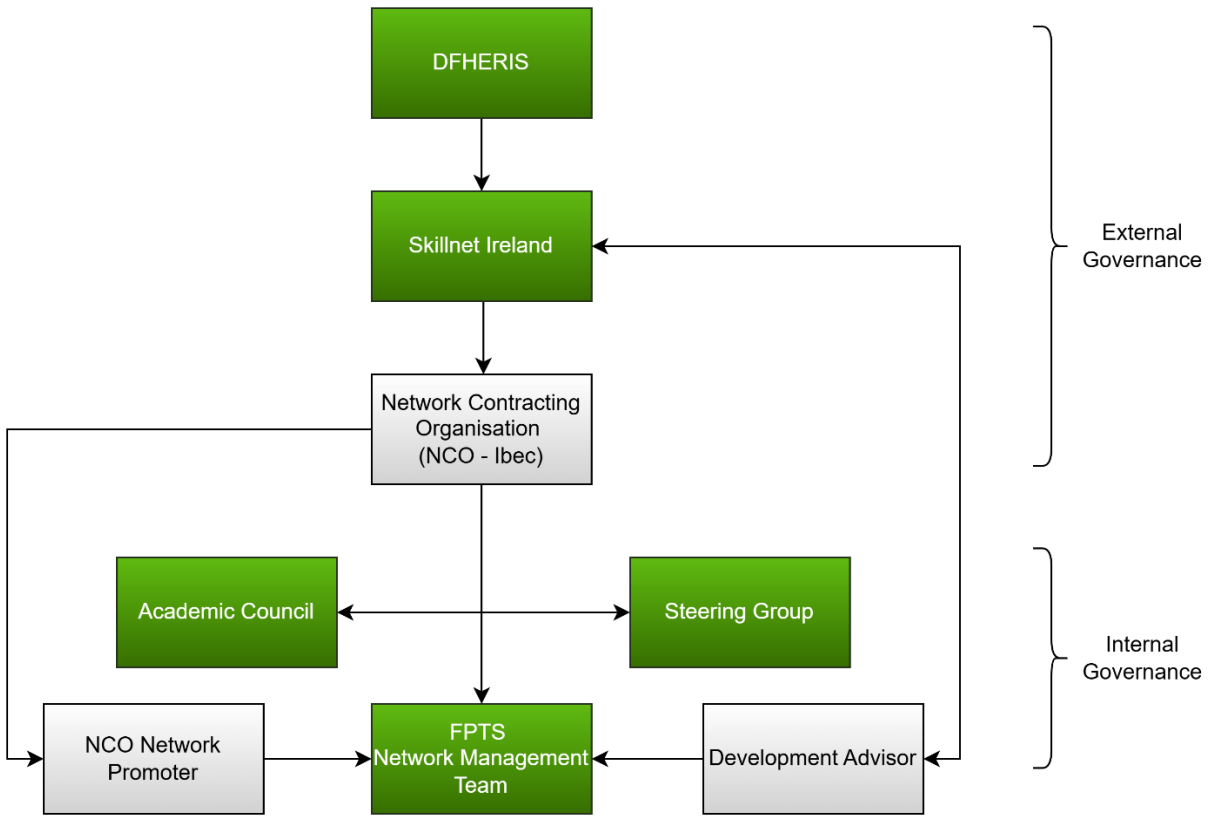
Governance at
First Polymer Training Skillnet

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FPTS Governance	
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Purpose of this document	
This purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the governance system in place at First Polymer Training Skillnet. It identifies the main stakeholders and describes in narrative terms the relationship between these stakeholders.	

1.1 Governance at FPTS



1.1.1 External Governance

Skillnet Ireland is a not-for-profit organisation that receives funding from the National Training Fund through the Department of Education and Skills. In turn, Skillnet Ireland award funding to enterprise groups through competitive 'Calls for Proposals' that are promoted by Skillnet Ireland throughout the year. There is a range of Skillnet Ireland funded programmes available to enterprise groups.

FPTS is one of approximately 70 (the number fluctuates from year to year) Skillnets approved and administered by Skillnet Ireland. FPTS provides training to organisations involved in plastics manufacture and processing in Ireland.

The **Training Networks Programme** is the main Skillnet Ireland funded programme. The programme supports the activities of enterprise-led Learning Networks across a wide range of industry sectors and geographical regions.

Skillnet Ireland use Network Contracting Organisations (NCO's) for the purpose of efficient management of the Skillnets.

Each Skillnet network will have a network contracting organisation that will take responsibility for the activities of the network and receive funds from Skillnet Ireland on behalf of the network.

Skillnet Ireland appoint a Development Advisor, and Ibec appoint a Network Promoter, to assist the work of the FPTS Network.

Full details of the roles and responsibilities for each entity are described in Section 1.2 of this document but the summary responsibilities are:

1.1.2 Internal Governance within FPTS

1.1.2.1 Academic Council (Academic Integrity)

The Academic Council ensures proper pedagogical practice, and the separation of commercial and educational decision making as well as the separation of responsibility for programme development from those who approve it.

