Stakeholder Consultation Workshop on the Development of the Zambia MCs Framework

Findings of the Zambia Micro-credentials Surveys

25th March 2026

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Introduction and Rationale

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Introduction and Rationale

Zambia is exploring the role of micro-credentials within its skills development and lifelong learning system as part of broader efforts to strengthen skills recognition and labour market responsiveness.

This policy moment offers an opportunity to consider how new forms of skills recognition can complement existing qualifications structures while supporting national priorities related to employment, productivity, and inclusive growth.

A baseline survey conducted in December 2024 focused on the current state of micro-credentials and their relationship to the national qualifications system (23 respondents).

The follow-up survey conducted in Jan-Feb 2026 aimed to deepen understanding of skills needs, employer engagement, and recognition conditions across different stakeholder groups and sectors (50 respondents).

Survey findings to contribute to national policy dialogue on the design, development, delivery, quality assurance, recognition and uptake of micro-credentials in Zambia.

Together, the surveys provide an evidence base for policy options for a national micro-credentials framework in Zambia.
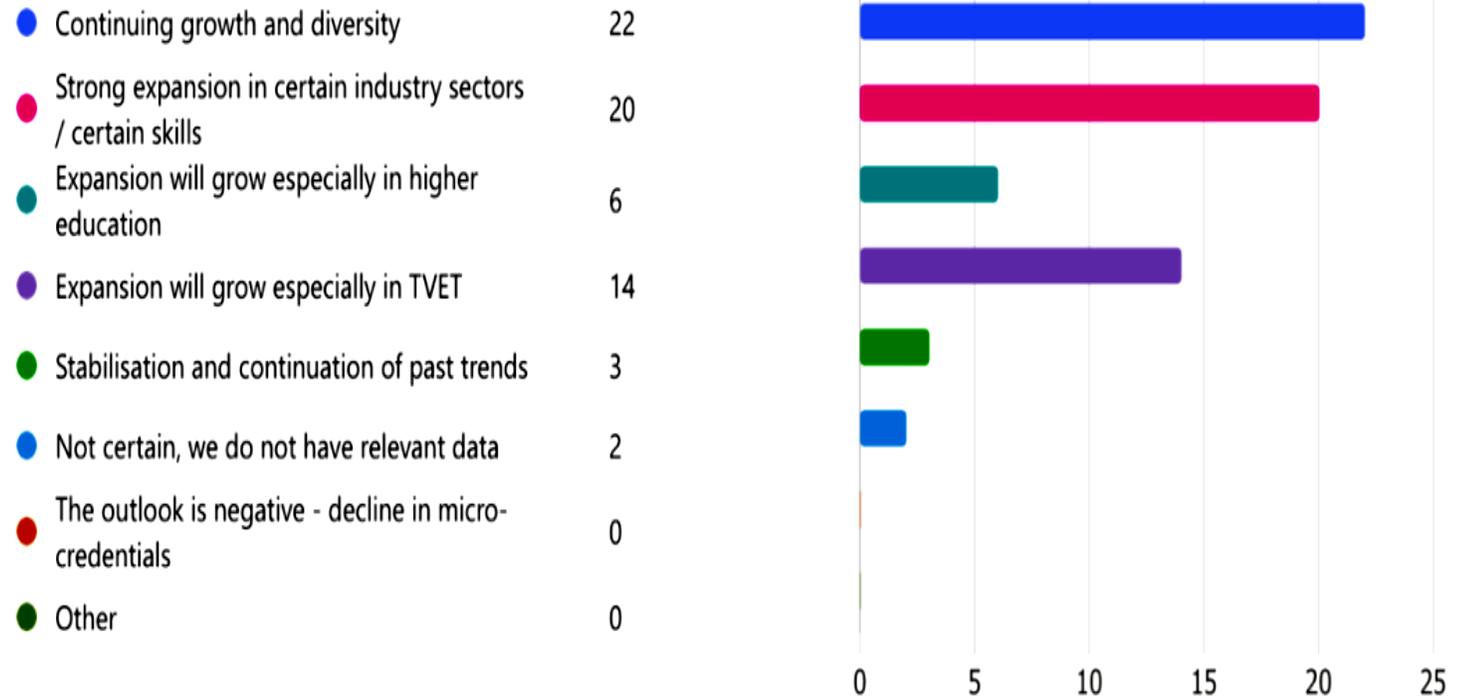
Key Findings of the Zambia Micro-credentials Surveys

Summary of key findings from the 1st survey

- **<u>Growth and Prospects of Micro-Credentials:</u>**

Respondents predominantly anticipate sustained growth, diversification, and sector-specific expansion of micro-credentials, with the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector identified as having the greatest potential for development.

