of the three measures.

- 1.6 Employers and Stakeholders generally expressed more positive views regarding ECITB's effectiveness in meeting objectives in 2023, with no significant decreases relating to key performance indicators, and more KPIs being hit.
- 1.7 The rest of this Executive Summary details the key findings from the third wave of the research, conducted in Summer 2023. Findings are compared against 2021 and noted where the change is statistically significant, though the wider context for the 2021 survey (Covid-19 related restrictions and the economic effects of lockdowns) means comparisons over time should be treated with caution.

Skills and training issues

- 1.8 Though skills and training issues are still prominent (56% of Employers having experienced them in the 12 months prior to taking part in the survey), this has fallen significantly against 2021 (74%). Around three-quarters (76%) of Providers cited at least one significant skills and training issue, consistent with the 85% who did so in 2021.
- 1.9 Employers most commonly cited attracting applicants with the right skills (17%) and training the existing workforce (16%) as the most significant issues. Providers and Stakeholders were most likely to cite a persistence of skills gaps (35% for Providers, 46% for Stakeholders) and too few new entrants to the sector (31% for Providers, 56% for Stakeholders).
- 1.10 Employers were generally positive about the support provided by ECITB, with 62% saying they felt supported. However, in 2023, the extent which Employers reported ECITB had actually *helped* Employers to address skills shortages remained lower than in 2021 (52% versus 73%), **falling short of the 60% KPI**. Providers were less positive about ECITB support, with 38% reporting they felt supported (in line with figures of 45% in 2021 and 40% in 2020).

Strategic added value and effectiveness

- 1.11 Overall, Employers and Stakeholders were positive about the extent to which ECITB provided strategic added value in 2023. Employers felt that ECITB provided the most strategic value in terms of supporting the training and recruitment of new entrants into the industry (89%), ensuring that smaller companies can access training who may otherwise struggle to access it (88%), and ensuring that National Occupational Standards (NOS) qualifications and training standards reflect industry requirements (87%).
- 1.12 In 2023, ECITB provided strong labour market intelligence to Stakeholders, with 83% agreeing. This is **comfortably above the KPI of 70%**. Although the proportion of Employers agreeing (67%) fell short, it demonstrated a statistically significant increase vs. 2020 (50%).
- 1.13 Though changes against 2021 were not statistically significant, a higher proportion of Employers agreed that by operating a collective and redistributive levy and grant system, ECITB ensures training takes place that may otherwise not happen (83% compared with 73% in 2021), and that ECITB leverages the assets of other organisations to the benefit of the industry (75% compared with 64% in 2021).
- 1.14 Over half of Providers thought that ECITB had been effective in supporting industry needs (57%) and contributing to solving UK skills shortage (53%). **Stakeholders' responses**

exceeded KPIs, with two-thirds (63%) agreeing that ECITB helps the industry develop more inclusive cultures and encourage greater workforce diversity (against a target of 50%).

- 1.15 77% of Employers and 75% of Stakeholders agreed (76% overall) that the ECITB is positively influencing skills policy, **exceeding the 65% KPI**.

