



Ministerial foreword



Undoubtedly, the renewed focus on rural this parliamentary term has highlighted the importance of rural Scotland for our overall economy.

Through all of the different strands of work underway, it is clear to me that people are key to driving forward our rural communities and economy. We recognise the need to safeguard and value our rural communities, making them sustainable and inclusive places for people to live, work and thrive.

The Scottish Government is committed to supporting our people to remain in, and return to, rural communities by creating a sustainable and productive environment in which they can live and work. We want to ensure we have the right people with the right skills in order help the Scottish rural economy flourish by providing opportunities for training, development and entrepreneurship.

Skills planning, which meets the current and future needs of Scotland's rural economy is a vital part of the suite of measures needed to develop a highly skilled workforce and deliver sustainable economic growth. That is why

the 2017/18 Programme for Government committed to 'produce a rural skills action plan, to enhance employment opportunities for young people.' The importance of skills was subsequently reinforced by the recommendations of the National Council of Rural Advisors and the Rural Economy Action Plan published in October 2018 which include a commitment to provide a highly skilled workforce through education, training and re-skilling.

When I asked for a skills action plan to be developed for rural Scotland I was well aware that we were not starting from scratch. The agriculture champions had already set out an ambitious list of proposals on land-based skills. Skills Investment Plans, with particular relevance for rural areas are already in place including early learning and childcare, food and drink, tourism, historic environment and ICT & digital technologies. Regional Skills Investment Plans are in place – or in development – covering much of rural Scotland. The purpose of this plan was therefore to build on the activity already underway across rural Scotland and the body of evidence around specific gaps, to produce a range of actions which will meet the skills required for jobs in rural areas both now and in the future.

The development of this plan and the identified actions has been very much a collaborative effort, led by Skills Development Scotland with extensive engagement with stakeholders. I'm grateful for the time, commitment and energy that our partners in the Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Lantra, National Farmers' Union of Scotland, Scotland's Rural College, Skills Development Scotland, the NCRA and industry have given to help develop this plan to set an ambitious agenda for future skills delivery in rural Scotland.

Of course, producing the plan is only the start of the process. I now look forward to seeing actions delivered and making a real difference for the people and businesses of rural Scotland.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Fergus Ewing". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

FERGUS EWING

Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy

1: Building a skills action plan for rural Scotland

Background

The 2017/2018 Programme for Government¹ made a commitment to develop a skills action plan for rural Scotland. This plan builds on the existing research ‘Understanding the Scottish Rural Economy’², work undertaken by the National Council for Rural Advisors in ‘A New Blueprint for Scotland’s Rural Economy’³ and the report of the agriculture champions setting out ‘A Future Strategy for Scottish Agriculture’⁴.

The plan underpins the ambition set out in ‘Supporting our Rural Economy’⁵, part of the Scottish Government’s ‘Economic Action Plan: Supporting business, accelerating growth and prosperity for all’⁶, which highlights the need to provide “a highly skilled workforce through education, training and re-skilling”. The plan has a clear focus on collaborative action, building on a recognition that there is a lot of activity already underway across rural areas, supported by a wide range of national, regional and local partners.

Interdependencies with wider inclusive economic development factors

Skills have a key role to play in underpinning inclusive economic growth in rural areas, but need to be viewed alongside wider social, economic and environmental considerations that serve to enhance or constrain development and inclusive economic growth. These include a supply of good quality, affordable housing, good transport and digital infrastructure, overall place attractiveness linking to talent attraction and retention and the reinforcing links between different industrial sectors and cross sectoral opportunities.

Defining ‘rural’

The newly developed Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services (RESAS) classification of rural, provides a holistic approach which clusters local authorities together based on their relative degree of rurality. This plan focuses on the areas defined as ‘Mainly Rural’ or ‘Islands and Remote’.

However it is important to note that the issues and opportunities identified in these rural areas, and the actions set out to support them, may also have relevance in the rural communities within localities categorised as ‘Urban with Substantial Rural areas’⁷.

Mainly Rural
Aberdeenshire Angus Clackmannanshire East Ayrshire East Lothian Dumfries and Galloway Highland Moray Perth and Kinross South Ayrshire Scottish Borders
Islands and Remote
Argyll and Bute Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Orkney Islands Shetland Islands

Source: Scottish Government Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services (RESAS)

1 Scottish Government (2017) Programme for Government

2 Scottish Government (2018), Understanding the Scottish Rural Economy:

3 Scottish Government (2018) A New Blueprint for Scotland’s Rural Economy

4 Scottish Government (2018) A Future Strategy for Scottish Agriculture

5 Scottish Government (2018) Economic Action Plan: Supporting our Rural Economy

6 Scottish Government (2018) Economic Action Plan supporting business, accelerating growth and prosperity for all.

7 Urban with Substantial Rural - North Lanarkshire, Fife, South Lanarkshire, West Lothian, Renfrewshire, Falkirk, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, West Dunbartonshire, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire and Stirling

Defining ‘rural skills’

A broad and holistic definition of rural skills has been used. Whilst traditional sectors including farming, forestry and fishing still have an important role to play in rural areas, so increasingly do activities across a wide range of sectors including tourism, creative industries, energy, manufacturing and others. Rural areas also have a requirement for a range of cross-cutting skills including digital skills and higher level leadership and management skills. Alongside this is the need to respond to the ‘meta-skill’ demands of the future to address the challenges and respond to the opportunities for individuals, organisations and the skills system driven by technological disruption and ‘Industrie 4.0’, including self-management, social intelligence and innovation⁸.

Skills planning and building a skills action plan for rural Scotland

Robust intelligence should underpin all skills planning activity, seeking to better understand, articulate and respond to the needs of Scotland’s employers and business managers (including micro-businesses and sole traders) and learners. This is to help ensure that skills provision better reflects current and future demand and prepares individuals to take up the opportunities on offer. Skills Investment Plans⁹ (SIPs) at a sectoral and regional level identify strategic priorities, objectives and actions for skills to support Scotland’s economic and skills ambitions.

