

Skills Delivery Landscape Review Call for Evidence– Colleges Scotland Response - December 2022

Introduction

Colleges Scotland is the collective voice for the college sector in Scotland, representing its interests and ensuring that colleges are at the heart of a world class education sector that is recognised, valued and available to all. Colleges Scotland, as the membership body, represents all 26 colleges in Scotland, which deliver both further education and around 24% of the provision of all higher education in Scotland.

Colleges Scotland has had extensive engagement with the Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) around Modern Apprenticeships, Foundation Apprenticeships and other key Scottish Government initiatives such as the Flexible Workforce Development Fund.

This work has included Lead Principals working on behalf of the College Principals' Group to articulate the college sector view around both strategic and practical elements of Scottish Government policy in relation to skills provision, and dialogue with SDS as the national skills agency.

Colleges Scotland welcomes the opportunity to provide views for the Skills Delivery Landscape Review around what a future landscape of skills provision could look like to support learners, communities, employers and the Scottish economy.

When colleges thrive, Scotland thrives, and we have considered the key questions 'what does good look like?' and 'what are the barriers to good?'

What Do Colleges Do?

Colleges are the powerhouses of Scotland's economy. Our skilled graduates contribute billions to Scotland's economy each year, across hugely diverse industries, in every community. Investment from the Scottish Government delivers significant gains for Scotland as a nation and allow colleges to support students at every stage of their learning journey, with qualifications, upskilling, re-training, or as part of their school experience.

Colleges in Scotland deliver 69 million hours of learning to around 213,135 learners every year, with the sector enabling around 8,000 students to progress into university each year, whilst working in partnership with businesses to re-skill and up-skill the workforce – 92,186 enrolments are linked to industry.

Colleges are also the biggest delivery agent of Modern Apprenticeships, supporting 11,534 students, whilst working closely with schools to provide opportunities for young people and offering vocational pathways into careers – 23% of school leavers go into further education from school (34% from the most deprived areas).

Colleges Scotland recognises the precarious financial position of Scotland and the UK as the after-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, turbulent macro-economic conditions with high inflation, and now a cost-of-living crisis, all impacting the fiscal position for the education and skills sector.

However, the underfunding of the college sector in recent years has led to significant financial challenges for all 26 colleges in Scotland. Colleges do 'everything' – provide learning and teaching,

work closely with employers, support vulnerable students in local communities and are regional hubs for skills.

The absence of sustainable investment has led to many colleges having to run voluntary severance schemes, cut budgets and the sector nationally requires at least £360m to make estates wind and watertight.

Colleges are reducing their capacity at a time when Scotland is facing severe skills shortages and will result in significant problems in health and social care, hospitality, digital and in tackling the climate emergency, if the skilled workforce is not in place. Inadequate resources are also damaging learners of all ages, harming the chances of Scotland's children and families and denting the delivery of a fairer, greener economy, reducing Scotland's ability to innovate.

In short, Scotland will miss out without an adequately resourced college sector. It will be harder for our country to thrive.

Key Sector Comments

What Does Good Look Like?

Below are the collective asks of the college sector. If these changes were to be implemented, the role and contribution of colleges in the skills delivery landscape in Scotland would be fully maximised.

Regardless of the future form of this landscape, which is in part a political decision for Scottish Government Ministers and elected members, it should allow for the following:

1. The articulation of a collective vision across both Tertiary education providers and the wider educational landscape. It is vital that discussions are education wide, rather than just the college sector. It is also vital that we have commitment to 'systems thinking' from all delivery partners, including a senior phase interface. It is vital that the outputs from the various different Reviews underway at this time form a consistent approach to help support the solutions required, and which collectively form a cohesive educational ecosystem going forward.
2. Colleges to plan and deliver apprenticeships and skills provision at the regional level. This approach should include a coherent and value for money commissioning system. Doing so will enable colleges to be the main delivery vehicles for regional skills needs (building on the work currently underway in Wales).
3. A single funding stream and single reporting structure within the skills delivery landscape, to reduce reporting burdens for colleges.
4. Colleges to be measured on impact within the skills delivery landscape as opposed to the current model of measuring input. A single impact framework, focusing on the planning and delivery of skills within regions and reflecting a single funding stream, should be introduced.