1.1.2.2 Industry Representation (Steering Group)

The Steering Group comprises industry representatives who reflect the training needs of organisations involved in the manufacture and processing of polymer plastics in Ireland.

1.1.2.3 Network Management Team

Management of the day-to-day operation of the FPTS Skillnet is the responsibility of the Network/Centre Manager supported by three staff.

1.2 Governance Roles and Responsibilities

The following table identifies the governance groups and individuals that define the operational and quality assurance framework in which the FPT Skillnet exists.

1.2.1 External Governance

#	External Governance
1.	**The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science** 
	Role Skillnet Ireland was established in 1999 and is funded from the National Training Fund (NTF) through the Department of Education and Skills (DES). (The name of this Department was altered to the Department of Education and Youth in 2025, and the funding agency is now a separate government department called the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS). At time of establishment of Skillnet Ireland, the Department received sanction from the Dept. of Public Expenditure and Reform for advance payment of grants to Skillnets for funding the provision of further education and training by and through the **Training Networks Programme (TNP)**. This sanction is conditional on **(1) policy**, **(2) administrative** and **(3) 'particular'** funding requirements. These requirements form the governance framework for the operation of the Skillnets. • **Policy** requirements relate to numeric targets (e.g. number of persons trained, learners from the live register, percentage of training directed toward Level 1-9 on the NFQ etc., alignment with Government Policy (e.g. FET Strategy, Expert Group on Future Skills etc.), avoidance of training duplication *inter alia*. • **Administrative** requirements relate to compliance with the DES/Skillnets Funding Agreement and Mandate (2011), caps on administrative and management costs, levels of private funding, overall number of networks, caps on funding carryover to subsequent years, compliance with Dept. of Finance Code of Practice etc.) • '**Particular**' requirements relate to accounting practices, acknowledgement of funding received, value for money, alignment with Labour Market Policy, audited accounts etc. In order to secure the future viability of the Skillnets initiative, Skillnet Ireland (and their associated networks) must meet these stated requirements.

	Skillnet Ireland will receive total exchequer funding of €63 million in 2025 through the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. Skillnet Ireland's exchequer funding will be further boosted by up to €30 million in private sector matched funding, amounting to a total investment of between €90 and €100 million to empower workforce development within enterprise in 2025. The Training Networks Programme (TNP) is the main funding stream which supports First Polymer Training Skillnet (FPTS). In the same way as the Skillnet Ireland organization is accountable to the Department under the Skillnets Funding Agreement, individual Skillnets are accountable to the Skillnet Ireland organization under the Skillnet Business Networks Operating Guidelines (SBNOG).
2.	**Skillnet Ireland.**
	Role Skillnet Ireland accepts proposals to approve applicant Skillnets through an online portal. Thereafter Skillnet Ireland has a support and monitoring role for all of the individual Skillnets. All Skillnets have a reporting line to the Network Contracting Organisation and to Skillnet Ireland. A Development Advisor (DA) from Skillnet Ireland is allocated to each network to provide support and monitor the network performance in the following main areas: • Network Management • Network Communications • Network Finance • Network Training & Activity • The Skillnet Ireland On-Line Reporting System Training and technical support A periodic Compliance Visit assesses the network's operational compliance with the financial, performance and quality metrics defined in the Operating Guidelines. The outcome of the visit is a Compliance Report which rates individual characteristics of the Network operation in terms of risk (significant, important, minor) and recommendations on best practice. The NCO representative is then obliged to respond in writing to Skillnet Ireland on any required corrective action identified in the Compliance Report.

	In addition, unannounced ad-hoc quality assurance visits are periodically conducted by Skillnet Ireland representatives to sit in on training events and to discuss the event with learners and tutors as well as with the Network Manager.
3.	**Network Contracting Organisation (Ibec)** 
	Each Skillnet network will have a network contracting organisation that will take responsibility for the activities of the network and receive funds from Skillnet Ireland on behalf of the network. They are often industry or enterprise organisations. In many cases employer organisations e.g. industry associations, federations and chambers) act as network contracting organisations on behalf of their member companies. In other cases, employee organisations, e.g. trade unions, have taken leadership of the process, working with company management to facilitate a network. Local Enterprise Offices and third-level institutions are also eligible to act as contracting organisations. Individual companies can also act as contracting organisations on behalf of the network members. **Role** The contracting organisation is required to ensure good corporate governance and plays an active role in overseeing the financial management of the network. The contracting organisation should not benefit financially / profit from the network in any way. Each network has a contracting organization, typically a company whose responsibilities include: • Acting as the contracting party with Skillnet Ireland. • Complying with the terms of the Funding Agreement and General Conditions • Establishing the network's steering group • The appointment of a network manager • The appointment of a network promoter representative • Informing Skillnet Ireland in writing of any changes to personnel, addresses, email addresses or other contact details