- there are eleven sectoral SIPs in place¹⁰, with those in early learning and childcare, tourism, food and drink, historic environment and ICT and digital technologies, and the sub-sectoral action plans supporting activity in aquaculture and timber and forest industries having particular resonance for rural areas
- of relevance to rural Scotland, Regional Skills Investment Plans (RSIPs) are in place for Highlands and Islands¹¹ with supporting local plans in Caithness and Sutherland, Arran, Moray, Western Isles, Shetland and Orkney, Edinburgh and South East¹² and Aberdeen City and Shire¹³. RSIPs are also in development for the South of Scotland, Tay Cities and Ayrshire
- the objectives and priorities of the City and Growth Deals which are emerging across Scotland also have the potential to impact on rural Scotland. Those with a rural element, include Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, Aberdeen City Region Deal, Inverness and Highland City Region Deal, Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal, Ayrshire and the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

Developing the plan

This Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland seeks to focus on developing the skills required for the jobs in rural areas – both now and in the future. Working with a steering group drawn from stakeholders, it builds on analysis of the evidence¹⁴, identifies key issues impacting on skills and through a series of workshops has agreed priority areas for action by partners. Key stakeholders in its development included the Scottish Government, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Scottish Enterprise (SE), Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), Lantra, National Farmers’ Union of Scotland, Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC), Scottish Training Federation (STF), Federation of Small Business (FSB), Confor, Seafood Scotland, VisitScotland, Education Scotland and representation from the National Council of Rural Advisors, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and industry. Initial engagement was via stakeholder consultation, however, most of these organisations were also represented on the steering group, as committed partners to both the development process and subsequent implementation of the plan.

8 SDS (2018) Skills 4.0 A Model to Drive Scotland’s Future

9 Available on the Skills Investment Plans section of the SDS website

10 Early Learning and Childcare, Food and Drink, Tourism, Financial Services, Engineering, Creative Industries, Energy, Digital and ICT Technologies, Chemical and Life Sciences, Construction and Historic Environment.

11 Skills Development Scotland (2014) Skills Investment Plan for the Highlands and Islands

12 Skills Development Scotland (2017) Skills Investment Plan for Edinburgh and South East Scotland

13 Skills Development Scotland (2018) Regional Skills Strategy for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire

14 ekosgen (2019) Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland: Background Evidence Paper

Figure 1.1: Developing a skills action plan for rural Scotland

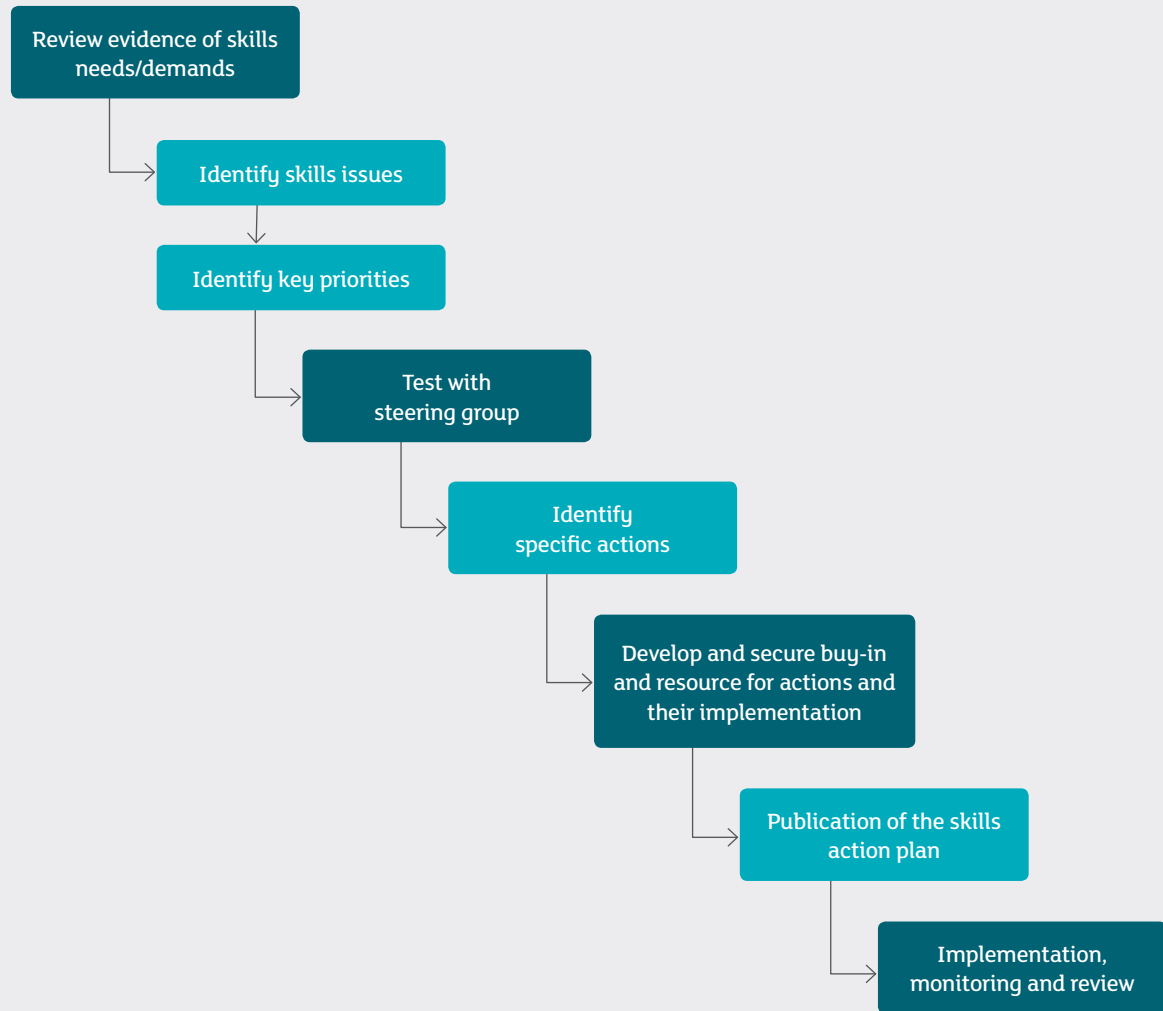


Figure 1.1 illustrates the approach taken to development of the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland¹⁵. However, the plan itself is not the sole outcome. A wide range of partners have a critical role in ensuring its effective implementation, both in terms of ongoing commitment and resource.

¹⁵ Socio-economic development consultants ekosgen was commissioned to work with partners to present and verify the evidence base help identify and validate the key skills issues, and to assist in the development of this plan

2: The policy context of rural Scotland

“The shared purpose of the Scottish Government and its partners is to make Scotland a more successful country, with opportunities for all to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.”¹⁶

The Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board, created in November 2017, is working to align and co-ordinate the activities of Scotland’s enterprise and skills agencies¹⁷ to help to move Scotland towards the top quartile of OECD countries in terms of productivity.

The Board’s strategic plan, which recognises both the need for current action and a longer-term ambition to deliver inclusive economic growth, focuses on how “public and private sector partners, local, regional and national, can provide place-centric, industry focused assistance that will drive inclusive growth”¹⁸.