College Sector Solutions for the Skills Delivery Landscape

In addition to these overarching sector positions, we have the following key recommendations to make on behalf of the sector:

- Revisions should be made to the Outcome Agreement process, as recognised by the Scottish Funding Council in their review of [Coherent Provision and Sustainability](#), in order to create the flexibility for colleges to respond directly to needs of businesses in their regions.
- We would strongly request the removal of unnecessary bureaucracy and duplication within the existing skills and education system, particularly in reference to repeated SCQF levels and use

of existing funding and resources, in order to make this system simple and accessible as per the terms of reference.

- College students deserve parity of investment and Colleges Scotland has consistently called for stronger, longer-term funding to help colleges thrive. What is required is the same level of funding for the same accredited level delivered.
- We would recommend that colleges are provided with autonomy within an assurance framework to develop qualifications that respond to local industry needs and are built on a requirement for increasing levels of in work, on demand and short stackable credentials, qualifications and microcredentials.
- We would recommend that the future focus of delivery is on those higher-level skills required by industry and ensuring that the qualifications and assessment system related to these skills pathways are accelerated and agile to meet industry demand.
- In order to deliver value for money for the public purse, we would recommend that Modern Apprenticeships should be devolved to, and led by, colleges who understand their regional economy and are already a public asset.
- We would recommend that the existing structure and outcomes of Foundation Apprenticeships are subject to further review, with a focus on how schools are currently employing these as part of senior phase. The funding methodology for Foundation Apprenticeships would also benefit from being reviewed.
- We would recommend that the development of NOS are devolved to regional college structures, to leverage this deep integration with industry, and knowledge of their processes, and to help develop NOS in line with industry developments when it is needed.
- To deliver maximum value for the public purse and to avoid duplication, we would recommend all public sector training should be delivered by colleges in their capacities as public bodies, in line with procurement legislation.
- We would recommend that the Scottish Government recognises and proactively uses the college sector's extensive networks and unique reach to SMEs.
- We would recommend the establishment of a common CIAG infrastructure within colleges, and the establishment of a clear and consistent career development leadership role in colleges.
- We would recommend that the college sector is recognised as the one-stop shop for skills training at the local/regional level – they are at the heart of communities and have a strong understanding of reskilling and upskilling needs and wider education and training requirements.
- Introduce a clear set of statutory entitlements setting out what citizens should expect from a lifelong learning system.

Comments on the Call for Evidence – How to Deliver Good

Skills Delivery Landscape

The vision '*for a skills and education system that can provide individuals with the skills they need to have rewarding careers, and businesses with a skilled workforce which will enable the economy to flourish*' is agreeable and correct, but the actual mechanisms for delivery need careful consideration.

We would strongly suggest that the opportunity presented by this Review is fully utilised to reframe a system within the terms of reference.

Sector and Regional Skills Planning

There are multiple agencies and organisations involved in skills training and business development support which causes confusion in the marketplace and across the business sector.

The Audit Scotland report on [Planning for Skills](#), published in January of this year, evidenced the requirement for urgent action to ensure essential progress in improving how workforce skills are planned and provided.

Within this context, the college sector should be viewed as a one-stop shop for skills training at the local/regional level – they are at the heart of communities and have a strong understanding of reskilling and upskilling needs and wider education and training requirements.

A clear theme that has been communicated by colleges from discussions at local and regional levels is that businesses need simpler process/approaches in order to accessing funding for skills training, especially those SMEs who are not fully factoring skills requirements into business processes.

In order to have colleges at the heart of regional skills planning and to provide that simplicity for businesses, there must be clearer funding and information sharing processes that enable colleges to use investment and intelligence to develop skills activities for the benefit of local employers and regions, underpinned by a single, simplified reporting stream. This is activity that should be progressed regardless of the future structure of the skills delivery landscape.

The importance of Skills Alignment in developing curriculum plans for colleges which are agile and responsive to future needs is critical, with college employing relevant Skills Investment Plans and Regional Skills Investment Plans to align their planning to ensure the unique skills needs of local and regional employers and economies are met.

Clear College Role within Regional Skills Delivery Landscapes

Colleges exist with strong, regional partnership structures in place. The college system is unique in its close collaboration with its regional industry base, including through local economic partnerships. As a result, colleges are well placed to respond to the needs of the economic and social needs of their regions, and with SMEs and micro-businesses in particular, in line with the ambitions established by the Scottish Government in the [National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#), whilst also delivering better outcomes for learners.

Revisions should be made to the Outcome Agreement process, as recognised by the Scottish Funding Council in their review of [Coherent Provision and Sustainability](#), in order to create the flexibility for colleges to respond directly to needs of businesses in their regions. Broader funding pots must be consolidated but also complement activity and delivery, and not compete against one another.

