

Regional Benchmarking tool South West trial out

Introduction

The Regional Benchmarking questionnaire was developed as an interactive tool, to be completed on line and the results to be analysed live. It was agreed at the March 2006 Partner meeting in Brussels that we trial out the questionnaire on 30 businesses in the size range 20-250. We decided that the best way for us to reach these enterprises was through the University of Exeter Business Leaders Forum. We took the questionnaire to the July meeting offering the incentive that all completed entries would be put in the draw for a bottle of champagne or some Belgian chocolates.

In the event most people were very interested to take part and we had 35 responses. Unfortunately only 8 of these were from businesses in the 20-250 size range, the makeup was as follows;

Organisation type	Number of responses
Public Sector	16
Business size 1-20	4
Business size 20-250	8
Business size >250	7
Total	35

We have since sent the questionnaire out by email to two more business networks in the region, but so-far only one person has responded, taking our total responses to 36. It has been suggested that the wording in the questions could be made more straight forward.

There was only a small amount of difference in between the responses from the private and public sector. Given the sample size, it was not really possible to distinguish to any great extent, however I have commented where I thought the difference was interesting or significant.

The 'indifferent' option makes the results slightly less clear, so it could be an idea to only have the 4 options. In this context indifference implies a lack of opinion, and the questionnaire is asking for opinions, so in my analysis I have mainly disregarded the indifferent column, except where people's indifference is interesting.

The other proviso of course is that the sample is small so there is no real statistical weight to these results, so this is more an exercise about how we can interpret the results than giving us any useful or comparable data.

I am presenting the results in two ways so that we can compare these to our partner regions in different ways. I have calculated a score for each of the questions, where 5 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree, as a single figure functions well as an indicator. The score disregards the 'indifferent' responses as discussed above. I also present the results in terms of the percentages

and count of the responses to each of the questions. I am still hopeful we will get some more responses from the businesses, so I will add these to the analysis when/if they come.

The Results

The results of this survey show a bit of a mixed picture, but they match fairly well with those from the signal panel.

People largely see globalisation as an opportunity for the region,

The labour market in the South West is not seen as healthy by representatives of the public sector and those from businesses with less than 250 employees, whereas the majority of those representing the larger enterprises see the labour market as healthy.

More people felt that the education system in the South West DOES produce people with the skills that enterprises within the region need, there was no real difference between the public and private sector, although there was more agreement from the private sector.

The policy makers in the region are NOT seen as effective at engaging businesses either by the public or private sector although the feeling was stronger from the private sector.

Regional policy is not seen as holistic, the main response here was from the public sector as most of the private sector were 'indifferent'.

All agreed that the citizens are not adequately engaged in regional policy development, although the businesses in the size range 20-250 were less certain about this than the other categories.

Slightly more people felt that the South West is NOT an inclusive society although, this was felt strongly by the public sector where 63% disagreed with the statement, as opposed to 26% of the private sector.

The sentiment was strong (81%) that the environmental and cultural heritage in the South West make a significant contribution to regional economic growth.

Most people agreed that political culture within the region is factionalised and competitive and damages the prospects for regional economic development.

There was overall optimism that the region has assets and attributes which provide a foundation for dynamic development and growth. There was majority agreement on this and more enthusiasm from the private sector.

Marginally more people felt that the region does not offer coherent and effective business support, although strangely this was felt more strongly in the public sector with 42% of the private sector group saying the region does offer good support.

The table shows the score for each question and the total percentage and the count;

	Score		Strongly Agree	Agree	Indiff.	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Globalisation presents the region with more opportunities than threats.	4.2	%	25	63.9	8.3	2.8	
		Count	9	23	3	1	
2. The labour market in the South West is healthy and is effective at meeting businesses' skills and labour needs	2.8	%		33.3	19.4	44.4	2.8
		Count		12	7	16	1
3. The education and training systems in the South West produce people with the skills that enterprises within the region need.	3.3	%	2.8	44.4	27.8	22.2	2.8
		Count	1	16	10	8	1
4. Policy makers within the region are NOT effective at engaging businesses in a dialogue about regional development priorities	3.6	%	5.6	47.2	30.6	16.7	
		Count	2	17	11	6	
5. Regional policy is holistic, bringing economic, social and environmental priorities together within a coherent overall plan.	2.7	%		19.4	41.7	38.9	
		Count		7	15	14	
6. Citizens within the region are inadequately engaged in regional policy development.	4.0	%	11.1	66.7	16.7	5.6	
		Count	4	24	6	2	
7. The South West is an inclusive society which promotes the well-being of all.	2.9	%	5.6	30.6	22.2	36.1	5.6
		Count	2	11	8	13	2
8. The environment and cultural heritages within the South West make a significant positive contribution to regional economic growth.	4.1	%	19.4	61.1	13.9	5.6	
		Count	7	22	5	2	
9. Political culture within the region is factionalised and competitive and damages the prospects for regional economic development	3.5	%	2.8	47.2	30.6	19.4	
		Count	1	17	11	7	
10. The region has assets and attributes which provide a foundation for dynamic development and growth	4.0	%	13.9	66.7	13.9	5.6	
		Count	5	24	5	2	
11. The region offers a coherent and effective range of business support services to enterprises in the region.	2.9	%	5.6	27.8	25.0	38.9	2.8
		Count	2	10	9	14	1



Regional Key Competencies

- a way to manage structural changes [AT6]

Annex 1

Score methodology

Formula for calculating the score is as follows;

$$\frac{\text{Number Strongly Agree} \times 5 + \text{Number Agree} \times 4 + \text{Number Disagree} \times 2 + \text{Number Strongly Disagree} \times 1}{\text{Total number} - \text{Number Indifferent}}$$

