

# Ayrshire Regional Skills Investment Plan 2022 - 2025



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Scotland

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# Executive Summary

Developed and delivered with partners across Ayrshire, our Regional Skills Investment Plan (RSIP) is an evidence-based report that draws on local insight and expertise to highlight opportunities for Ayrshire-focused skills investment across the three local authorities.

The Ayrshire RSIP aims to create an agile and responsive skills system that supports an inclusive, sustainable and competitive regional economy, offering opportunities for everyone to thrive and progress, and enhance Ayrshire's attractiveness as a great place to invest, live and work.

Building on existing national and regional strategy and policy such as the National Strategy for Economic Transformation and the Ayrshire Growth Deal, the Ayrshire RSIP intends to promote a place and asset-based approach to support community wealth building and sustainable inclusive growth across the region.

The Ayrshire RSIP will be aligned to the priorities of the Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy, which aims to enhance regional collaboration and support recovery in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and will ensure that regional opportunities are capitalised on by maximising activity and efforts in Ayrshire's key growth sectors.

In addition, the Ayrshire RSIP acknowledges the importance of sectors in the foundational economy and identifies areas for investment to address skills supply challenges and shortages. This includes ensuring that pathways into sectors aligned to the regional economy such as Aerospace, Marine, Manufacturing and Tourism are clearly defined throughout skills provision.

The Ayrshire RSIP acknowledges the impact of the pandemic across the regional economy, as well as the climate emergency, and aims to promote inclusive growth to ensure that economic recovery and growth is green and accessible to all.

Following a review of the existing data and listening to the voices of Ayrshire's employers and industry and regional workforce including young people, the following Strategic Goals have been identified:

1. Invest in growing talent across Ayrshire by capitalising on sectoral opportunities and ensuring skills provision is aligned to industry demand.
2. Ensure that pathways into regional employment opportunities are clearly defined, and support both new entrants and job changers in the labour market.

3. Encourage and support investment in upskilling and reskilling provision for the existing workforce.
4. Improve employability outcomes across Ayrshire by addressing existing employment barriers and promoting inclusive growth.

The Ayrshire RSIP development was managed on behalf of the Ayrshire Skills Group by a Steering Group that included Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Ayrshire College (AC), University of the West of Scotland (UWS) and the Ayrshire Growth Deal (AGD) Programme Management Office (PMO). Particular thanks are due to Anne Campbell, Allison Craig and Marcus Ross for their input.

Implementation will be taken forward by the lead and supporting partners identified in the Action Plan.

Governance of the Ayrshire RSIP will be through a newly established sub-committee of the Ayrshire Joint Committee involving SDS, East Ayrshire Council (EAC), North Ayrshire Council (NAC), South Ayrshire Council (SAC), AC and UWS. This group will also have responsibility for the Ayrshire Growth Deal Ayrshire Skills Fund.

# Foreword



Today's rapidly changing economy presents a series of opportunities and challenges for the people and businesses of Ayrshire.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented difficulties for much of Ayrshire's regional industries, labour market and economy, but we are emerging from that stronger than many anticipated, with a renewed focus on meaningful change and collaboration across the region. Investment in business and in our people will be at the heart of Ayrshire's economic recovery and future success.

The signing of the Ayrshire Growth Deal (AGD) in late 2020 signified the regional partners' commitment to inclusive economic prosperity and investment in Ayrshire, as well as their intentions to support existing industry and attract new business to the area.

The AGD is uniquely placed to influence real sustainable growth to the benefit of the people and places across Ayrshire. The Ayrshire Regional Skills Investment Plan (RSIP) acknowledges the region's intrinsic industrial strengths and emerging growth sector opportunities, as well as providing a tangible skills action plan for the partners of the Ayrshire Growth Deal and Regional Economic Partnership to deliver collaboratively.

Capitalising on the region's foundational industrial strengths such as tourism, food and drink, aerospace and health and social care will be important if Ayrshire is to embed inclusive growth across the regional economy, ensuring that all individuals can access fair and rewarding work.

The Ayrshire RSIP illustrates that responding not only to emerging needs, but also to existing industrial needs, will be crucial to building resilience and future success.

New and innovative key sectors across Ayrshire such as space, low carbon manufacturing, and cross-cutting digital technologies have the potential to accelerate economic development and attract new business investment to the region.

Central to this will be ensuring that Ayrshire has a diverse and accessible skills pipeline to meet growing demand across these key growth sectors, ensuring that employers can fill existing and emerging vacancies to unlock their potential.