With regards to skills structures in other places that are delivering outcomes in line with Scotland's ambitions, we would strongly advise the Scottish Government to consider developments in Wales, wherein all apprenticeship provision has been brought into colleges in order to better respond to regional economies and ensure better value for money.

Simplification and Fair Funding of Skills Delivery

We would strongly request the removal of unnecessary bureaucracy and duplication within the existing skills and education system, particularly in reference to repeated SCQF levels and use of existing funding and resources, in order to make this system simple and accessible as per the terms of reference.

As called for in the [Cumberford-Little Report](#), reform to the current funding model for the college sector should be delivered, so as directly to incentivise colleges' agility and speed of response to employer demand, whilst being transparent, and readily understood.

The Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) information document produced for the Education and Young People Committee ahead of its evidence session on Wednesday 5 October 2022 set out the following information:

- Funding per full time equivalent student in 2022/23 for university - £7558
- Funding per full time equivalent student in 2022/23 for college - £5054

- Difference of £2504 per student

In addition, as per this [parliamentary answer](#), there is a stark difference in the baseline amounts invested in college students, and the real disparities across our educational settings (figures below do not include tuition fees).

Average expenditure per place for each education level in real terms (2020-21 prices)	
Education level	2019-20
Pre-school	£7,397
Primary School	£6,143
Secondary School	£8,278
College	£4,321
University	£5,913

College students deserve parity of investment and Colleges Scotland has consistently called for stronger, longer-term funding to help students thrive. Funding should be the same in any part of the ecosystem for the same accredited level delivered. Currently, college funding covers the teaching element, but colleges require additional resource to ensure a great student experience, equity of opportunity and to ensure the necessary support for those cohorts of students requiring additional interventions. Equity of funding would also facilitate the development of new provision to deliver training and upskilling and reskilling activity to support the STEM pipeline and support the delivery of Scottish Government targets relating to sustainability.

Reform of Qualifications and Assessment

This spirit of reform should also extend to qualifications, as both qualifications and funding need to be truly person centred and responsive to the rapidly changing socio-economic landscape. We would recommend that colleges are provided with autonomy within an assurance framework to develop qualifications that respond to local industry needs and are built on a requirement for increasing levels of in-work, on demand and short stackable credentials, qualifications and microcredentials.

Within the skills ecosystem, the over reliance on four-year degrees, rather than two-year HNC/D, is leading to a shortage of higher level applied technical skills in areas such as engineering and further extending the learner journey because engineering graduates, for example, need to come back to college to get the required practical skills. Simultaneously, many young people are directed to university when the best route for the individual and the [economy](#) would be a shorter and in work programme of study that colleges offer.

We would recommend that the future focus of delivery is on those higher-level skills required by industry and ensuring that the qualifications and assessment system related to these skills pathways are accelerated and agile to meet industry demand.

Apprenticeships

Modern Apprenticeships

The current Modern Apprenticeship contracting model does not work. This system is currently inflexible and controlled at a national level, subsequently failing to reflect needs and industry knowledge at a regional level. The current system is very bureaucratic, compliance and rules based. This bureaucracy and compliance-based approach drives training provider behaviour and, in turn, the experience of apprentices and their employers.

Since 2019, Colleges Scotland has facilitated a Modern Apprenticeship Working Group (MAWG), working on behalf of the College Principals' Group, with a remit of working collaboratively with managing agents (MA) to identify and develop more sustainable delivery models across all sectors

and trades, which are appropriate for both the college sector and the managing agents, to ensure the continued delivery of Modern Apprenticeships.

As noted in the consultation paper, MA funding is based on a contribution-rate model which SDS administers, with contributions paid directly to the learning provider delivering the apprenticeship.

Over the last three years, the work of the MAWG has provided the evidence and reinforced historical concerns held by the college sector that the current contribution model and the fee structures within existing sub-contract agreements do not represent viable financial and operating models for colleges, as they do not cover associated costs, and in doing so do not provide value for money as a public sector funded activity.

In order to deliver this value for money, we would recommend that Modern Apprenticeships should be devolved to, and led by, colleges who understand their regional economy and are already a public asset. This will also deliver a better integration into the overall system and will also deliver value for the public pound, by reducing the levels of funding being top sliced by managing agents within the existing system.