This provides a strong policy and operating context for the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland, which plays into a complex landscape, with a range of existing strategies and policy documents with the potential to influence and shape both its development, actions and implementation. Of particular relevance to the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland are:

- ‘Scotland’s Economic Strategy’¹⁹, which through its inclusive growth priority, makes a commitment to “realise opportunities across Scotland’s cities, towns and rural areas, capitalising upon local knowledge and resources to deliver more equal growth across the country”²⁰
- the Scottish Government’s ‘Economic Action Plan’²¹ which sets out the Government’s intent for Scotland “to be a leader in the technological and social innovations of the future, to harness that innovation to improve lives for the better, and to export solutions to the rest of the world” with its commitment to developing a highly skilled workforce through education, training, up-skilling and re-skilling, as well as developing the potential of rural communities and the rural economy by “supporting the development of a diverse and healthy rural economy”, and through growing traditional and non-traditional rural sectors
- ‘A New Blueprint for Scotland’s Rural Economy’²² – published by the National Council of Rural Advisers states that a vibrant, sustainable and inclusive rural economy can only be achieved by recognising its strategic importance, and effectively mainstreaming the rural economy in policy and decision-making processes

- ‘Scotland’s Labour Market Strategy’ has a vision of “[a] strong labour market that drives inclusive, sustainable economic growth, characterised by growing, competitive businesses, high employment, a skilled population capable of meeting the needs of employers, and where fair work is central to improving the lives of individuals and their families”²³
- in looking to improve Scotland’s provision of employability support, the Scottish Government published ‘No One Left Behind’²⁴ to ensure that the national approach to employability focuses on the needs, strengths and ambitions of the individual, giving them access to the right support to help improve their life chances
- the Scotland is Now campaign²⁵ was created to help promote the country to a global audience, and encourage people to consider Scotland as a place to live, work, study, visit and invest. There are clear benefits to the rural economy through this approach to showcase Scotland’s range of natural assets, diverse economy and investment potential.

16 Scottish Government (2015, p13), Scotland’s Economic Strategy

17 Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise the Scottish Funding Council and the South of Scotland Economic Partnership.

18 Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board (2018, p.4) Working Collaboratively for a Better Scotland

19 Scottish Government (2015) Scotland’s Economic Strategy

20 Scottish Government (2015) Scotland’s Economic Strategy p9, p59

21 Scottish Government (2018) Economic Action Plan

22 National Council of Rural Advisers (2018) A New Blueprint for Scotland’s Rural Economy: Recommendations to Scottish Ministers

23 Scottish Government (2016) Scotland’s Labour Market Strategy, p5

24 Scottish Government (2018) No One Left Behind: next steps for employability support

25 Scotland is Now campaign, launched 2018

3. Key issues impacting on skills: Focusing on the evidence base

Drawing on the review of the evidence base and stakeholder consultations, a range of key issues have been identified across rural Scotland. These have the potential to impact on employers' ability to recruit the people that they need to sustain and grow and on individuals' opportunities to take up, sustain and progress in quality work.

They include both those with a direct impact on skills, including the supply of people and qualifications, the nature of employment and the business base and those with an indirect impact, including the supply of housing, digital connectivity, access to transport and childcare and wider issues of talent attraction and retention.

Issues with a direct impact on skills

Demographics

A plentiful supply of appropriately skilled labour is critical to achieving growth ambitions, however, Scotland's rural areas are facing several demographic challenges.

- **limited population growth.** 1,674,100 people live in Scotland's rural areas accounting for 31% of Scotland's total population. 2007-2017 saw an increase in population in rural areas, but at 3%, the rate of growth was two percentage points lower than Scotland. Forecast growth to 2041 in rural areas is 3%, also two percentage points lower than the Scottish average, with the population of all Islands and Remote Rural communities forecast to decrease
- **an ageing population,** with the working age population of Scotland's rural areas forecast to decrease by 9% by 2041, and a significant increase in people of retirement age

- the **out-migration** of young people which impacts on overall population size, community sustainability and economic growth
- a **dispersed population** which exacerbates the challenges of service delivery.

Economic output and productivity

Scotland's rural areas make a significant contribution to national economic output, contributing £34,600 million (28%) to Scotland's total Gross Value Added (GVA) of £127,226 million in 2015. Although there have been improvements in recent years, levels of productivity are lower in Scotland's rural economy than the Scotland average.

- rural areas make a **significant and increasing contribution** to economic output, with continued growth forecast, although highly variable performance across different local authority areas and sectors
- whilst farming, forestry and fishing have an important role to play in rural communities across Scotland, there has been **notable GVA (and employment) growth in 'non traditional' sectors**
- **levels of productivity** in rural areas remain **lower** than the Scottish average and forecasts suggest this will continue over the next decade
- **underemployment** presents a particular challenge in rural areas where part-time and casual employment is more prevalent.

Employment

In 2017, 717,000 people were in employment in rural areas, accounting for almost one third (28%) of total employment in Scotland²⁶, with most of that employment (88% of total employment in rural areas) within the Mainly Rural areas.

- levels of employment are typically higher, unemployment lower and the percentage of economically inactive who are retired significantly higher than the national average creating **limits on the supply of available labour**
- there has been uneven **employment growth** across rural areas in recent years, with limited (and uneven) growth forecast over the next decade. Forecasts are particularly concerning for Islands and Remote Rural areas
- **working patterns differ** from the national picture with people in rural areas more likely to be self-employed (although it is unclear whether this is by necessity or choice), employed on a part-time basis, have a second job and/or be working from home. Earnings (particularly for men) are lower
- **outdated perceptions** of the types of work and occupations which are available in rural areas persist, and there is a need for greater awareness of the diverse economy and range of high quality employment opportunities on offer in rural areas
- in broad terms the **sectoral footprint is comparable** to the rest of Scotland, with the most notable variations being a larger agriculture, forestry and fishing sector, a more important role for manufacturing and accommodation and food services and a lower share of employment in business administration and support services and financial and insurance sectors

²⁶ Source: NOMIS Business Register and Employment Survey

- the **occupational make-up** of Scotland's rural areas differs from the rest of Scotland, with lower levels of managerial, professional and associate professionals and higher levels of skilled trades
- although not restricted to rural areas, **significant gender imbalances** remain in certain sectors including agriculture (with an under representation of females) and childcare (with an under representation of males).

The business base

In 2018, over 68,000 businesses were operating across Scotland's rural economy, with the majority based in Mainly Rural areas.

- the number of **businesses operating across the rural economy has increased** by 13% (c.7,800 businesses) since 2010. Whilst representing strong growth, the national increase over the same period was 17%
- agriculture, forestry and fishing accounts for **21% of all businesses** in rural areas, compared to 10% across Scotland
- across rural areas there is a **higher share of micro-businesses** and a **lower share of businesses with 50+ employees**
- **hard to fill vacancies are more prevalent** in rural areas, although there is no consistent picture on skill shortage vacancies
- **fewer employers fund or arrange training**, with some evidence of lack of local provision a contributing factor.