3. What is the outlook for expansion of micro-credentials in Zambia? You can select up to 3 relevant options.

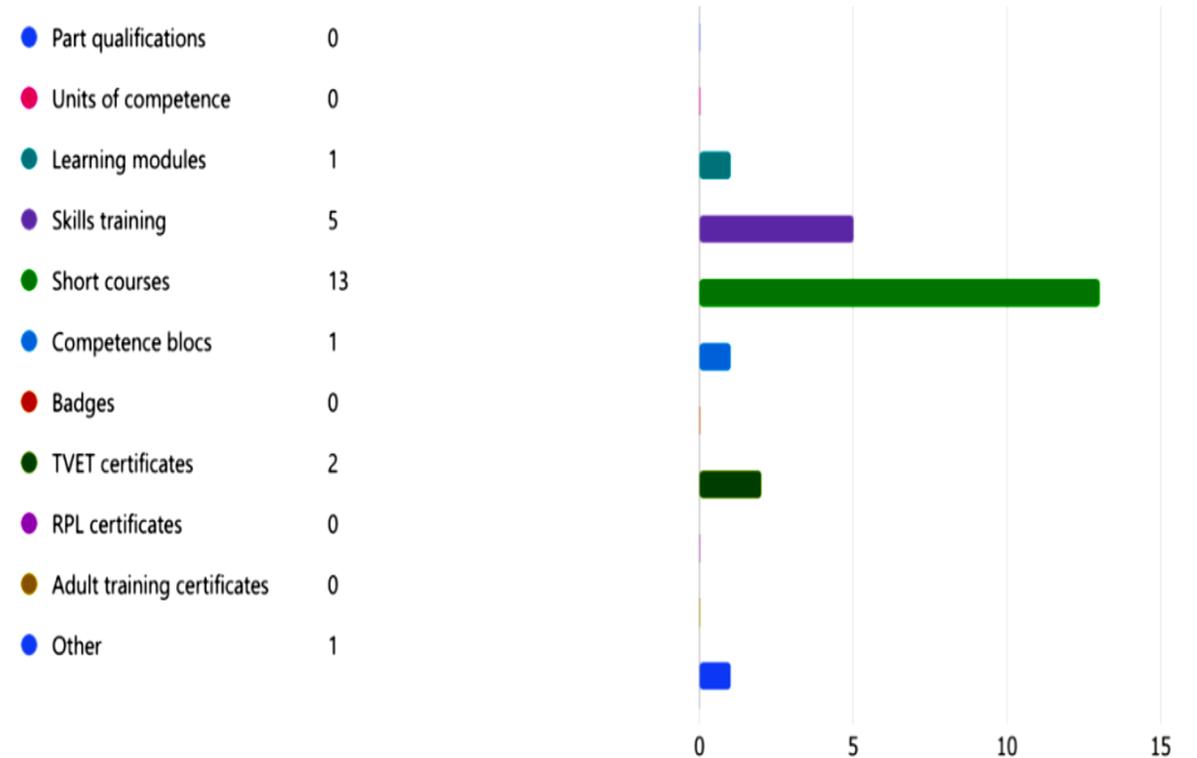| Option	Count
Continuing growth and diversity	22
Strong expansion in certain industry sectors / certain skills	20
Expansion will grow especially in higher education	6
Expansion will grow especially in TVET	14
Stabilisation and continuation of past trends	3
Not certain, we do not have relevant data	2
The outlook is negative - decline in micro-credentials	0
Other	0

Summary of key findings from the 1st survey…

- **<u>Provision of Micro-Credentials:</u>**

Approximately half of the respondents indicated that they currently provide micro-credentials of various types. Terminology varies considerably, with "short courses" being the most frequently used designation for offerings that align with the concept of micro-credentials.

5. If your institution offers or recognises micro-credentials (or proxies), please could you name them? Please select the relevant responses - as many as needed.

Part qualifications	0
Units of competence	0
Learning modules	1
Skills training	5
Short courses	13
Competence blocs	1
Badges	0
TVET certificates	2
RPL certificates	0
Adult training certificates	0
Other	1

Summary of key findings from the 1st survey…

ACQF

- **National Definition of Micro-Credentials:**
  - **TEVETA:** "Qualifications that do not fall on the National Qualifications framework but are very essential in the economy. We call them Skills Award".

  - **Lusaka Apex Medical University:** "Skills and knowledge obtained through short course programs".

  - **Copperbelt University:** "The term micro-credential is not used commonly. The term 'short course' is common relating to short duration interventions to enhance knowledge and skills of participants in various areas of need".