To address skills challenges outlined in the RSIP it is important that the regional partners and all three local authorities work together to promote Ayrshire as a vibrant and viable place to visit, work, and live.

The pandemic has seen an increasing number of individuals choosing to live and work in rural areas, and if communicated well by all partners, this could operate as a catalyst to attract new people to the region and encourage people already residing across the region to stay in Ayrshire.

To ensure that the skills requirements of the current and future labour supply are met, the partners of the Ayrshire Growth Deal and Regional Economic Partnership must look forward and envision a regional economy and labour market where individuals have the necessary skills to remain active and participating, whilst tackling existing historical inequalities across the region and in key sectors.

In this respect, it's essential that the RSIP complements Scottish Government's National Strategy for Economic Transformation and takes account of the changes evident in the global economy, from the growth in green jobs and skills to the increasing pace of digitisation and automation in the workplace.

There is a need to simplify the skills and enterprise landscape, and the challenge is for partners to think innovatively about how to overcome any complexities or barriers to collaboration, in order to futureproof our local industry and businesses.

Targeted engagement with all partners in Ayrshire's Skills sphere will be key to achieving this, with genuine and meaningful engagement amongst all stakeholders being central to the delivery of this plan. The challenges and opportunities facing Ayrshire's skills system cannot be solved or realised by one individual partner alone.

The increased regional partnership working that has begun to emerge in Ayrshire means that now is the perfect time to launch the Ayrshire Regional Skills Investment Plan to help shape the activities of local partners going forward. We must continue to work together and build on these partnerships if we wish to maintain the momentum driving regional change.

The RSIP marks a transition to a more collaborative Ayrshire that has the interests of the regional industry, business, population, and economy at heart.

**Alistair Dobson**

Managing Director

Arran Dairies/Taste of Arran

Chair of Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy

Working Group

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# 1. Background

## 1.1 Plan Objectives

Our Regional Skills Investment Plan (RSIP) is Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and local partners' commitment to collaborative working across local authority boundaries. It embeds an evidence-based approach to skills planning, investment and delivery that is aligned to the needs of employers and the regional economy.

The aims of the Ayrshire RSIP are to:

- **inspire action** through setting out the purpose for its development, and the benefits to Ayrshire from co-design, collaboration and joint implementation to respond to the skills needs of the region
- **understand the regional skills issues** by developing consensus on the opportunities and challenges for Ayrshire - focusing on individuals and employers, particularly in the current economic context
- **set out the skills response** to existing and emerging skills needs of the region and the articulation of the agreed priority areas for skills action
- ensure that underpinning each of these priority areas has full consideration of **promoting equality, diversity and inclusion**

- **articulate timescales** associated with opportunities and challenges driven by investment identified over the short, medium, and long-term, with actions that are both achievable and agile in responding to emerging opportunities and investment in the region, as well as acknowledging the pace of change in labour markets and workplaces which has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic
- develop an agreed **Action Plan** for implementation by regional skills partners.

## 1.2 Developing the Ayrshire RSIP

The Ayrshire RSIP development was managed on behalf of the Ayrshire Skills Group by a Steering Group that included SDS, Ayrshire College (AC), University of the West of Scotland (UWS) and the Ayrshire Growth Deal (AGD) Programme Management Office (PMO).

The plan is evidence-based, drawing on the most recent Ayrshire Regional Skills Assessment, built up from existing official datasets and forecasts including data from Oxford Economics, Burning Glass (jobs postings), Office for National Statistics, Annual Population Survey, National Records of

Scotland, Department for Work and Pensions, and the Scottish Employer Skills Survey.

Following an initial workshop with the Ayrshire Skills Group, individual consultations were conducted with more than 25 regional stakeholders representing the main institutions and sectors engaged with the Ayrshire economy and skills system. An online survey and two focus groups with regional employers gathered a further 70 responses. Finally, three focus groups with senior school pupils and Ayrshire College students were also held.

We are grateful to all the individuals and organisations that contributed their insights on the current and future challenges and opportunities for the Ayrshire economy and skills system, and their ideas and input that helped shape the set of strategic goals and actions set out in this plan.

## 2. Policy Context

### 2.1 Introduction

A review of existing national and regional strategies and policy outlines the operating environment in which the Ayrshire RSIP has been developed. Table 2.1 below provides an overview of the main documents considered for the development of the plan. The National

Strategy for Economic Transformation (published in March 2022) provides important strategic context, with its vision that “Scotland in 2032 is a wellbeing economy: thriving across economic, social and environmental dimensions, one that delivers economic prosperity for all Scotland’s people and places”.