Qualifications

Whilst broadly in line with the national picture, there is some evidence that the qualifications profile of rural Scotland differs.

- fewer individuals are qualified at NVQ Levels 4 and 5 (SCQF Level 7-12), a slightly higher proportion hold NVQ Level 2 (SCQF Level 5) and NVQ Level 3 (SCQF Level 6) and a lower proportion with no qualifications
- there are **increased barriers to accessing education and training** particularly in addition to additional costs and limited opportunities to study locally.

Education and skills provision

Individuals and employers access education and training opportunities to enhance their skills in a number of different settings and from a wide range of providers.

- **schools** support children and young people to develop the range of skills, attributes and qualifications they need to open up opportunities and maximise their potential
 - since 2008 the number of schools has **decreased more than at a national level**, and is a particular issue in Islands and Remote Rural areas
 - the number of pupils in rural areas has **decreased by 2%**, compared with a 2% increase nationally since 2008
 - rural schools struggle to recruit the volume of teachers they need across all subjects

- **colleges** have a key role to play in developing a highly educated and skilled workforce, providing a broad base of education, vocational and work-based learning opportunities. Whilst they are the main providers of further education, around 20% of students study at higher education level²⁷
 - more than **£103.8 million of core funding** will be provided to rural colleges in 2018/19. A rural and remoteness premium seeks to ensure students in rural Scotland have access to the same range and quality of courses to those in urban areas
 - **a slight decrease in overall provision** in rural based colleges over the last three years, and a **7% decrease in enrolments** in 'rural subjects'²⁸ since 2013/14.
 - leavers from rural based colleges are **more likely to move straight into work** than the national average
 - **additional funding** has been made available to support staff and students in rural areas

27 Audit Scotland (2018) Scotland's Colleges 2018

28 As defined by the SFC 'rural subjects' include: fashion/textiles/clothing (craft), fabric crafts/soft furnishings, wood cane and furniture crafts, glass/ceramics/stone crafts, water sports, food/drink services, food sciences/technology, country leisure facilities works, arts/culture/heritage administration, environmental protection/conservation, energy economics/management/conservation, environmental health/safety, agriculture science,

agriculture/horticulture, crop protection/fertilisers/byproducts, crop husbandry, gardening/floristry, amenity horticulture, forestry/timber production, animal husbandry, fish production/fisheries, agricultural/horticultural engineering/farm machinery, agricultural/horticultural maintenance, rural/agricultural business organisation, veterinary services, pets/domestic animal care, land-based studies, freight handling, marine transport

- **universities** through the delivery of higher education contribute to economic growth through increasing employment rates, raising tax revenues and supporting greater productivity and innovation, in addition to supporting wider social benefits, higher earnings and improved health and well-being for individuals²⁹
 - it is estimated that SFC will spend **more than £22 million on provision of ‘rural’ subjects**³⁰ in 2018/19
 - there are a **relatively small number of higher education institutes (HEIs) located in rural areas**, with six of the 19 HEIs having a presence in rural areas
 - **increasing uptake of ‘rural’ subjects** Between 2012/13 and 2016/17, the total number of entrants (FTEs) studying rural subjects at HEIs in Scotland increased by 36% (474 students) to 1,804 students
 - **developments in delivery to adapt to rural needs** across universities (and colleges), particularly building on technological solutions through videoconferencing and online learning
 - **key developments to enhance rural provision** including the Inverness Campus of UHI with a focus on Life Sciences and the expanded offer at the Crichton Campus in Dumfries
- **training providers** were highlighted by consultees as having a **key role to play in the delivery of training** in rural areas to address skills gaps, particularly due to their perceived agility and flexibility to meet employer demand

- **Scottish apprenticeships** provide work-based learning opportunities that prepare individuals for their careers and help employers tackle skills shortages and gaps by supporting the development of new or existing employees
 - there is an **increasing** number of **Modern Apprenticeships** starts in rural areas (8,458 in 2017/18) and consistently accounting for almost one third of total starts since 2013/14
 - there is an **increasing number** of starts overall on land-based frameworks (c. 500)
 - there are **increasing opportunities to undertake Foundation and Graduate Apprenticeships** across rural Scotland.

Wider factors impacting on skills

There are a number of important interdependent factors with the potential to impact on skills demand and supply in rural areas and therefore the potential for achieving inclusive economic growth. Whilst these are not skills issues per se and cannot be addressed directly by a skills action plan, it is important to identify and understand the challenges they present to ensure that these can be addressed in parallel.

Housing supply

A supply of good quality housing of the right type has an important role to play in making communities sustainable. This includes a mix of single dwellings, family homes and those suitable for older people. Housing needs to be affordable, i.e. somewhere people can live within their means, and include a range of social housing, low-cost home ownership and mid-market rental properties³¹. Housing can be an asset, attracting and retaining people

in a locality, allowing workers to reduce their need to commute, increasing their quality of life and providing a boost to the local economy through construction.

- rural areas have **relatively high and increasing housing costs, a limited supply of appropriate types of dwelling, lower levels of local authority owned housing, higher levels of second home ownership, higher levels of vacant properties and more challenges** in terms of building new properties

Scottish Government is committed to working with industry to address barriers to housing delivery. This includes looking at ways to **address skills needs** and **strengthening diversity** within the sector. Further consideration is to be given to a more **flexible approach to planning, combining options for forestry with housing** and **addressing the higher costs of rural housing**.

²⁹ Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2013) The Benefits of Higher Education Participation for Individuals and Society: Key Findings and Reports Quadrants

³⁰ As defined by the SFC, subjects include: pre-clinical veterinary medicine; clinical veterinary medicine & dentistry; broadly-based programmes within agriculture & related subjects; animal science; agriculture; forestry & arboriculture; food & beverage studies; agricultural sciences; others in veterinary sciences, agriculture & related subjects; science of aquatic & terrestrial environments

³¹ CRESR (2015) Affordable Housing in Scotland

Digital connectivity

Internet connectivity is an issue for attracting people to live, study and work in an area, through ensuring they can remain connected and access a range of increasingly digital services. Connectivity also plays an important role in attracting business investment.

- whilst recognised as a challenge, **digital connectivity issues persist**, affecting both Internet and mobile coverage.

Transport

In rural areas there are constraints on the ability of individuals to access learning and employment opportunities, suppliers to reach businesses, and for businesses to reach markets and customers.

- the **availability, frequency, timetabling and routes of public transport**, alongside the **increased costs of private transport** and **poor infrastructure quality** in some areas combine to present significant challenges.

Childcare

Access to high quality and affordable pre-school and childcare provision is a critical issue in rural areas.

- **more limited access** to affordable childcare and pre-school provision can act as a barrier (particularly for women) to taking up, sustaining and progressing in employment, education or training.