Summary of key findings from the 1st survey…

- **National Definition of Micro-Credentials:…**

  o **Zambia Air Services Training Institute:** "This is a series of courses that culminate in a digital badge from an accredited university. They let employers and your professional network know that you have proficiency in a subject area. certify the learning outcomes of short-term learning experiences, for example a short course or training. They offer a flexible, targeted way to help people develop the knowledge, skills and competences they need for their personal and professional development".

  o **ZCAS University:** "Micro-credential is a short, focused certification program that demonstrates an individual's competence in a specific skill or area of expertise. It is designed to be quicker and more targeted than traditional degrees or certifications, often focusing on practical, job relevant skills".

Summary of key findings from the 1st survey…
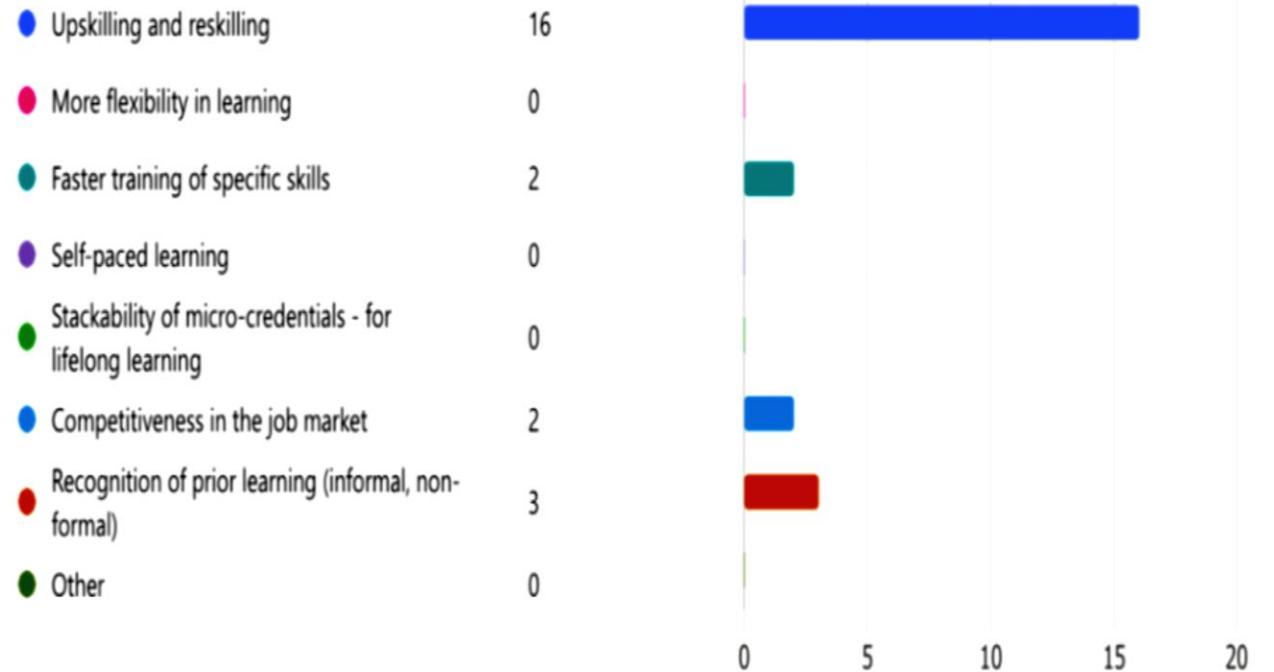
- **Target User Groups:**

  o Public sector employees

  o Employees in private enterprises.

  *Notably, low-qualified men and women were not identified as target groups in the submissions.

- **Perceived Benefits for Users:**

  Upskilling and reskilling were the most frequently cited benefits of micro-credentials for learners.

7. From your experience what are the benefits of micro-credentials for individuals in the Zambian context? You can select more than 1 option, as adequate.