### 2.2 Strategic Insights and Implications

Ayrshire has a robust set of policies and organisations that can support economic development at a regional and local level. The focus of policy and strategy is primarily on using local resources to implement a place based approach to sustainable and inclusive growth.

Principally through the Ayrshire Growth Deal, regional priorities are aligned to key sectors (including aerospace and space, energy, food, marine, manufacturing, and tourism) and the need to build essential infrastructure (both physical and digital). Proposed interventions around digital skills and community wealth building seek to provide an “ecosystem of support” to build business and individual resilience and readiness for future growth.

**The Ayrshire Growth Deal represents a £250m investment which is estimated to leverage a further £300m private investment, with the potential of creating up to 7,000 new jobs by 2029/30. This is a significant impact for the region which currently has a workforce of approximately 145,000.**

**The Ayrshire Growth Deal is based on the achievement of inclusive economic growth with a focus on addressing the issues of innovation, productivity and inequality across the regional economy.**

**Table 2.1: Strategic Review – Key National and Regional Policies**

National	Regional
<u>National Strategy for Economic Transformation</u>	<u>South Ayrshire Strategic Economic Plan: Vision 2030</u>
<u>Programme for Government 2021/22</u>	<u>East Ayrshire’s Delivery Plan for the Economy and Skills 2021-24: Partnership Actions</u>
<u>Scotland’s Future Skills Action Plan</u>	<u>North Ayrshire Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy Refresh 2016-25</u>
<u>Sector Skills Investment Plans</u>	<u>North Ayrshire Tourism Action Plan 2018-22</u>
<u>Sectoral Skills Assessments</u>	<u>Ayrshire Growth Deal</u>
<u>Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland</u>	<u>North Ayrshire Council Community Wealth Building Strategy</u>
<u>Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan</u>	
<u>Developing the Young Workforce</u>	
<u>No One Left Behind</u>	
<u>Covid-19 Labour Market Insights</u>	

**Five programmes are underway: Space and Aerospace, Communities, Economic Infrastructure, Energy, Circular Economy and Environment, and Tourism.**

The economic development policy landscape is dynamic and continues to evolve in response to the impact of COVID-19 and Brexit, as well as other major systemic changes that reflect digitisation and automation and the climate emergency. Agencies at all levels are continuing to take stock, revisit and (where appropriate) refresh strategic ambitions and priorities in light of the impact of the pandemic and changes in trade regulations. The Scottish Government's [Resource Spending Review](#) outlines the financial challenges currently facing the public sector, and the need for partners to develop a responsive skills system for the region which can adapt and respond resourcefully to changes.

These recent uncertainties add to longer recognised challenges for the Ayrshire economy in terms of low productivity and wage levels, over-reliance on the public sector for employment, locations of high unemployment, and youth unemployment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial impact on some of Ayrshire's key growth sectors (such as retail, hospitality and accommodation and food services) and those that contribute to the region's economic

growth including aerospace and aviation, manufacturing, and construction. Many of these sectors have experienced challenges with recruitment and retention of staff because of the national and local lockdowns, supply chain issues due to social distancing measures, and/or trade regulations associated with Brexit. These challenges coupled with pre-existing skills shortages in the area have resulted in a mismatch in skills demand and supply across the region.

The Ayrshire Regional Economic Partnership is currently working to develop a new Regional Economic Strategy (RES). The RES will promote enhanced regional collaboration and ensure resources are directed towards supporting the recovery of sectors most affected by the pandemic, or those which provide greatest leverage to support the recovery process to move into renewal.

Synthesising the national and regional strategies identifies key priorities for Ayrshire:

- aiding regional economic recovery from the pandemic, led by green growth, fairness, and wellbeing
- creating a resilient, responsive, and sustainable skills system, by offering access to upskilling and reskilling opportunities, and focusing on improving the learner journey
- focusing on climate emergency priorities at a regional level which build on the

[Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan](#) and mobilises businesses towards net zero emissions (energy transition, construction, transport, manufacturing, and agriculture and land-use management)

- ensuring that the region's strategic vision to become a centre for digital technologies and the next generation of manufacturing is achieved, as well as achieving the other sectoral priorities set out in the Ayrshire Growth Deal (AGD) associated with tourism, aerospace/space, green economy, and advanced manufacturing
- maximising the value of the AGD (and future regional and national funding opportunities) to local people and businesses by ensuring that training provision meets the needs of local industry
- providing early-stage enterprise support and supporting Ayrshire to become a dynamic, ambitious, and diverse entrepreneurial region in Scotland
- facilitating workforce development through upskilling and reskilling to equip the current workforce with the skills necessary to embrace technological change



- fostering and embedding meta-skills<sup>1</sup> in the workforce through provision, particularly among young people and those furthest from the labour market
- creating a labour market that is supportive of young people and contributes to a fairer, more equal society by continuing activities associated with the Developing the Young Workforce Regional Group and increasing the range and take-up of apprenticeships on offer in line with regional needs
- promoting inclusive growth by working with communities to raise aspiration and ambition, providing employment and skills support, and improving access to jobs through innovative community empowerment, employability programmes, and fair work
- ensuring that skills provision meets the needs of industry and employers in rural areas and is promoted and accessible to all
- continuing and enhancing regional delivery through growth deals and economic partnerships and collaborations.