Talent attraction and retention

It is increasingly important to attract and retain a more diverse population to live and work to build sustainable rural communities and ensure there are the skills to support economic growth.

- these challenges require a wide strategic response, seeking to **bring new talent in, persuading those who have left to return** and **providing opportunities to retain those who might otherwise leave**.

These issues provide a focus for the activities of partners committed to the implementation of the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland³². The evidence provides the rationale for building on existing opportunities and where necessary addressing gaps, and highlights key areas for links to other complementary activity to tackle wider social and economic challenges.

³² SDS and SG (2019) Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland: 2019-2021 details these issues in full.

4. Developing the skills base of rural Scotland: Priority areas for action

Developing the skills base and maximising the potential for capitalising on opportunities is key to supporting inclusive growth aspirations in Scotland's rural areas. The development process led to the identification and agreement of **five overarching priority areas** for action that can be progressed in the context of this skills action plan. Underpinning each of these priority areas needs to be a consideration of equalities.

- Priority area A: Better understand the skills rural employers need and align provision to support this
- Priority area B: Provide individuals with accessible education and skills provision to secure, sustain and progress in their careers in rural areas
- Priority area C: Develop the current workforce in rural areas through upskilling and reskilling
- Priority area D: Build a secure pipeline for the future
- Priority area E: Take a co-ordinated, strategic approach to tackling skills in rural areas.

Each of the priority areas for action has a series of themes (TA.1-TE.2) to be addressed. Each of these has a number of complementary actions, each with an identified lead and supporting partners, indicative resource implications, timescales and anticipated (interim) outcomes. There will be scope for additional activities to be developed to support these actions throughout the lifetime of the plan. These specific actions are a combination of:

- approaches, activities, interventions and programmes that are already underway in rural areas but are being:
 - considered for scaling up or rolling out into different geographies
 - 'flexed' to better meet needs of rural areas e.g. greater flexibility of delivery or funding
 - more intensively or widely promoted
- new approaches, activities interventions and programmes needed to plug a gap – which are either national or in the form of regional or sectoral pilots for subsequent review and evaluation.

Priority area A: Better understand the skills rural employers need and align provision to support this

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes	
TA.1 Further embed and widen use of evidence based education and skills planning	TA1.1 Maintain and further enhance the evidence base developed for the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland, strengthening knowledge around skills challenges, shortages and gaps to provide a robust basis for skills planning across rural areas	Ensure that the national evidence base for education and skills recognises and reflects issues affecting rural Scotland Co-investment by national agencies with partners to develop a more localised evidence base that reflects the differences across rural areas	Lead: SDS SFC, SE, HIE, South of Scotland Economic Partnership (SOSEP) ³³ , SRUC, Lantra other Skills Councils and ILGs ³⁴ and REPs ³⁵	£50K per 18 month cycle £20K SDS contribution from evidence base team – but would require significant co-investment from other partners to facilitate 18 month updates	From June 2019 and in response to 18 month review	(Evidence based paper on skills needs and demands across rural Scotland, identifying thematic and sectoral priorities, to be reviewed by governance group at 18 months) The skills needs of rural Scotland are more clearly articulated Skills planning is more responsive to the distinctive needs of Scotland's rural areas	
	TA1.2 Identify the need for sectoral or thematic research on the demands of the economy and issues specific to rural areas						
	TA1.3 Encourage the use of SDS regional skills assessments by all relevant regional and local partners and relevant stakeholders	Promotion and signposting Partner commitment to evidence based decision making	Lead: Steering group All education and skills partners	Within existing resource	From June 2019	Enhanced evidence based decision making around skills provision	

³³ South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) will begin its formal legislative operation from 1 April 2020

³⁴ ILGs (Industry Leadership Groups).

³⁵ REP (Regional Economic Partnerships)

Priority area A: Better understand the skills rural employers need and align provision to support this

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TA.2 Align education and skills provision and resource to the needs of employers and the rural economy	TA2.1 Use the available evidence on skills demand and supply to effect change in support of the skills needs in rural areas	SDS will continue to work with SFC to develop a joint planning process to achieve skills alignment. As part of the process, the needs of Scotland's rural areas will be embedded in all five stages of the skills alignment model – demand assessment, provision planning, commissioning, performance monitoring, and management and review Aligning demand assessment with the outputs of the skill provision mapping, will form the basis for jointly commissioning provision through existing mechanisms e.g. ROAs, MA and other contracting arrangements	Lead: SDS, SFC	Within existing resource	From April 2020 then annual review	Establishment (when fully implemented) of a new collaborative process, which will help the planning and achievement of skills alignment Enhanced evidence based decision making around skills provision in Scotland's rural areas
	TA2.2 Partners to work together to address skills issues in rural areas, with improved collaboration/co-design/co-investment of curriculum, programmes and interventions	Promotion and signposting Partner commitment to evidence based decision making	Lead: Steering group SFC, SDS, HIE, SE, SOSEP, Education Scotland, SQA, awarding bodies and others	Within existing resource	From June 2019	Programmes and interventions better able to address skills issues in rural areas
TA.3 Capture the current and future skills needs of employers in rural areas through direct engagement	TA3.1 Explore the potential for wider use of the outputs from existing and/or proposed business panels and other existing data collection mechanisms in rural areas to develop greater clarity around current and future skills requirements and challenges	Identify existing mechanisms currently used by partners (likely to include HIE and SE Business Panels, Farm Advisory Service, DYW Regional Groups etc.) Undertake short assessment of how they are used, including any limitations and gap filling required	Lead: HIE, SE VisitScotland, DYW, FSB, Chamber of Commerce, Lantra, other sector skills councils, Business Gateway and others	Within existing resource	By March 2020 then annual review	(Wider and deeper engagement with employers in rural areas) Greater clarity around current and future skills requirements and challenges of rural employers

Priority area B: Provide individuals with accessible education and skills provision to secure, sustain and progress in their careers in rural areas

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TB.1 Increase choice and accessibility of high quality education and skills development opportunities in rural areas and positively impact on transition from school to FE and HE	TB1.1 Use of innovative approaches to deliver high quality education and skills including e-learning, digital technology, off-campus learning	Building on the existing resources of Dumfries & Galloway and Borders Colleges, development of the South of Scotland Skills and Learning Network. This uses a digital and physical hub and spoke network accessible to individuals, communities, school and businesses	Lead: SFC Dumfries & Galloway and Borders Colleges	6.6 million committed through SOSEP	Underway (scheduled for infrastructure completion by 2020)	(Facilitate access to STEM hubs linked to a region wide digital infrastructure) (Facilitate access to wider range of online training available through FE and HE partners e.g. Open University and UHI) Provision of easier access to education and skills opportunities across all stages of the learner journey Addresses the skills gaps identified e.g. engineering, construction and care
	TB1.2 Extend and promote the use of flexible delivery models that facilitate evening, weekend and other forms of non-standard learning across all levels of education and skills development	The development of flexible delivery models in response to local need	Lead: SFC Lantra, colleges, HEIs and local training providers	Within existing resource	From June 2019 then ongoing	Increase access to/widen choice of education and training opportunities in rural areas
	TB1.3 Ensure profile of rural skills prioritisation in relevant ROAs			Lead: SFC		From 2019