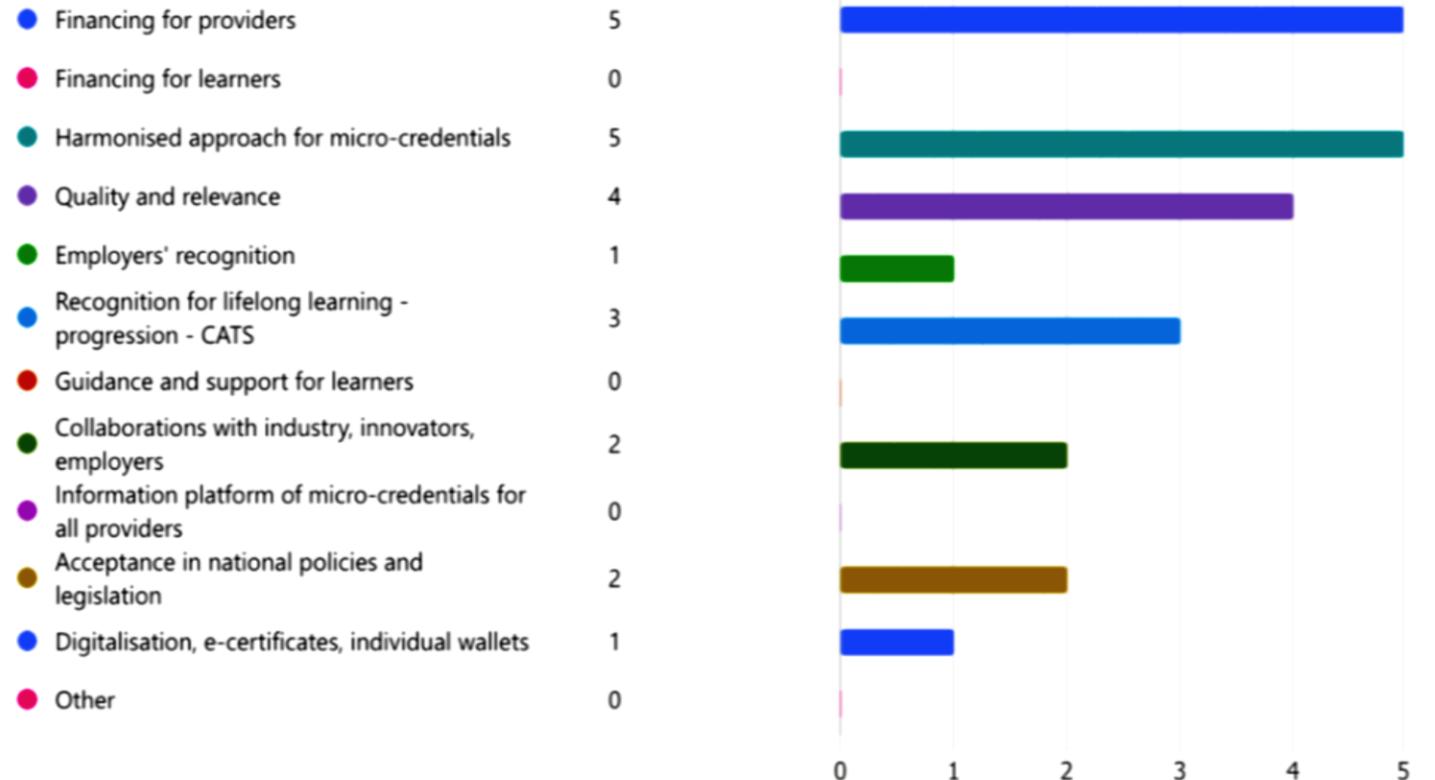| Benefit	Count
Upskilling and reskilling	16
More flexibility in learning	0
Faster training of specific skills	2
Self-paced learning	0
Stackability of micro-credentials - for lifelong learning	0
Competitiveness in the job market	2
Recognition of prior learning (informal, non-formal)	3
Other	0

- **<u>Key Challenges Identified:</u>**

o Lack of integration into the formal education and training system and the NQF.

o Limited recognition.

o Absence of standardisation and weak linkages to occupational standards.

o High cost of provision.

o Inadequate support, infrastructure, and material resources.

Summary of key findings from the 1st survey…

- **<u>Proposed Improvements for Uptake and Impact:</u>**

o Increased financing for providers.

o A harmonised national approach to micro-credentials.

o Assurance of quality and relevance.

o Improved recognition and alignment with lifelong learning progression pathways, including CATS.

9. What needs to be improved to further develop and expand uptake and impact of micro-credentials in Zambia? You can select several options, as relevant.

|	
Financing for providers	5
Financing for learners	0
Harmonised approach for micro-credentials	5
Quality and relevance	4
Employers' recognition	1
Recognition for lifelong learning - progression - CATS	3
Guidance and support for learners	0
Collaborations with industry, innovators, employers	2
Information platform of micro-credentials for all providers	0
Acceptance in national policies and legislation	2
Digitalisation, e-certificates, individual wallets	1
Other	0

Summary of key findings from the 1st survey…

- **Policy Development and Integration into the NQF:**

o There was unanimous agreement among respondents on the urgency and importance of developing a coherent national policy on micro-credentials.

o Furthermore, 87% of respondents expressed support for the integration of micro-credentials into the NQF.

11. The revised ZQF shall integrate micro-credentials and support their quality and harmonisation. What is your position?