A key priority for Ayrshire includes creating a labour market that is supportive of young people and contributes to a fairer, more equal society, and increasing the range and take-up of apprenticeships on offer

## 3. The Ayrshire Economy and Labour Market

This section draws on data analysis and intelligence to highlight the key economic and labour market issues across the region. It explores skills supply and demand by highlighting some of the key regional opportunities and challenges, and outlines a range of strategic insights that have informed the development of the Action Plan.

### 3.1 Labour Market Overview

Ayrshire has an ageing population resulting in a declining working age population. In 2020, the number of individuals of working age (between 16 to 64) across the region was 222,400. This is a decrease of 6% from 2010 (14,900 individuals)<sup>2</sup>. This trend is projected to continue and by 2043 the regional working age population is forecast to have contracted by 17% - presenting challenges for the vibrancy and vitality of the regional economy.

A decline in the working age population will result in skills supply challenges for the regional business base. In 2021 there were approximately 10,000 businesses across Ayrshire, predominately in industries such as construction (13%), professional, scientific and technical (13%), and agriculture, forestry and fishing (11%)<sup>3</sup>. The regional business base has expanded by 4% (a similar rate to the national

level) between 2015 and 2021, with growth concentrated in construction, education and business administration. The industries that have experienced the largest decline were retail and motor trades.

In 2021, total employment for Ayrshire (measured by people) was estimated to be 138,000 - 5.4% of Scotland's total employment<sup>4</sup>. Between October 2020 and September 2021, the regional employment rate for the working age population was 69.8% - lower than the Scottish rate of 72.9%. This means that roughly three in 10 of the region's working age population were unemployed (4.8%) or economically inactive (26.7%). More people in Ayrshire worked full-time than part-time (in line with the national trend), however Ayrshire has a higher percentage of part-time workers at 29.9% than Scotland overall (25.6%)<sup>5</sup>.

Across the region, there is a reliance on public sector employment. The sectors with the largest share of regional employment in 2020 were human health activities (11.7%), retail trade (10.1%), education (8.1%), public administration and defence (6.3%) and social work (5.9%).

In addition to employment opportunities in the public sector, industries such as motor trades, accommodation and food services, financial

and insurance activities, and arts, entertainment and recreation all experienced a growth in employment between 2015 and 2020 of 17%<sup>6</sup>. Ayrshire also has unique regional employment opportunities in the Tourism industry which employed 13,000 individuals in 2018<sup>7</sup> however, the pandemic has had an impact on many of these sectors and their associated skills demand in the short term.

Ayrshire currently has a higher rate of economic inactivity at 26.7%, compared to the national rate of 23.9%<sup>8</sup>. Many individuals may have returned to further or higher education due to the instability of the labour market because of the pandemic or may be balancing caring responsibilities or illnesses. Businesses should consider implementing fair work principles into employment contracts to allow for flexibility and attract candidates to roles.

Across Ayrshire, the claimant count (those seeking unemployment-related income support) rose sharply following the initial lockdown measures in March 2020, peaking at 18,500 in August 2020. The claimant count has gradually decreased to 16,800 in December 2021, however, remains higher than pre-pandemic levels<sup>9</sup>. This suggests individuals across the region are struggling to obtain employment that offers income security.

2 National Records of Scotland (June 2021), Population Estimates Time Series Data, [available online](#)

3 UK Business Counts (October 2021), [accessed via NOMIS](#)

4 Oxford Economics, SDS Regional Skills Assessment – Ayrshire

5 Annual Population Survey, [accessed via NOMIS](#)

6 Business Register and Employment Survey (2021), [Accessed via NOMIS](#)

7 Scottish Annual Business Statistics (2020) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-annual-business-statistics-2018/>

8 Annual Population Survey, [accessed via NOMIS](#)

9 Claimant Count – not seasonally adjusted, [accessed via NOMIS](#)

Between October 2020 and September 2021, youth unemployment (those aged 16 to 24) was 12.2% compared to the national level of 10.4%<sup>10</sup>. The impact of the pandemic on the labour market was felt most acutely by individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds, women, individuals with disabilities, those in long-term unemployment and young people.