Colleges exist with strong, regional partnership structures in place. The college system is unique in its close collaboration with its regional industry base. This structure is ideally suited for a devolved apprenticeship delivery and contracting process. One where the system relies less on rigid, centralised structures that are overly bureaucratic, and more on the flexibility to deliver the needs of each region in Scotland.

Foundation Apprenticeships

The purpose of the Foundation Apprenticeship programme is well supported by industry but feedback from colleges and employers suggests that the framework design could be enhanced to make the programme more attractive whilst providing better opportunities for learners. This feedback from employers and apprentices also suggests that the existing Foundation Apprenticeship program is excessively burdened by bureaucracy and administration.

We would recommend that the existing structure and outcomes of Foundation Apprenticeships are subject to further review, with a focus on how schools are currently employing these as part of senior phase. Concerns have been raised around the low number of learners progressing from a Foundation Apprenticeship into a Modern Apprenticeship, with consideration needing to be given to ensure they are most appropriately utilised. The funding methodology for Foundation Apprenticeships would also benefit from being reviewed.

National Occupational Standards (NOS)

NOS is an important part of the vocation skills landscape in Scotland, helping define and standardise what it means to be competent in the workplace.

Experience of NOS is that new development can be difficult and laborious. This process is centralised historically through Sector Skills Councils. They tend to struggle to achieve employer input and the result is that it is difficult for the standards to adapt quickly enough. NOS have to be more responsive to industry needs.

Colleges are working with regional industry every day and, in most cases, are on-site with industry regularly to support work-based learning. We would recommend that the development of NOS is devolved to regional college structures, to leverage this deep integration with industry, and knowledge of their processes, and to help develop NOS in line with industry developments when it is needed.

Upskilling and Reskilling

There are elements to be addressed around how upskilling and reskilling funding is delivered in future to ensure this both removes duplication and dual-funding issues and addresses specific skills themes around individual needs and sector demands.

Life-Long Learning with Long-Term Funding

To address these elements in practice a genuine long-term funding solution is required to support “Life-Long Learning” across the skills delivery landscape. There is a need to introduce a clear set of statutory entitlements setting out what citizens should expect from a lifelong learning system.

This long-term funding solution would also provide a stronger foundation to deliver the ambitions set out in the National Strategy for Economic Transformation, in particular with regards to the Skilled Workforce Policy Programme of Action, with colleges being a key partner in the delivery of Entrepreneurial People and Culture, New Market Opportunities, Productive Businesses and Regions and in developing a Fairer and More Equal Society.

Simultaneously, this funding solution will enable colleges to build on their key existing role in feeding and managing the future skills pipelines for key industries and sectors in Scotland, including Health and Social Care and Construction and Electrical Engineering and in supporting the skills-led recovery from the pandemic, with a key emphasis on the STEM agenda.

This solution, in the form of a single funding stream for colleges to employ on an agile basis, reflecting local skills requirements, will enable colleges to deliver upskilling and reskilling activity to an even greater extent than now.

This single funding stream should be underpinned by trust being placed in colleges with regards to accountability, in line with our overarching sector position of the implementation of a single monitoring and reporting system to give institutions adequate control and usage of public money and facilitate a move away from the current system which is inhibiting the full capacity of colleges within the existing landscape.

Public Sector Training

One particular aspect of the need to simplify upskilling and reskilling activity in Scotland concerns the current delivery of public sector training, which is an area in need of redress. To deliver maximum value for the public purse and to avoid duplication, we would recommend all public sector training should be delivered in colleges in their capacities as public bodies, and in line with public procurement legislation.

Digital

There has been particular duplication and a lack of joined-up thinking in the digital skills space. These themes are unpacked in greater detail in **Appendix One**.

The Future Technology Partnership (FTP) proposal seeks to expand Scotland’s digital talent to provide employers with the skills pipeline they need as we move towards a more digitised economy. The FTP would be a strategic collaboration of colleges from across Scotland with a shared goal of increasing and improving pathways for learners into the Digital Tech sector.

The FTP would coalesce existing and future activity around a shared purpose and create an efficient solution to providing digital talent for Scotland’s economy, whilst simplifying the digital skills delivery landscape and removing duplication by aligning thinking and initiatives.

Capitalising On New Opportunities

With regards to the Just Transition to Net-Zero, achieving this by 2045 will require transformational change across the economy and society, providing opportunities for:

- developing new, quality green jobs
- embedding green and circular economy skills
- increasing access to growing global green markets for Scottish businesses
- stimulating regional growth
- providing enhanced access to nature and the environment

Going forward colleges across Scotland will also continue to help Scottish workers, and Scottish apprentices, to keep pace with technological, environmental and labour market changes, to increase workforce and business resilience to future disruption and deliver transitions to a net-zero, low-carbon inclusive format in response to the Climate Emergency.