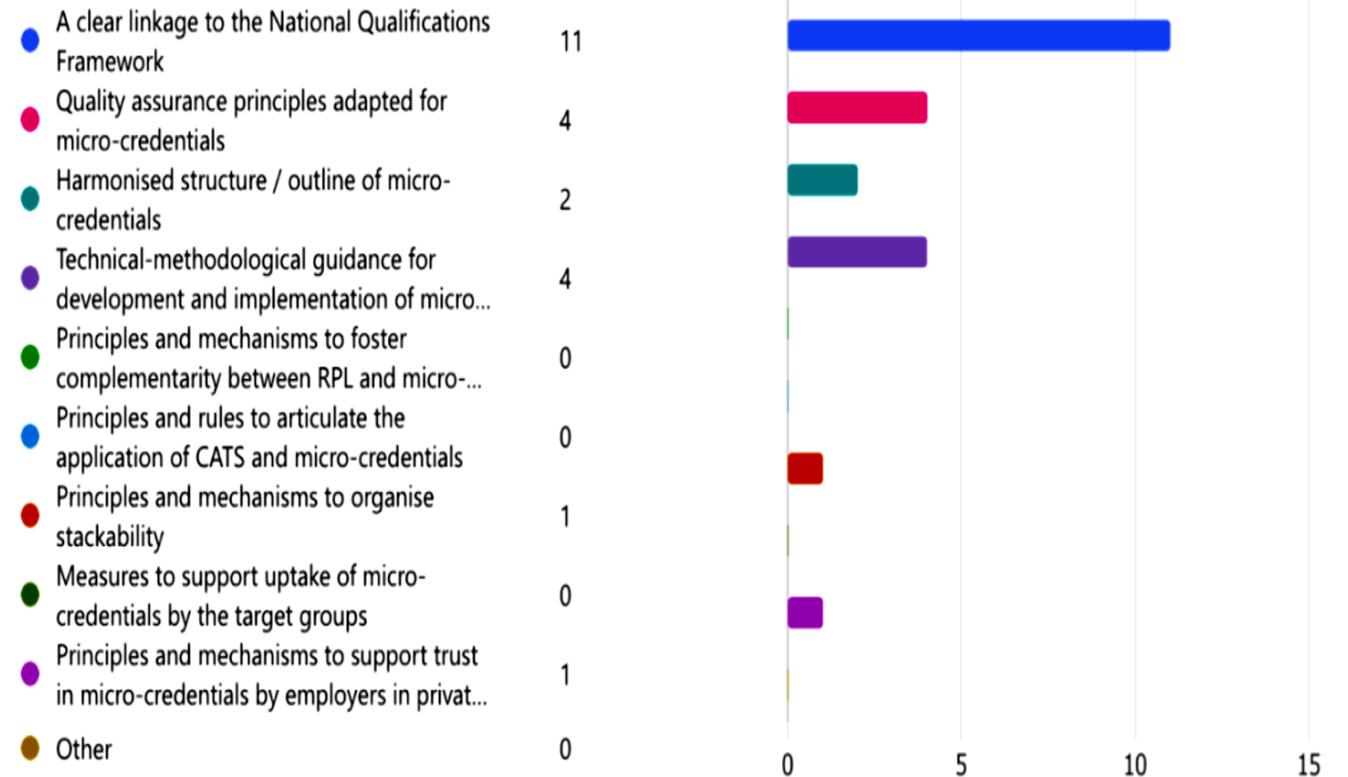|	
● I agree	6
● I agree but need more dialogue and understanding on the options to do it well	14
● I am not certain, I need more dialogue and understanding on the topic	3
● I disagree	0
● Other	0

13%
26%
61%
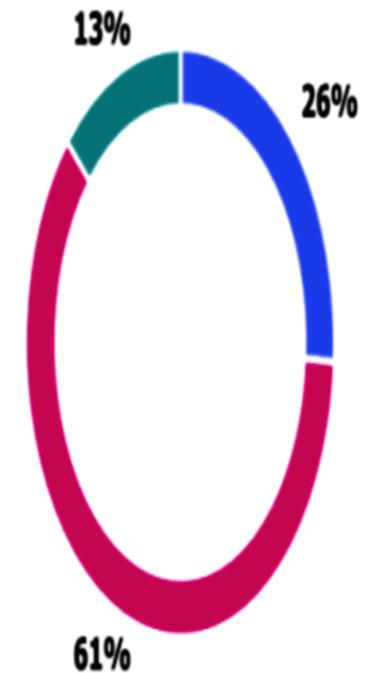
Summary of key findings from the 1st survey…