However, most recent unemployment data for the region has found that more males than females are currently unemployed across the region. This could be due to the increased skills demand across traditionally female dominated sectors such as health and social care and retail.

The Ayrshire skills response should focus on ensuring that employment and training opportunities are available for (and targeted at) those who have been hardest hit by the pandemic. Policy and strategy should also concentrate on narrowing the gap in employment, economic activity and unemployment indicators between Ayrshire and the rest of Scotland.

### 3.2 Skills Supply and Demand

Young people across all three local authorities in Ayrshire are becoming increasingly higher skilled with an increase in the number of

individuals achieving at least one or more SCQF Level 5 or above qualification. Between 2015 and 2021, North Ayrshire experienced the largest increase in the number of young people leaving school with one or more SCQF Level 5 or above qualification, followed by South Ayrshire and East Ayrshire<sup>11</sup>.

Despite this, between October and September 2021, Ayrshire continued to have a marginally lower proportion of individuals employed in high-skilled occupations compared to Scotland. Of those in high-skilled employment at a national level, 8.5% were employed as managers, directors, and senior officials, compared to 8.1% at a regional level<sup>12</sup>. For professional occupations, the disparity was greater with 24% of individuals employed at a national level, and 18.5% at a regional level.

Ayrshire has a marginally greater proportion of its workforce employed in medium-level occupations (such as skilled trades occupations, caring, leisure and other service occupations) and a higher rate of individuals employed in low-skilled occupations (such as elementary occupations) at 12.2% compared to the national rate of 10.2%. Women also tend to be employed in lower-skilled and lower-paid occupations, so despite having higher employment rates, the quality and security of their employment may be considerably poorer than their male counterparts.

Most recent data provided shows that across Ayrshire, more males (7,400 individuals) were employed in higher-skilled occupations such as managers, directors, and senior officials than females (4,100). Occupations such as sales and customer service occupations had a larger share of female employment (10,500) than male employment (3,800)<sup>13</sup>.

This influences average earnings. In 2021, weekly median pay in both North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire for full-time workers was below the Scottish average (£622.40), at £597.20 and £616.90 respectively. The weekly median pay in East Ayrshire was higher at £721.70<sup>14</sup>. Weekly pay across all three local authorities has increased year on year since 2018, in line with the national trend.

Across Ayrshire's three local authorities in 2021, males received a higher weekly gross pay at £621.57 than females at £445.33 - a difference of £176.23<sup>15</sup>. This pay gap between male and female weekly gross pay has only decreased marginally since 2011, where the disparity was £180.10. More efforts could be taken to address the quality of work for females across the region and address the existing equality imbalances.

There was a sharp decrease in the number of job postings across the region in March 2020,

10 Annual Population Survey, [accessed via NOMIS](#)

11 Scottish Government (2022) Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations, No. 4: 2022 Edition, [available online](#)

12 Annual Population Survey (October 2020 – September 2021), [accessed via NOMIS](#)

13 Annual Population Survey (Jan 2021 – December 2021), [accessed via NOMIS](#)

14 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings – [Workplace Analysis \(2021\)](#), [Accessed via NOMIS](#)

15 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings – [Workplace Analysis \(2021\)](#), [Accessed via NOMIS](#)

following initial national lockdown measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, with the reopening of key sectors the number of job postings have returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Between February 2021 and January 2022, there were 20,200 job postings across Ayrshire accounting for 3.6% of all job postings in Scotland. Job postings were primarily concentrated in Ayr, Kilmarnock and Irvine and occupations with the highest number of postings were care workers and home carers, nurses, and other administration occupations.

The Scottish Employers Skills Survey, conducted during the height of the pandemic and over a period where restrictions on businesses were fluctuating under review, identified that 10% of Ayrshire employers reported having skills gaps in the workforce, compared to 12% nationally. The density of these skills gaps (the proportion of the workforce considered to lack full proficiency) is higher in Ayrshire (and rising) at 7.4% than in Scotland at 4%.