Colleges are ideally placed to support organisations across Scotland to rebuild businesses and their confidence and to do this with the net zero targets in mind, whilst creating opportunities to develop resource efficient, inclusive and sustainable economic approaches, which help address inequality and poverty.

We would recommend that the Scottish Government recognises and proactively uses the college sector's extensive networks and unique reach to SMEs, as colleges have a key role to play in supporting net-zero related innovation activity in these businesses, whilst driving regional economic developments and recoveries focused around moving towards a net zero economy and simultaneously maximising the opportunities for workers to develop their skills as part of these changes.

Careers and Young People

Colleges Scotland, working with the Career Review Programme Board, has been engaged with SDS in both the development and ongoing implementation of the Career Review recommendations in the college sector.

Across this activity, Colleges Scotland has been consistent in advising the Scottish Government of the unique requirements and opportunities of the college sector to provide CIAG support for all learners, and not just young learners, as part of a wider lifelong learning approach.

By way of providing context, 39% of college students are aged between 16-24 and in 2019-20, one fifth (20.9%) of 18–19-year-olds in the Scottish population attended college full-time. Colleges deliver over 70 million hours of learning, of which 6% is for Under 16s and 63% for 16-24-year-olds, with college also being the most popular destination for those from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds with 37% of school leavers moving into further education

Equity of access to quality CIAG provision for these learners is required, in addition to adult learners and those returning to education from the workforce to ensure we are not just focused on the target groups of students and young people as per the Career Review. To support this in practice we would recommend the establishment of a common CIAG infrastructure within colleges, and the establishment of a clear and consistent career development leadership role in colleges.

The Career Review Final Report included the recognition that “There is limited professionally qualified career guidance resource in Scotland’s colleges” and the reflection that “In many cases career support focuses on helping people find a pathway through the college, e.g. transferring from one course to another, rather than providing a longer-term view on the student’s career that extends into the labour market.

In order to provide this long-term view it is vital that different types of CIAG provision are in place for the different learner audiences served by the college sector, over and above the support given to young people, including for groups such as returners from the existing workforce. To deliver this person-centred focus the key role of college staff with industry experience has to be considered, and in enabling them to use this experience inform, advise and guide learners on their learning journeys.

Employer Support and Engagement

Colleges have excellent relationships with regional industry, and this is unmatched by any other part of the skills and education system. It appears, on the ground, that often engagement with employers at national level circumvents this regional partnership to an extent. Feedback from employers suggests that engagement with national bodies will often lack the detailed knowledge that the employer needs and gets from its regional college partner.

Colleges have exceptional engagement with local industry when compared to other parts of the skills system. Industry values this greatly. Developments and partnerships mostly happen at national level, through third parties, and engagement often is not as strong as that seen on the ground between colleges and industry partners.

There are multiple agencies and organisations involved in skills training and business development support which causes confusion in the marketplace and across the business sector. We would recommend that the college sector is recognised as the one-stop shop for skills training at the local/regional level – they are at the heart of communities and have a strong understanding of reskilling and upskilling needs and wider education and training requirements. Businesses need simpler process/approaches in order to accessing funding for skills training.

Conclusion

This Independent Review provides a tremendous opportunity to ensure that the skills delivery landscape is renewed, structured and aligned in a manner that delivers for Scotland's employers, economies and regions, whilst creating pathways for our learners to succeed in a manner that also maximises delivery of the public pound against a challenging climate for public sector finances.

Colleges Scotland has welcomed the opportunity to respond to this Call for Evidence and in particular to hold discussions with James Withers as the Chair of the Independent Review. Going forward, we would be keen to continue this engagement with the Independent Review to ensure we can collectively deliver on the Review recommendations for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Colleges Scotland
December 2022



Digital Skills Landscape Summary – December 2022

Introduction

Colleges Scotland is the collective voice for the college sector in Scotland, representing its interests and ensuring that colleges are at the heart of a world class education sector that is recognised, valued and available to all. Colleges Scotland, as the membership body, represents all 26 colleges in Scotland, which deliver both further education and around 24% of the provision of all higher education in Scotland.

In this capacity, Colleges Scotland has held membership of the Computing Science in Schools Working Group as convened by the Scottish Government, whilst also engaging with the Scottish Digital Academy and the Digital Directorate within the Scottish Government.