ECITB Products and Services

- 1.16 Employers' awareness of ECITB products and services was stable compared with 2021, but did show some reductions since 2020, for supervisory programmes (88% in 2020 vs. 69% in 2023), Project Controls Training Programmes (88% in 2020 vs. 64% in 2023) and Technical Tests (69% vs. 49% in 2023). Usage has remained consistent across all products.
- 1.17 Where employers had accessed a product, they were asked the extent to which it met their needs. Across all ECITB products, an average of 81% of Employers said their needs had been met, **which falls short of the KPI of 90% set for this measure**. Supervisory programmes (93% satisfaction) and Technical Training tests (92%) were the only services to exceed the KPI.
- 1.18 Employers expressed positive views about ECITB products, particularly regarding quality, with 94% satisfied, followed by 89% satisfied with affordability, and 86% satisfied with accessibility. **Across all three, an average of 90% reported satisfaction, meeting ECITB's 2023 KPI of 90% or more**. The proportion rating ECITB grants, products, and services as effective in helping to achieve outcomes increased across the board, and significantly so for 'helping to satisfy regulatory or other requirements (81% in 2023 vs. 66% in 2021).
- 1.19 Most Providers were positive about their experience with ECITB products, with most (75%) satisfied with the auditing process for ATP products. However, only 25% of Providers were satisfied with promotion and marketing support. Provider satisfaction levels were consistent with 2020 and 2021. Where Providers had used a product, they were asked for their satisfaction with these; ECITB CCNSG Cards scored highest (76% satisfaction), followed by Training Standards (64%) and Project Controls training programmes (60%). All other products had 50% or lower satisfaction (though these measures also had small base sizes).

Satisfaction with ECITB functions

ECITB Functions

- 1.20 Employers were generally satisfied with their Account Manager, with at least eight in ten satisfied with six of their functions listed. They were most satisfied with their account manager's level of knowledge of ECITB products and services (91%), their understanding of needs (90%), and their responsiveness to enquiries (90%). Satisfaction was lowest for ECITB's ability to help Employers understand the wider industry (76%) and ECITB's ability to help provide new connections (61%).
- 1.21 Employers were also generally satisfied with ECITB central administration, with around three-quarters reporting they were satisfied with the administration of the training levy (76%), administration of training grants (77%), and the Member Services Portal (72%). The fourth measure, general enquiries made to ECITB head office, scored less favourably with 37% of Employers satisfied, though over half (52%) responded that they 'didn't know' to this question.

- 1.22 Employers that reported operating in the North England region were more likely to be satisfied with their Account Manager's ability to provide solutions (100% vs. 86% overall), and their responsiveness to enquiries (100% vs. 90% overall). These Employers were also more likely to be satisfied with ECITB's administration of the training levy (88% vs. 76% overall).
- 1.23 Overall, Providers were most satisfied with the auditing process for ATP products (75%), and learner certification processes (70%). ECITB's promotion and marketing support was looked upon less favourably, with only 25% satisfied and 43% dissatisfied (14% very dissatisfied) among the 28 Providers that had engaged with it.
- 1.24 Providers were most positive about their Auditor/Account Manager's level of knowledge of ECITB qualifications (78%), and ability to monitor, maintain and implement quality assurance processes (76%), as well as provider satisfaction with the overall relationship (75%). Responses were consistent with 2021 and 2020 across all of these measures.
- 1.25 The small number of Approved Centres taking part in the research were most satisfied with post-approval monitoring and registration of candidate process. As with Approved Training Providers, they were least positive about promotion and marketing support.

Communication

- 1.26 All Employers (100%), and almost all Providers (96%) and Stakeholders (94%) had had contact with ECITB in the past 12 months at the time of interview. For Employers (97%) and Providers (90%), contact with their Account Manager/Auditor was most common, followed by the MSP (84% for Employers, 86% for Providers).
- 1.27 Tying in with their likeliness to be satisfied with their Account Manager, contact via telephone enquiry (75% vs. 59% overall) was more likely for Employers in North England.

Relationship with ECITB

- 1.28 Employers reported that ECITB were best at providing advice and support around sourcing appropriate training (20%) and providing funding for training (20%). However, the proportion of Employers citing advice / support around sourcing appropriate training had fallen since 2021 (47%) and 2020 (35%), with all other responses remaining consistent between years.
- 1.29 Reinforcing the strong relationship with Employers from North England, they were more likely to report ECITB were best at keeping them up to date with changes and developments in the industry (9% vs. 4% overall).
- 1.30 Employers most commonly felt their relationship with ECITB had helped them to maintain or improve safety standards (73%), helped them meet emerging skills and knowledge needs (73%), increased worker competence (71%) and provided them with reassurance that the skills and training needs of the wider industry are being met. In 2023, 'improved inclusivity in the workforce / workplace' was the least commonly reported outcome (36%), followed by 'increased productivity of workers' (43%). These results were consistent with previous years.
- 1.31 Over three-quarters (77%) of Employers reported that their relationship with ECITB had contributed positively to achieving outcomes in some way. This was in line with the results from 2021 (73%) and 2020 (79%). As in 2021 (3%) and 2020 (4%), a small proportion (3%) felt that they would not have been able to achieve any of their outcomes without ECITB in 2023. Those