Skills gaps across Ayrshire in 2020 were concentrated in occupations such as caring, leisure and other service occupations, elementary staff, and machine operatives. Employers reported that an inability to recruit staff with the required skills (51%) and training

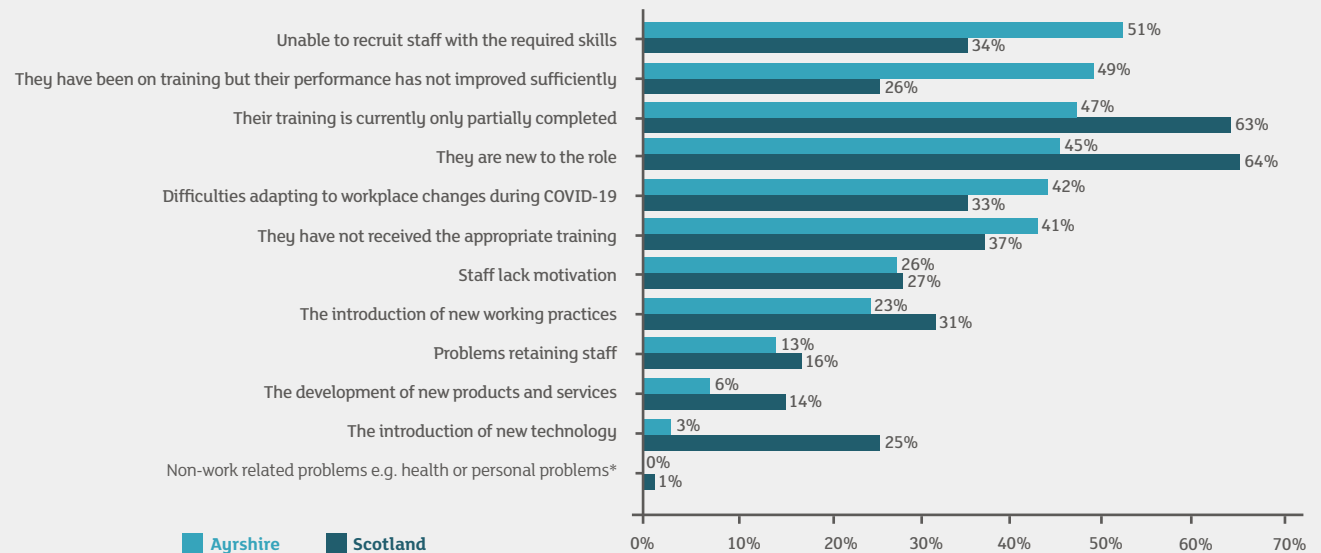
not sufficiently improving performance (Figure 1) were the main causes of skills gaps in Ayrshire.

The proportion of all establishments with any skill-shortage vacancies has fallen from 5% in 2017 to 1% in 2020. Skills-shortage vacancies occur when there is a shortage of applicants with the right experience, skills or knowledge required to successfully fill a job vacancy.

This decline could be attributed to alternative

priority issues that employers faced during the period of reporting such as forced workplace closures, transitioning to home working and new legislation and operating measures. Recent insight suggests some key sectors and industries (for example those associated with the digital economy) are now struggling to recruit due to increased competition for skillsets.

**Figure 1: Scottish Employer Skills Survey – Causes of Skills Gaps**



### 3.3 Employment Forecasts

Over the mid-term between 2021 and 2024, a total of 18,600 job openings are forecast across the region<sup>16</sup>. This will be mostly made up by a replacement demand (individuals retiring or leaving the labour market) of 15,500 people, and an expansion demand (the creation of new jobs) of 3,100 people. A large proportion of these openings will be concentrated in a few sectors (wholesale and retail, health and social work, accommodation and food services, and transportation and storage).

Long-term forecasts between 2024 and 2031 indicate that job growth is not anticipated to continue in Ayrshire. However, opportunities created by replacement demand means that there could be approximately 37,100 jobs during this time. Four sectors account for 59% of these job openings (wholesale and retail trade, human health and social work, accommodation and food services, and administrative and support services).

The forecasts indicate that there will be healthy growth in key occupations across the region in the medium-term. The increased reliance on technology for homeworking as a result of the pandemic means that geographical boundaries are no longer a barrier for some roles in the labour market.

Whilst these roles cannot be definitively identified at this stage it highlights the potential for new opportunities for Ayrshire and the need for business and individuals to embrace new ways of working through digital technology.

### 3.4 Education and Training

There are opportunities to obtain further and higher education qualifications in all three local authority areas, at Ayrshire College in Ayr, Kilwinning and Kilmarnock, and University of the West of Scotland in Ayr<sup>17</sup>. A wide portfolio of courses is offered which broadly seeks to align to the main sectors of the regional economy.

The Ayrshire Growth Deal enhances the skills infrastructure through additional education and training centres and further education partners in growth sector areas (Table 3.1).