- **Preferred Features of a Future Micro-Credentials Framework:**

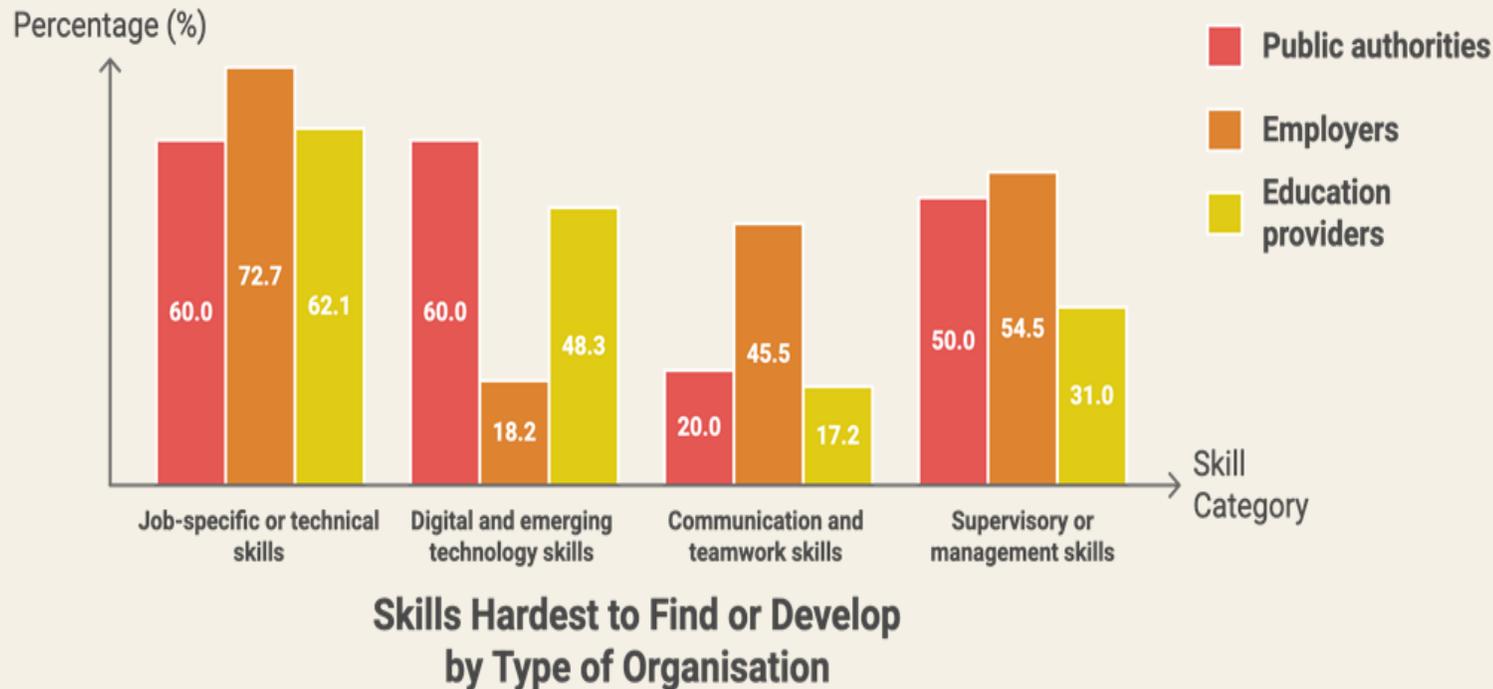Three components were most frequently prioritised for inclusion in a future Zambian micro-credentials framework:

o Explicit linkage to the NQF.

o Quality assurance principles adapted to micro-credentials.

o Technical and methodological guidance for their development and implementation.

12. What should a future Micro-credentials policy framework in Zambia entail. Please you can select as many options as relevant

Option	Count
A clear linkage to the National Qualifications Framework	11
Quality assurance principles adapted for micro-credentials	4
Harmonised structure / outline of micro-credentials	2
Technical-methodological guidance for development and implementation of micro...	4
Principles and mechanisms to foster complementarity between RPL and micro-...	0
Principles and rules to articulate the application of CATS and micro-credentials	0
Principles and mechanisms to organise stackability	1
Measures to support uptake of micro-credentials by the target groups	0
Principles and mechanisms to support trust in micro-credentials by employers in privat...	1
Other	0

Summary of key findings from the 2nd survey

- ## Skills hardest to find or develop by type of organisation:

Skills Hardest to Find or Develop by Type of Organisation

Percentage (%) by Skill Category:

- Public authorities
- Employers
- Education providers

Skill Category	Public authorities	Employers	Education providers
Job-specific or technical skills	60.0	72.7	62.1
Digital and emerging technology skills	60.0	18.2	48.3
Communication and teamwork skills	20.0	45.5	17.2
Supervisory or management skills	50.0	54.5	31.0

Main Takeaways:
- Important to link micro-credentials to skills anticipation and labour-market intelligence.
- Address emerging needs in a timely manner

Summary of key findings from the 2nd survey…

- **Main Takeaway:**
  o MCs will provide a quicker option to responding to evolving workplace/ industry demands thereby aiding in bridging the skills gap in a timely manner

- **Skills gaps and alignment with training provision:**
  o Findings suggest that alignment must be treated as a system function: identifying skills needs through sector dialogue and labour market intelligence, translating these into clear learning outcomes, and ensuring that training content and assessment practices can be updated and recognised quickly.
  o Micro-credentials are most likely to add value where shorter training and credible recognition can bridge the gap between evolving workplace requirements and slower-moving qualification structures.