This has involved working with Joanna Campbell and Simon Hewitt as the Lead Principals for Digital on behalf of the College Principals' Group to articulate the college sector view around both strategic and practical elements of Scottish Government policy in relation to Digital Skills.

Through this work, Colleges Scotland and the Lead Principals have noted a number of common themes relating to the delivery of Digital Skills as part of the wider Skills Delivery Landscape which we believe are impacting on the coherent provision of digital upskilling and reskilling activity for learners of varying ages and abilities in Scotland.

This paper should therefore be noted as a complementary document to the main Skills Delivery Landscape Review Call for Evidence response provided by Colleges Scotland on behalf of the college sector.

Key Points

Role of the College Sector in Delivering Digital Skills

The college sector plays an active role in building a Digital Scotland in which learners can be prepared for entering the workplace of the future, and wherein training and skills development is available for the existing workforce through colleges across Scotland.

We want our learners to be well prepared to participate in a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive, and sustainable economy and to be able to become a part of thriving and innovative businesses and take up quality jobs. Similarly, we want our learners to be able to overcome disadvantage and the impact of poverty through access to digital technology, ensuring that no one is left behind.

The involvement of the college sector in Digital Skills delivery ensures that learners, employers and employees and other community stakeholders have the abilities, connectivity and devices required to fully participate in the digital nation of the future, in line with the ambitions established in the Digital Strategy for Scotland and Scotland's AI Strategy.

We know colleges will ensure that as the pace and scale of digital transformation continues in the coming years that this growth is inclusive and increases equity of opportunity for those learners from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and ensuring the benefits of digital transformation are seen by communities across Scotland.

Current Digital Skills Delivery Landscape in Scotland

There is currently a major digital skills shortage in Scotland, as evidenced by the Scottish Technology Ecosystem Review which highlighted an estimated 13,000 vacancies in the provision of suitably skilled digital workers for the Scottish economy.

Despite the growing plethora of initiatives and groups operating in the digital space, ranging from CodeClan to the Open University and the Digital Start Fund, Scotland is still witnessing skills gaps in the digital space. It is clear that what we are doing as a nation currently is not working and that an effective new approach is required one which will provide parity of opportunity for college students, school learners and university level students, complementing the investment provided for computing science in schools by the Scottish Government.

Future Technology Partnership Summary

Throughout 2021/22 Colleges Scotland, working with the Lead Principals for Digital on behalf of the College Principals Group, developed a Business Case where a Future Technology Partnership (FTP) which would add value and make impact for the benefit of learners, economies, and Scottish Government policy priorities. The Business Case provides a clear timeline for action, in addition to a governance structure which will oversee the sustainable and successful implementation of the FTP in practice within a three-year period.

The FTP proposal seeks to expand Scotland's digital talent to provide employers with the skills pipeline they need as we move towards a more digitised economy. The FTP would be a strategic collaboration of colleges from across Scotland with a shared goal of increasing and improving pathways for learners into the Digital Tech sector.

It seeks to coalesce existing and future activity around a shared purpose and create an efficient solution to providing digital talent for Scotland's economy. The FTP would engage with industry and other education partners to deliver digital skills and increase gender balance and equalities across the digital workforce in Scotland.

Scottish Government advised the funding envelope was not available to take the proposal as set out in the Business Case forward and provided direction that the sector should identify opportunities to develop the FTP model within the existing education and skills landscape.

On that basis, we would welcome the opportunity to explore how the Future Technology Partnership proposal could complement the activities and outcomes associated with the Skills Delivery Landscape Review, pending publication of the Review findings.

Duplication of Delivery

Progressing activity in relation to the FTP would also create the opportunity to resolve some of the current challenges in this space of the wider skills delivery landscape around duplication of activity and effort across existing agencies and actors, which have been noted by college sector leaders, and will simplify the digital skills landscape.

For example, in June 2022 a Scottish Government agency successfully tendered for a contract to deliver a Digital Economy and Climate Emergency Training Framework on a unilateral basis,

without any consultation or engagement to date with the college sector. This is one example where existing funding can be refocused to support the delivery of the Scottish Government's objectives.

Conclusion

Colleges Scotland would welcome further engagement and dialogue with James Withers and the Skills Review Secretariat to identify where the college sector can maximise delivery to meet the increasing Digital Skills requirements of Scotland's economy, both through the Digital Economy Skills Action Plan and the National Strategy for Economic Transformation.

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December 2022