Priority area B: Provide individuals with accessible education and skills provision to secure, sustain and progress in their careers in rural areas

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TB.2 Increase engagement across Scottish Apprenticeships (Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships)	TB2.1 Ensure that national campaigns for Scottish Apprenticeships have resonance in rural areas, incorporating case studies of individuals and employers that demonstrate opportunities, pathways and benefits for all	Continue to build/review promotion of content through existing channels Increase the use of innovative communication channels to ensure far reaching engagement Maximise use of relevant sectoral and regional events for promotion	Lead: SDS DYW, Lantra, Colleges and other local partners	Within existing resource	From June 2019 with ongoing review	(Marketing campaigns which demonstrate the opportunities available in rural areas) Increase the number of Scottish Apprenticeship opportunities in rural areas
	TB2.2 SDS will pilot, monitor and evaluate new models of Modern Apprenticeship delivery, including shared apprenticeship models, taking into consideration the barriers to participation identified by small and micro businesses and ensuring engagement and co-design of delivery with industry partners	Building on an assessment of demand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pilot a forestry apprenticeship model with additional learning to support the demand for forest machine operators • monitor and evaluate the pathway in self-employment developed for Harris Tweed producers • raise awareness of potential to combine part-time work and an apprenticeship Evaluation across all stages of delivery, including recruitment, induction, placement and assessment	Lead: SDS Industry partners	Within existing resource	A shared apprenticeship pilot in agriculture is already underway in the north east of Scotland, and this will require annual review Programmes including forestry machine operators are also currently being delivered	New models of apprenticeship delivery addressing the needs of small and micro businesses Apprenticeship delivery aligning to the needs of specific sectors If successful potential to develop a template or learning model which could be used in other sectors with strong rural footprint

Priority area B: Provide individuals with accessible education and skills provision to secure, sustain and progress in their careers in rural areas

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TB.2 Increase engagement across Scottish Apprenticeships (Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships)	TB2.3 Further raise awareness of the rural supplement for training providers in 'remote rural' or 'remote small towns', available since 2018/19 in 17 local authority areas	Promote the rural supplement to training providers Work with Lantra and other industry partners to raise awareness	Lead: SDS Lantra and industry partners	Within existing resource	Underway	(Delivery of a needs led postcode-based approach to address the effects of rurality on MA delivery) Training providers and employers have a greater understanding of support available More employers and training providers engaging with Scottish Apprenticeships, resulting in an increase in the number of apprentices in rural areas
TB.3 Raise awareness of opportunities for career development on offer in colleges and with local training providers	TB3.1 Plan and develop a package of case-study based marketing and communication materials around career opportunities, tailored to employers and individuals in rural areas	All partners to review existing materials relating to career opportunities across rural Scotland Initial collation exercise of available case studies, identifying gaps Where gaps exist, work together to share existing and develop new case studies that clearly demonstrate opportunities, pathways and benefits (Link to TC4.1)	Lead: Steering group SDS, Lantra, DYW regional groups SRUC, HIE, SE and others	In-kind contribution from SDS to undertake initial collation exercise and gap analysis	By December 2019 From January 2020 then annual review	(Overview and gap analysis of existing case studies to support career development in rural areas) (Case studies of career opportunities and pathways in rural areas) Increased understanding of the scope of career opportunities available in rural areas

Priority area C: Develop the current workforce in rural areas through upskilling and reskilling

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TC1. Respond to the needs of employers' workforce in line with local demand	TC1.1 Develop an effective response to the identified needs of employers in rural areas including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upskilling and reskilling opportunities in sectors relevant to growing the rural economy • provision of a more cohesive offer for SMEs in rural areas 	Build on initial work undertaken by Skills for Farming to further develop and promote the Employers Toolkit for Apprenticeships and Work Placements	Lead: Skills for Farming group	£20K contribution from SDS	From June 2019	Employers in rural areas are aware of and are clear how to access opportunities to upskill/ reskill their workforce
		Learning lessons from this approach, expand its use to other sectors with significant rural footprint e.g. hospitality	SDS, Lantra, SE, HIE, SOSEP, SFC, colleges, local delivery partners and industry	Within existing resource	From October 2019	Additional CPD upskilling/ reskilling opportunities
		Recognition that the specific needs of rural businesses has precipitated a planned change in procurement for Skills for Growth away from a national approach, dividing into two lots (1) Highland and Grampian and (2) Rest of Scotland (Link to TC3.3)	Lead: SDS	Within existing resource	From October 2019	Additional funded business support targeted at rural areas
		Maximise opportunities available to upskill and reskill through the Flexible Workforce Fund	Lead: SFC Colleges	Within existing resource	From June 2019	

Priority area C: Develop the current workforce in rural areas through upskilling and reskilling

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
<p>TC2. Support and encourage skills for the future with a particular focus on digital, leadership and management skills</p>	<p>TC2.1 Embed digital skills in all workforce development offers in rural areas with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing and embedding basic digital literacy to support individuals into digital or digitally enabled jobs supporting activity to develop skills to harness digital technology to maximise and transform business models helping create a culture of digital awareness across the rural economy 	<p>Signpost existing SDS offer in digital skills development, including Digital World (relaunched April 2019), Digital Xtra, Codeclan and Digital Start Fund</p> <p>Greater promotion of the five SDS pilot projects examining digital and cyber skills, to ensure rural coverage and engagement</p> <p>Work with partners to support individuals into digital jobs, assist individuals and employers to become more digitally capable and raise awareness of the range of support services available</p> <p>Signpost to complementary services including: DigitalBoost, Digital Development Loan Fund, E-Placement Scotland and the Digital Skills Partnership</p>	<p>Lead: SDS</p> <p>HIE, SE, SFC, SRUC and others</p>	<p>Within existing resource</p>	<p>Underway and ongoing</p>	<p>(Increased number of employers engaging with SDS and partners to access digital skills support)</p> <p>Increased numbers of individuals being trained in digital leadership and management skills</p> <p>Higher levels of digital skills amongst rural employees</p> <p>Increased awareness of the importance of digital technology to employers across rural Scotland</p> <p>Maximise benefit from existing offers and avoid duplication</p>

Priority area C: Develop the current workforce in rural areas through upskilling and reskilling