- **Drivers of skills needs and response mechanisms:**
  o When new skills needs arise, the most frequently selected responses relate to changes in training provision.
  o Updating existing training content or curricula is selected by 54.0% of respondents, and 52.0% select training linked to new tools or technologies.
  o Practical workplace exposure is selected by 44.0%.
  o Smaller shares select the emergence of new job roles or tasks (38.0%) and the need for formal certification (36.0%).
  o Across the response options, selections concentrate on training adaptation and additional skills development rather than on structural labour market responses.

Summary of key findings from the 2nd survey…

- **Main Takeaways:**
  - Even though adjustments to training content was selected by 66% of the respondents as a follow-up action to address identified skills needs, the process of updating training content typically takes long.
  - Thus, development of micro-credentials (short courses) could offer a faster solution to addressing skills needs.

- **Organisational involvement in skills discussions:**
  - Involvement in discussions about skills needs is reported by 76.0% of respondents, while 16.0% report no involvement and 8.0% are unsure.
  - Among those reporting involvement, discussions with employers are selected by 73.7%, and discussions with education and training institutions by 65.8%.
  - Discussions with government ministries or agencies are selected by 57.9%, while sector associations are selected by 42.1%.
  - Employers report discussions with training providers at 81.8%, and public authorities report discussions with employers at 90.0%.

- **Actions taken when skills needs are identified:**
  - After skills needs are identified, adjustments to training content are selected by 66.0% of respondents, and the development of new short courses by 54.0%.
  - Collaboration with employers is selected by 40.0%, while policy or regulatory adjustments are selected by 30.0%.
  - A further 18.0% select that no formal follow-up action typically occurs.
  - The most frequently selected follow-up actions are therefore training-oriented, with smaller shares selecting policy-level responses.

Summary of key findings from the 2nd survey…

ACQF

- **What makes it difficult for training to respond quickly to industry needs?**

o No continuous forecasting of skills or rapid feedback loops for anticipation of skills.

o Capacity and coordination constraints.

o Limited collaboration with employers.

o Slow-moving policy or regulatory changes.

Summary of key findings from the 2nd survey…

ACQF

- **Main Takeaway:**
o There is need to prioritise shorter and more flexible learning formats, and promote the recognition of skills acquired outside traditional programmes – MCs as results of and tools for RPL.

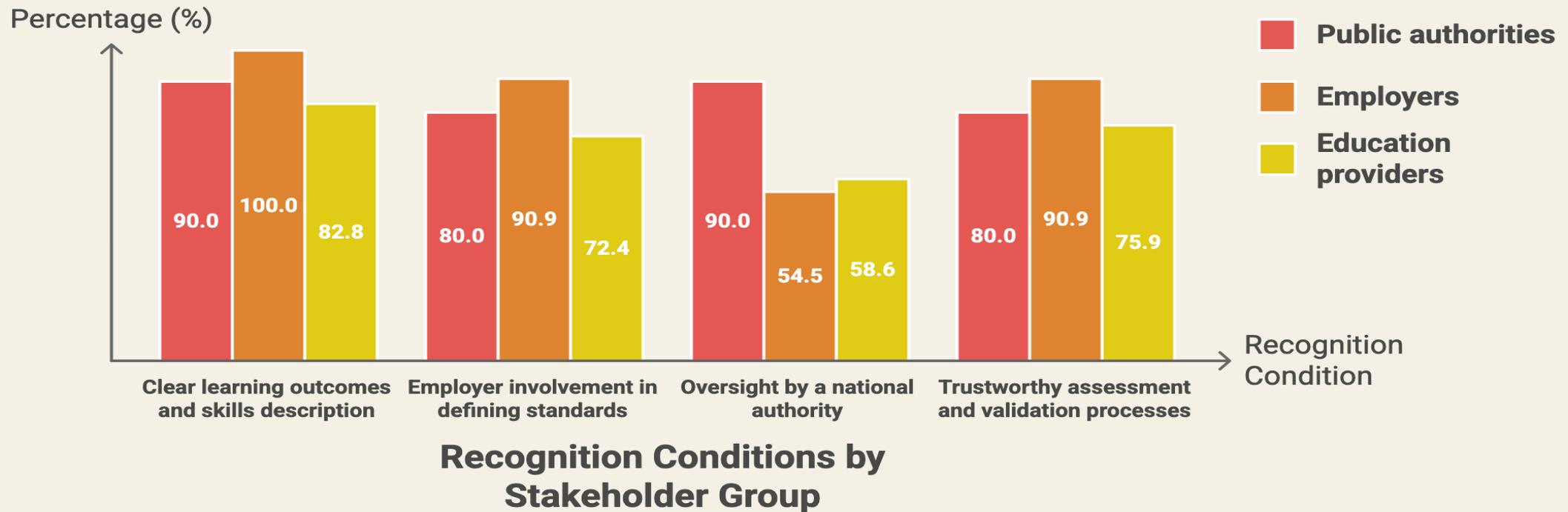- **Importance of short and flexible training options:**
o Short and flexible training options are rated as highly important for responding to skills needs. Across all respondents, 82.0% rate this as very important, while 14.0% rate it as somewhat important and 4.0% rate it as not very important.