from North England were more likely to report ECITB had helped to address skills gaps (28% vs. 17% overall) and helped them to be able to offer as much training as they did (22% in North England vs. 12% overall).

- 1.32 Most commonly, Providers reported that their relationship with ECITB had helped them improve: the quality of their offer (67%); their reputation in the industry (61%), and their understanding of the ECI sector, its current and future challenges, and opportunities (57%). The least commonly mentioned impact of their relationship with ECITB on provider outcomes was an engagement of viable cohort sizes, reported by a quarter (27%) of Providers. Almost seven-in-ten (69%) Providers reported there was nothing they did in the past 12 months that they could not have done without ECITB support.
- 1.33 Although Provider satisfaction with their Account Manager's knowledge, quality assurance and overall relationship has remained consistent with previous years, between 2021 and 2023 there has been an 11 percentage point increase in the proportion of Providers reporting that ECITB are like inspectors, and a 12 percentage point decrease in those reporting they value ECITB highly, reversing the positive trend seen in 2021 and returning to the levels observed in 2020, perhaps indicating that although their individual relationship is strong, they have some issues with the broader organisation. However, due to the small base size, neither of these changes are statistically significant.
- 1.34 Stakeholders were most likely to cite the positive impact of ECITB on helping them understand the needs of the ECI sector (79%) and providing valuable information to inform decision making (73%). They were least likely to say ECITB had affected the way they make decisions about allocating resources or assets (33%).
- 1.35 In 2021, half (52%) of Stakeholders reported ECITB had affected the way they make decisions about allocating resources or assets to at least some extent, higher than the 33% reporting ECITB had contributed to this outcome at all in 2023. The reverse is true for 'providing reassurance that skills needs in the sector are being met' – 74% said ECITB had contributed to at least some extent here in 2021, vs. 56% reporting they had contributed to this outcome at all in 2023.
- 1.36 As with Providers, seven-in-ten (69%) reported there was nothing they have done in the past 12 months that they could not have done without ECITB support.
- 1.37 Stakeholders' views of their relationship with ECITB were consistent with 2021 and 2020, with six in ten (60%) describing it in a positive way, most likely citing close dialogue (31%) and collaboration and mutual trust (21%).

Continuous improvement

- 1.38 Employers were broadly positive about ECITB services to the organisation and the industry, with around three-quarters reporting they were satisfied with ECITB's service for their organisation (75% were satisfied) and the industry more broadly (73% satisfied). However, those reporting they were satisfied with ECITB's service to the company had decreased significantly since 2021 (89%), driven by an increase of those giving a neutral response (19% vs. 2% in 2021).
- 1.39 Providers' responses to these questions were more muted than Employers, though around six-in-ten were satisfied, both with the service ECITB provided to their company (61%) and the

industry as a whole (57%). This maintains the higher satisfaction levels seen in 2021, vs. 2020 where both measures were below 50% (to your company: 48%; to your industry: 42%).