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TC.3 Encourage employers to understand their workforce development needs and access available support	TC3.1 Encourage employers in rural areas to review their training and workforce development needs through greater uptake of existing products and services e.g. Skills for Growth, Training Needs Assessments etc.	Effective promotion of partners' products and services	Lead: SDS DYW, Lantra, colleges and other local partners	Within existing resource	From June 2019 then ongoing	Increased uptake of existing products and services by employers in rural areas
	TC3.2 Greater promotion of the benefits of workforce development and a learning culture amongst employers					
	TC3.3 Target employer engagement events in rural areas outlining the cross-agency support offer to rural employers to support skills development and growth	Build on existing employer engagement/networking events taking place in rural areas Hold bespoke joint workshops to engage SMEs in rural areas to provide a cohesive business support offer that meets their specific needs (Link to TC1.1)	Lead: Steering group HIE, SE, SDS, Lantra, DYW groups Lead: SDS SE, HIE, SOSEP Business Gateway	Within existing resource Within existing resource	From June 2019 then ongoing By June 2020 then ongoing	Increased awareness of support available to support business development and growth in rural areas

Priority area C: Develop the current workforce in rural areas through upskilling and reskilling

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TC4. Support individuals seeking to change or progress in their careers	TC4.1 Further develop and enhance all age careers management offer to support those looking to upskill and reskill – ensuring its relevance to those in rural areas through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • face-to-face services • digital content on My World of Work 	Develop additional case studies showcasing content of rural communities and sectors to upload to digital platforms (Link to TB3.1)	Lead: SDS Lantra, SE, HIE, DYW and other local partners	Within existing resource	By December 2019 with ongoing review	(Access to additional content on My World of Work) Individuals will have increased understanding of the support available to build their career management, work based and employability skills
		Build on LMI for rural areas to further enhance knowledge of careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) staff on breadth and depth of opportunities for those upskilling and retraining	Lead: SDS		By June 2020	
		Review My World of Work job profiles to ensure appropriate coverage for rural areas and partner more effectively with industry and encourage them to link in to My World of Work job profiles. Highlight relevant content for those in rural areas and showcase challenges and opportunities	Lead: SDS		By June 2021	Individuals will be better informed about the range of opportunities available to them in rural areas through greater direct engagement with employers
		Align with My World of Work Live – ‘Virtual Experts’ – using video conferencing to bring experts in a range of careers into schools etc. giving young people real insight into the world of work	Lead: SDS Industry partners		By June 2021	

Priority area D: Build a secure pipeline for the future

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TD1. Highly localised careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) that reflects local employment and training opportunities	TD1.1 Further strengthen and maintain the SDS local LMI resource for CIAG developed to support staff working in schools, with school leavers and post school/adults	Continue to maintain and update evidence based, localised LMI resources on an ongoing basis to provide an accurate, relevant and up to date picture of employment opportunities in rural areas that will support progression into sustained destinations. (Link to TA1.1)	Lead: SDS	Within existing resource	Underway with annual review Supported by quarterly CPD sessions	(Ongoing maintenance and annual update of Local LMI resource) (Scoping exercise to provide evidence base to determine future action)
	TD1.2 Scoping exercise to determine value of utilising digital platforms to extend access to this resource by sharing with other partners e.g. school guidance teachers, DYW leads	Undertake scoping exercise with key partners engaged supporting individuals in securing, sustaining and progressing in their career	Lead: SDS Local authorities, DYW	Within existing resource	By December 2020	Increase the reach of localised, evidence based LMI to underpin informed decision making
TD2. Enable individuals and their influencers to make informed decisions and identify opportunities to develop their careers in rural areas	TD2.1 Equip individuals of all ages in rural areas with the career management skills (CMS), knowledge and self-awareness to develop aspirational career aims and the confidence to act as opportunities arise throughout the learner journey	Utilising the enhanced rural LMI evidence base, SDS will continue to develop our CIAG services, ensuring that the current and future workforce are equipped with the necessary CMS they require to achieve their potential	Lead: SDS	Within existing resource	Underway and ongoing	Individuals and their influencers will be better equipped to make informed decisions
		Ensure that Scotland's Apprentice Network, which uses current and former Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprentices as ambassadors to encourage young people to follow in their footsteps is strong across rural areas and sectors with a strong rural footprint	Lead: SDS	Within existing resource	Launched March 2019	Increase the number of individuals taking up Scottish Apprenticeship opportunities

Priority area D: Build a secure pipeline for the future

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TD2. Enable individuals and their influencers to make informed decisions and identify opportunities to develop their careers in rural areas	TD2.2 Collaborative careers influencer events and activities to raise awareness and understanding and challenge perceptions of opportunities available in rural areas and in sectors with a significant rural footprint e.g. land based industries, food and drink, tourism, energy	In collaboration with DYW, employer and industry champions build on current work with pupils, parents and teachers to increase understanding of available pathways and opportunities	Lead: SDS, DYW regional groups Lantra, colleges, schools, SQA and employers	Within existing resource	Underway and ongoing	(Increased number of collaborative careers influencer events in rural areas)
	TD2.3 Showcase the full range of opportunities in rural areas/sectors building on the work inspirational activities of DYW regional groups which work to facilitate greater engagement between schools, colleges and employers	Signpost to key resources including My World of Work and My Kids Career (www.mykidscareer.com), a website to help parents and carers understand current and future jobs in demand, the routes into these jobs, and tips on having career conversations	Lead: SDS DYW regional groups, schools, colleges	Within existing resource	Underway and ongoing	A confident, skilled rural workforce, able to identify and capitalise on appropriate employment and learning opportunities within their area
			Lead: Steering group DYW regional groups	Within existing resource	From June 2019	

Priority area D: Build a secure pipeline for the future

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TD2. Enable individuals and their influencers to make informed decisions and identify opportunities to develop their careers in rural areas	TD2.4 Embed entrepreneurship and self-employment as a positive and achievable career choice	Continue to raise self-employment as part of face to face CIAG As part of the case study mapping exercise, draw on existing and develop additional case studies to demonstrate learner journeys and career progression into self-employment (Link to TB3.1)	Lead SDS DYW regional groups, schools, regional colleges	Within existing resource	Underway	(Increased number of individuals considering self-employment as a career option) Increased number of business start ups in rural areas
	TD2.5 Integrate an understanding of the rural economy in the curriculum through developing materials to demonstrate career paths available in the rural economy, supported by case studies, conceptualised learning materials to support sector recognition, etc. and enhanced content on My World of Work	Develop additional case studies showcasing content of rural communities and sectors to upload to digital platforms (Link to TB3.1) Education Scotland will support conversations with key stakeholders to incorporate the rural economy agenda into their planning as appropriate and align this with the Career Education Standard 3-18 and other education priorities	Lead SDS SDS, Lantra, DYW, SRUC, HIE and others Lead Education Scotland SDS, DYW regional groups	Within existing resource	From December 2019 By June 2021	The potential and opportunities on offer to live, work and study in rural areas are clearly visible to young people in schools