1.2.2 Internal Governance

4.	**Academic Council**	Academic Council
	The Academic Council ensures the academic integrity of training provision at FPTS. It ensures the separation of financial and educational decision making, and the separation of responsibility for programme development from those who approve it. Decisions made by the Academic Council are made in collaboration with other stakeholders including the Centre/Network Manager and the Steering Group (who represent the polymer processing industry). The responsibilities of the Academic Council include: • Oversight of academic provision and protection of academic standards. • Compliance with QQI QA (provider re-engagement, programme validation) • Facilitating the learner voice in programme provision • Adjudication in instances of complaint or appeal • Programme approval, monitoring, review and implementation of improvements • Appointing external QA personnel and review of external reports • Ensuring achievement of programme-related KPIs • Risk identification and monitoring • Learner advocacy (supports, resources, welfare) • Promote and guide pedagogical best practice • Formation and dissolution of sub-committees • Ensuring the quality and completeness of public information • Self-regulation Full details of the Academic Council responsibilities are documented in their Terms of Reference (FPTS-TOR-AC-001).	
5.	**Steering Group (incl. Network Promoter)**	Steering Group
	The Steering Group comprises representatives from member companies and one Ibec representative. The Network Manager is also part of the Steering Group. The Steering Group's main functions are to: Role • Be the voice of industry in guiding the strategic direction of the network • Assist the Academic Council in the adoption of new programmes and revisions to existing programmes • Provide a link between the contracting organisation and member companies • Assist the network manager in managing the network • Participate in the procurement process and monitor network expenditure	

- Members can be representatives of a public body (e.g. SOLAS, Local Enterprise Board) however, they cannot be in receipt of any benefits, financially or otherwise, from the network. They can act in an advisory capacity only.

Additional members:
The **Network Promoter** is an individual appointed by the contracting organisation whose role is to champion the aims of the network. The promoter should be a member of the Steering Group.
The **Development Advisor (DA)**, a senior member of the Skillnet Ireland Organisation, periodically sits in on Steering Group meetings.

Full details of the Steering Group responsibilities are documented in their Terms of Reference (FPTS-TOR-SG-001).

6. First Polymer Training Skillnet Network Management Team.

Network Management Team

A Network Manager is appointed by the contracting organisation. Operating in collaboration with the Academic Council and the Steering Group, the network manager's role is to lead the Network Management Team in the implementation of the Network Plan.

Responsibilities:

- Manage the day-to-day operation of the Network
- Recruit and train Network Management staff to assist in the day-to-day running of the network.
- Participate in governance groups for the management of training provision
- Ensure timely and complete provision of data to relevant stakeholders including Skillnet Ireland, Ibec, QQI, staff, learners *inter alia*
- Provide administration resources to manage the network
- Report to the contracting organisation and the network steering group
- Adjudication in instances of complaint or appeal
- Appoint of external independent adjudication in the event of escalated appeals.
- Manage finances/budgets
- Implement a fair and transparent procurement process, seek tenders, negotiate with suppliers
- Plan and organise events
- Communicating with member companies
- Submit reports to Skillnet Ireland
- Adhere to Skillnet Ireland operational, procurement and branding guidelines
- Participate in training as required by Skillnet Ireland
- Perform other roles and responsibilities as may be decided by Skillnet Ireland or the NCO.

	• Conduct all network duties in accordance with the guidelines Full details of the Centre Manager responsibilities are documented in their Terms of Reference (FPTS-TOR-CM-002).

1.3 Governance personnel

#	Stakeholder	Name and Title
1.	The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.	Minister for Further and Higher Education
2.	Skillnet Ireland	CEO Skillnet Ireland
3.	Director at Network Contracting Organisation	Mark McAuley (Ibec - Polymer Technology Ireland)
4.	Academic Council	1. T.J. Hughes (Chair) – Enterprise Ireland 2. Alan Harrington – Tutor Representative 3. Oleg Aleksandrov – Learner Representative 4. David Mulligan – Head of Mechatronics (ATU) 5. John Costello – Midlands Regional Skills Manager 6. Catherine Collins – FPTS Network Manager (Network Management Representative)
5.	Steering Group (incl. Network **Promoter**)	1. Sean Nolan (Chair – West Pharmaceutical Services) 2. Catherine Collins (FPTS Centre Manager) 3. Kenny O'Brien - Applied Polymer Technology Gateway 4. Mark McAuley (Director at Network Contracting Organisation – Ibec) 5. Pat Whyte – Invermed 6. Justin Wallace – Trend Technologies Ltd 7. Kevin Heffernan – Jabil Healthcare 8. John Brennan – Spectrum Plastics Group 9. Kieran Donlon – Medtronic 10. Louis Goor – JL Goor Ltd 11. TJ Hughes – Enterprise Ireland 12. Paul Bryan – P3 Solutions 13. Joanne Fayne – Teleflex Medical 14. Aoife McDonnell – Irish Life Sciences
6.	Development Advisor (Skillnet Ireland Representative)	Justin Purcell (Development Advisor – Skillnet Ireland)

7.	First Polymer Training Skillnet Network Management Team	Catherine Collins (FPTS Network Manager) Alan Harrington (Technical Training Specialist FPTS) Christine Harkin (Centre Co-Ordinator)