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The South East and Greater Green Triangle Area Consultative Committees recently conducted a major Business information and Labour Force Survey across the Greater Green Triangle Region. The survey included large, medium and small enterprises in all industry groupings throughout the region.

One of the questions that we asked in the survey was whether that enterprise would consider employing a mature age job seeker. Of the 776 respondents to the survey 375 answered YES which represented 48.32% of respondents. Many of the enterprises that we spoke to qualified this answer by adding that they would consider a mature aged applicant provided they possessed the required skills.

While we had what we believe to be a very positive answer from employers, the local Job Network agencies advise us that they have difficulty in placing mature age workers in employment. This then leads us to question whether the majority of the mature age job seekers in the region do have the required skills e.g. an acceptable level of computing skills, etc.

Following the analysis of the data gained from the survey we have initiated a number of follow up projects. One of these is to go back to a broad selection of those enterprises who indicated that they would employ a mature age worker and to define which employment related generic skills they consider to be essential. Once we have this information we intend, in association with the Job Network agencies, to match needs against the skills of a selection of mature age job seekers. If a mismatch is evident a range of initiatives will be developed, such as:

- Producing an information kit for mature age job seekers advising them not only of what skills prerequisites but also the availability of training in their locality
- Marketing strategy targeted at business and mature age workers
- Lobby for the appropriate training to be delivered

Obviously there is competition between different groups of job seekers for the available opportunities and while we do not intend to favour any one group it is apparent to us that there is a need for more information and assistance to be provided to mature age job seekers.

At this stage we are only in the development stage of this initiative but we are keen to provide you with further input once the outcomes of this project have been realised.

I will continue to keep you informed.