Regional projects include the HALO Enterprise and Innovation Centre<sup>18</sup> based in Kilmarnock - a net zero carbon mixed-use site, which offers the opportunity to increase Ayrshire's entrepreneurial talent, skills development, employment opportunities and local economic growth. The Centre also aims to increase digital skills provision and support new business start-ups and scale-ups of all sizes.



There are further and higher education opportunities in all three Ayrshire local authorities

<sup>16</sup> Oxford Economics (2021), SDS Regional Skills Assessment – Ayrshire

<sup>17</sup> Ayrshire College and University of the West of Scotland

<sup>18</sup> HALO Projects

**Table 3.1 Ayrshire Growth Deal Skills-related Projects**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Partners</b>
<b>Community Renewable Energy Project, CORE Centre of Excellence, Cumnock</b>	Research and innovation STEM education from early years to further education Entrepreneurship education Apprenticeships	University of Strathclyde Prince's Trust, Ayrshire College, schools  Ayrshire College Schools/Ayrshire College/University of the West of Scotland
<b>Aerospace and Space Innovation Centre, Prestwick</b>	Aircraft decommissioning pathway training for unemployed and at-risk of redundancy	Ayrshire College, University of Strathclyde, Chevron Aircraft Maintenance
<b>I3 Digital Processing Manufacturing Centre, Irvine</b>	Training for young people and existing workers in digital skills	University of Strathclyde, National Manufacturing Institute Scotland, Ayrshire College
<b>International Marine Science &amp; Environment Centre, Ardrossan</b>	Applied marine sciences Marine education and training	Stirling University North Ayrshire Council
<b>The HALO Enterprise and Innovation Centre, Kilmarnock</b>	Green Energy Hub Encourage entrepreneurship ecosystem Create new jobs Develop new digital and cyber security projects	Industry East Ayrshire Council Ayrshire College
<b>Ayrshire Manufacturing Investment Corridor, East Ayrshire</b>	Centre for excellence delivering manufacturing and digital skills Innovation Centre	Strathclyde University East Ayrshire Council Transport Scotland

At a national level, and a regional level, Modern Apprenticeship (MA) starts declined between 2019/20 and 2020/21, due to delivery challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, across Scotland and Ayrshire, numbers are recovering, with almost 800 new trainees starting an MA in Ayrshire in Q3 of 2021/22.

In addition, over the last four years the number of Ayrshire schools offering Foundation Apprenticeships (FA) has been growing. In 2020, 100% of schools in North Ayrshire had pupils undertaking an FA at SCQF Level 6, an increase from 22.2% in 2016<sup>19</sup>. Additionally, East Ayrshire has experienced an increase from having no schools offering FAs in 2016, to 71.4% in 2020, and South Ayrshire increased from 12.5% in 2016 to 87.5% in 2020.

Apprenticeship offerings across Ayrshire are broadly aligned to industry demand and regional opportunities with offerings in subjects including aerospace manufacturing repair and maintenance, general manufacturing, engineering and laboratory science, and digital skills. More could be done to promote Graduate Apprenticeships offerings across the region.

### 3.5 Strategic Insights and Implications

The analysis of the Ayrshire economy and labour market suggest several important areas of focus. These relate to:

- maximising the opportunities through the Ayrshire Growth Deal skills-related projects by ensuring efficient progress in each of the project's activities through collaborative governance and regional partnerships
- taking focused action to lower Ayrshire's unemployment rate, with a particular focus on young people, looking to increase activity rates and earnings relative to the Scottish average
- ensuring that employment across the region is secure and offers a fair standard of living for all individuals, whilst addressing existing inequalities in the labour market such as the regional gender pay gap and occupational/industrial segregation
- addressing Ayrshire's relatively high density of skills gaps by encouraging and supporting employers to offer learning and development 'on the job'

- acknowledging and responding to challenges for the future, such as, the long-term decline in manufacturing employment due to automation and digitalisation
- meeting the demand for health and social care workers, who currently form a large part of the existing labour market, including improving the attractiveness of these jobs and building secure career pathways
- focusing on the expansion and uptake of apprenticeship opportunities in areas where there are predicted skills shortages and future growth opportunities, including the opportunities emerging from the transition to a net zero economy
- ensuring that individuals in Ayrshire have access to an excellent range of opportunities and skills provision through Ayrshire College and University of the West of Scotland and wider provision (and look to identify and address any gaps), with further and higher education provision partners seeking to capitalise on the new Ayrshire Growth Deal innovation and skills facilities that may bring specialist provision and operate as a catalyst for new partnerships across the region.