- 1.40 When asked how likely they are to recommend ECITB to others, Employers were the most positive audience, with over half (53%) considered promoters of ECITB, compared with 44% of Stakeholders and 35% of Providers. Providers were significantly more likely to be detractors than Employers (35% vs. 16%, respectively), with Stakeholders sitting in the middle at 19%.
- 1.41 Employers (+39) and Stakeholders (+25) both had positive Net Promoter Scores, with Providers reporting a neutral score of zero. Compared with 2021, Employers and Stakeholders' NPSs are consistent, though Providers have dropped from +24, returning to levels observed in 2020.
- 1.42 When asked what more ECITB could do going forward, for Employers (44%), Providers (25%) and Stakeholders (25%), the most common response was there was nothing more ECITB could be doing, reflecting the generally high levels of satisfaction reported earlier in the survey.
- 1.43 Where Employers did make suggestions for changes, 'better availability of training opportunities / offer more courses' was the most common suggestion (20%), similarly to 2021 (17%). Among Providers, updating / modernising processes was the most commonly cited area for improvement (18%), followed by improving communication (16%). Stakeholders, where they made a suggestion, most commonly cited a need for a more collaborative process (19%).

2 Recommendations

2.1 Overall, as in previous years, Employers, Providers and Stakeholders speak positively about their relationship with ECITB, and the service provided. Across the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), ECITB were broadly successful, receiving strong responses on their supportiveness around Net Zero (76% agreement); their positive influence on skills policy (76%), diversity and inclusion (66% agreement); their labour market intelligence (73% agreement) and the quality, affordability and accessibility of their training and assessment (90% agreement).

2.2 Reflecting the continuing challenge of skills shortages and gaps in the sector, ECITB failed to meet their KPIs of 'helping address skills shortages' (52% agreement vs. 60% KPI), and the proportion of Employers saying ECITB products meet their needs (81% vs. 90% KPI). This chapter provides some recommendations for future improvement, based on the views of customers and Stakeholders.

- Further engagement with Providers about their needs:** In 2021, it was suggested that better engagement was needed on the part of ECITB with Providers and Stakeholders, to understand their needs and engage more with the training needs of the industry. Among Stakeholders, there was still a desire for a more collaborative approach (19%), though the real, remaining issue seems to be within the provider relationship, where 16% cited a need for improved communication, and 14% cited a need for more engagement concerning training needs. This, coupled with the drop in Provider NPS from +24 to zero, suggested a need for greater focus in this area, and that lessons can be learnt from ECITB's relationship with Employers, where 44% said there was 'nothing more' ECITB could do.
- Improvement of promotion and marketing support:** This form of support scored poorly across Providers, with only 16% reporting they were satisfied. Although Providers were mostly aware of the services ECITB could provide to their company (98%), 14% were unaware of the services they provide to the wider industry. One of ECITB's key roles is to work with Employers to 'attract' people to the workforce. Over half (56%) of Employers cited skills/training issues in the past 12 months, with the most common being attracting applicants with the right skills (17%). Working with Providers to better promote their courses could help to combat this deficiency.
- Build upon growingly positive labour market intelligence score among Stakeholders:** In 2023, ECITB provided strong labour market intelligence to Stakeholders, with 83% agreeing. This is comfortably above the KPI of 70%. Although the proportion of Employers agreeing (67%) fell short, it demonstrated a statistically significant increase vs. 2020 (50%). As demonstrated throughout the report, skills shortages, and gaps, although less of a concern after Covid-19, are still at the forefront of customer and Stakeholders' minds. It is important that ECITB continue to deliver positive intelligence to help tackle these issues.
- Learning lessons from ECITB status in the North England region:** consistently, Employers in the North England region were more likely to be positive about both their Account Manager, and ECITB central administration team. Employers that reported operating in the North England region were more likely to be satisfied with their Account Manager's ability to provide solutions (100% vs. 86% overall), and their responsiveness to enquiries (100% vs. 90% overall). They were also more likely to be satisfied with ECITB's administration of the training levy (88% vs. 76% overall). This positive relationship looks to be built upon strong communication through familiar (e.g., telephone enquiries) channels. It

may be beneficial to explore how lessons from these positive relationships can be applied to Employers in other regions.

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