Priority area D: Build a secure pipeline for the future

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TD3. Create more workforce diversity in key sectors with a significant rural footprint	TD3.1 Building on existing research, prepare a short research paper, focusing on evidence of occupational segregation in sectors with a significant rural footprint This output will be used to inform and capitalise on current work by partners to enhance diversity in key sectors to include education and skills choices through to employment and career progression	An assessment of the issues and barriers for individuals with protected characteristics from accessing training and entering the workforce in rural areas	Lead SDS SE, HIE, SOSEP, VisitScotland, FSB, Lantra and others	Within existing resource	By June 2020	(Better understanding of the scale of the equalities challenge in rural areas) Increase the number of individuals with protected characteristics in the workforce
	TD3.2 Identify positive examples and role models to build case studies for use in schools, colleges etc. to demonstrate opportunities and pathways in rural areas and seek to embed the equalities agenda across all programmes and initiatives	Development of case studies (Link to TB3.1)	Lead SDS Lantra, DYW regional groups, SRUC, SE, HIE and others	Within existing resource	By June 2020 and ongoing	

Priority area D: Build a secure pipeline for the future

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TD4. Enhanced work based learning pathways in rural areas	TD4.1 SDS will continue to work to grow the volume of Foundation Apprenticeship delivery in rural areas. Working with industry partners, SDS will ensure that the Foundation Apprenticeship offer meets the needs of employers in rural areas	Review Foundation Apprenticeship uptake (by school) in rural areas on an annual basis and work closely with local partners and industry to agree actions to maximise opportunities SDS regional partnership and delivery managers will work to promote the FA offer available in rural areas	Lead: SDS Schools, DYW local authority contacts and regional groups	Within existing resource	Underway with annual review	(Employers will have clearer understanding of the FA frameworks available) Increased number of FA opportunities in rural areas Increased uptake of FA opportunities in rural areas
	TD4.2 Working with industry partners, SDS will assess the pathways for new work-based learning qualifications at SCQF Level 4/5 to assess deliverability in rural areas	Delivery of an initial pilot of a new work-based learning Level 4/5 qualification in the Highlands and Island, evaluating this in the Hospitality and Construction sectors	Lead: SDS Industry partners and SQA	Funding is in place for the pilot but further expansion would require the confirmation of additional resource (particularly for rural delivery)	April 2019 to June 2020	Successful implementation would lead to employers and individuals having increased awareness of and access to work based learning Increased uptake of work based learning opportunities Potential expansion of qualification into other sectors – evaluation dependent
	TD4.3 Delivery of a pilot pre-apprenticeship programme	Developed in collaboration with Machinery Rings, SFC and Lantra, SDS will support delivery of three pre-apprenticeship pilots These will provide a new entry route for young people to undertake a 6-month work placement and progress to a Modern Apprenticeship A steering group will be established to oversee delivery of the project and evaluate the pilot programme	Lead SDS SFC, Lantra, SRUC, Borders College, and Machinery Rings	Funding in place for the three pilots	February 2019 to November 2019	New entry routes for young people into the land-based sector Potential increase in MA uptake, as young people realise the benefits of work-based learning and industry recognised qualifications Strengthened industry partnerships

Priority area E: Take a co-ordinated, strategic approach to tackling skills in rural areas

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TE.1 Multi-agency and industry collaboration to address skills issues identified in rural areas	TE.1.1 Establishment of steering group with clear Terms of Reference to support implementation	Build membership from organisations on the steering group that jointly developed the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland, extending membership to ensure coverage across sectors with a key role to play in supporting the inclusive growth aspirations of rural areas	Lead: SG	In-kind support from partners	From June 2019	(Establishment of a governance group to shape and support inclusive growth across Rural Scotland) (Establishment of a steering group to support implementation) More co-ordinated, strategic approach to tackling skills issues in rural Scotland Increased inclusive economic growth in rural areas
	TE1.2 Establishment of a governance group to oversee progress		Lead: SG			

Priority area E: Take a co-ordinated, strategic approach to tackling skills in rural areas

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TE.1 Multi-agency and industry collaboration to address skills issues identified in rural areas	TE1.3 Undertake a skills provision mapping exercise in rural areas	Map the volume, type and delivery location of education and training opportunities on offer across rural areas in Scotland to develop a picture of provision through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • colleges • universities • Scottish Apprenticeships Undertake a scoping exercise to look at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • widening out the mapping to include activities of private and third sector training providers • including workforce development activities e.g. through Workforce Development Fund, SE and HIE leadership and management training • understanding the prevalence of digital skills in the workforce, at what level and where gaps exist Identifying a 'platform' for dissemination through exploring potential of existing mechanisms or the need for a bespoke solution	Lead: SFC, SDS HIE, SE, SRUC, Lantra and other sector skills councils, STF, FSB and others	SDS support for initial proposal development Wider partner resource contribution required to be able to undertake: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scoping exercise (C. £5K) • mapping exercise (C. £50K) Costs dependent on solution identified	Proposal developed within 3 months of establishment of steering group. Scoping exercise within 9 months of establishment of steering group (resource dependent) Completion of skills mapping within 18 months (resource dependent) By 2021 (resource dependent)	(Clear map of current skills provision across rural Scotland) Facilitation of a strategic approach to gap filling, collaboration, co-ordination and promotion Partners have a greater understanding of the skills system, provision of education and training, and the challenges and opportunities of delivery in rural areas Development of a platform/ resource detailing existing education and training provision to support a collaborative approach to provision among partners

Priority area E: Take a co-ordinated, strategic approach to tackling skills in rural areas

Theme	Action	Activities	Lead and partners	Resource implications	Timescales	(Interim) outcomes
TE.1 Multi-agency and industry collaboration to address skills issues identified in rural areas	TE1.4 Develop rural skills learner journey pathways across relevant college and university Regional Outcome Agreements (ROAs) with particular emphasis on Highlands and Islands and South of Scotland regions	Work closely with colleges and universities to develop rural skills learner journey pathways	Lead SFC: Colleges, SDS	Within existing resource	From June 2019	Development of learner journey pathways for individuals across rural Scotland
TE.2 Promotion of opportunities in rural areas	TE. 2.1 Compile a calendar of relevant scheduled events (national, regional and sectoral) to target key messages, ensuring rural skills becomes part of the mainstream agenda	Partners to develop and agree key messages Partners to commit to scanning for relevant events to add to an events calendar	Lead: Steering group	Within existing resource	By December 2019	Key rural messages embedded in mainstream agenda



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