o This strong level of agreement indicates that flexibility in training delivery is widely perceived as a key requirement for responding to evolving skills demand. Employers report particularly high importance, with 90.9% rating short and flexible training as very important.

- **Types of learning or recognition most needed:**
o Across all respondents, short targeted training programmes are selected by 60.0%, while recognition of prior learning is selected by 54.0%. Digital certification or portable proof of skills is selected by 46.0%, and formal qualifications by 38.0%.

o These responses indicate that respondents most frequently prioritise shorter and more flexible learning formats, alongside mechanisms that recognise skills acquired outside traditional programmes.

o Employers most frequently select short targeted programmes (72.7%), while public authorities most frequently select recognition of prior learning (60.0%), reflecting variation in emphasis between immediate training needs and system-level recognition pathways.

Summary of key findings from the 2nd survey…

- **<u>Recognition, trust, and quality assurance:</u>**

Percentage (%)

| Public authorities | Employers | Education providers |

Clear learning outcomes and skills description: 90.0, 100.0, 82.8
Employer involvement in defining standards: 80.0, 90.9, 72.4
Oversight by a national authority: 90.0, 54.5, 58.6
Trustworthy assessment and validation processes: 80.0, 90.9, 75.9

Recognition Condition

Recognition Conditions by Stakeholder Group

Summary of key findings from the 2nd survey

Recognition Conditions by Sector

Recognition condition	Education and training	Tourism and hospitality	Agriculture and agri-business	Mining
Clear learning outcomes and skills description	85.7%	92.3%	100.0%	100.0%
Employer involvement in standards	71.4%	84.6%	83.3%	100.0%
Oversight by national authority	57.1%	61.5%	83.3%	80.0%
Trustworthy assessment and validation processes	78.6%	84.6%	100.0%	100.0%

Main Takeaway:

Factors that are highly likely to affect the recognition, trust, and quality of MCs are:

- transparency of learning outcomes
- credible assessment processes
- employer involvement in setting standards for MCs
- oversight by a national authority

Summary of key findings from the 2nd survey...

ACQF

- **Main Takeaways:**
  - There is currently low recognition of skills gained through work experience (work-based learning).
  - This can be partly attributed to low awareness levels on existing assessment processes, standards as well as recognition tools and rules.
  - MCs could be used to recognise work-based skills through the recognition of prior learning.

- **Recognition of skills gained through work experience:**
  - Work experience is reported as a common source of useful skills.
  - Across respondents, 70.0% report that gaining skills through work experience rather than formal training is very common, and 22.0% report it as somewhat common.
  - Recognition of these skills is reported at lower levels.
  - Wide recognition is selected by 18.0%, partial recognition by 52.0%, and limited recognition by 30.0%.

- **Barriers to recognising work-based skills:**
  - Barriers to recognising skills gained through work or experience cluster around how such skills are assessed and evidenced.
  - Lack of formal assessment processes is selected by 62.0% of respondents, and absence of clear standards by 58.0%.
  - In other words, workplace learning is not questioned as a source of competence; the gap lies in the tools and rules needed to translate that competence into trusted recognition.

What Next?

Whereto from here?

Develop a national micro-credentials framework which will facilitate the quality-assured design, delivery, recognition, and integration of micro-credentials within Zambia's education and skills development system

This aligns with ZAQA's mandate under the ZAQA Act No. 8 of 2024 and supports the implementation of the revised NQF, which now accommodates new forms of learning and qualification types, including micro-credentials