19 Skills Development Scotland (2021) Foundation Apprenticeships Progress Report, [available online](#)

## 4. Stakeholder Perceptions and Priorities

### Regional Partners

Key regional stakeholders and partners were approached for consultation to explore the existing and emerging skills challenges and opportunities for Ayrshire that could be addressed through the Ayrshire RSIP. In addition, consideration was given to the potential for the Ayrshire RSIP to maximise the workforce development initiatives delivered through Ayrshire Growth Deal investments and leveraging the benefits of coordinated regional action.

The consultations were reviewed and thematically coded, with the skills challenges set out in relation to the three key thematic areas of Strategic Drivers, Employers and Industry, and Individuals and Workforce.

### 4.1 Skills Issues and Challenges

#### Strategic Drivers

Strategic Drivers at a national level have had an impact on the skills challenges facing Ayrshire's regional economy and labour market. The pace of technological change

which accelerated because of the pandemic has radically increased the digital skills needs of the labour market. In addition, the policy drivers moving the Scottish economy towards net zero has seen increased demand for decarbonisation of some industries and as a result many existing jobs could be replaced with new 'greener' occupations or may take a greener focus.

This increased reliance on digital technology and the transition to net zero will require significant upskilling and reskilling of individuals within Ayrshire's labour market. Efforts to address the challenges will need to deliver at all stages of the learner journey from school-level instruction in subjects such as digital, coding, and cyber technologies, through to continuing professional development for tutors in further and higher education to ensure they can keep up with the pace of change.

The further and higher education systems could also increase the number of short flexible courses with early certification on offer to upskill existing workers.

### Employers and Industry

Ayrshire needs to focus investment both on the large employing foundational economy sectors, including health and social care, tourism, and hospitality, as well as the aspirational growth sectors, such as space/aerospace, green energy, and advanced manufacturing. This is to ensure that Ayrshire can benefit not only economically from its key growth sectors, but also to ensure that the welfare and basic needs of its population are being met by addressing skills challenges in sectors such as health and social care.

Partners will also need to guarantee that the skills system can respond to the skills demands of Ayrshire's employers and industry, not only in the short-term, but in the medium to long-term too. This includes a recognition of the time that it takes to fully train individuals. For example, to train a new nurse takes four years and does not meet the immediate demand and shortage across the regional health and social care sector.

Improved partnership working and evidence-based decision making will be required to ensure that the skills system remains agile and responsive to employer demand. Employers



may need additional support when it comes to advertising vacancies to ensure that they can attract a wide range of candidates, and employers expressed that they would be more inclined to take on young people if provided with additional incentives (such as Kickstart) or support.

Employer participation in setting the skills agenda and investing in skills is vital, both in terms of informing skills development and supporting delivery, for example, through offering placements, internships, and business projects. Alongside qualifications, employers are looking for experience of the workplace, and increased promotion of, and engagement with, Scottish Apprenticeships will be central to Ayrshire's skills system.

Consultation with employers across the region has identified their expressed willingness to work with the education system and support apprenticeships which could increase the experience of individuals in the labour market. The RSIP prioritises greater communication and engagement between employers and other stakeholders (including students, schools, higher and further education providers).

This would facilitate a shared understanding and provide a basis for actions to be taken. By doing so career pathways will be clear to

potential regional candidates, and employers will have an opportunity to help shape regional skills supply. To be effective, the Skills Plan must be bespoke to Ayrshire to fit and showcase its particular regional strengths and opportunities.

## Individuals and Workforce

Consultations identified that there is a need to challenge individuals understanding and perception of the types of jobs that are available across Ayrshire and ensure that they are aware of all the existing opportunities. Young people do not see themselves as well-versed in the Ayrshire economy and this means there could be missed opportunities to retain talent young people locally. This could be addressed by showcasing pathways into emerging career opportunities.

There is also a need to recognise that some key roles that are vacant due to skills shortages may not be able to be filled from the resident workforce in the short-term, and that talent attraction may be necessary at a wider strategic level. This could include initiatives to encourage the return of Ayrshire graduates to the regional labour pool.

There is a range of cross-cutting skills which are needed generally within the current and

future workforce to ensure that individuals are equipped to take on new opportunities. However, many young people were unaware of the central importance of cross-cutting skills in the labour market and world of work. These skills should be built into existing provision and include:

- **meta-skills**<sup>18</sup> across self-management, social intelligence and innovation
- **enterprise skills**
- **digital – basic skills** and keeping pace with system upgrades
- **digital – advanced skills**, e.g., XR (mentioned around aerospace), web and app development, security and network management.

Developing these underpinning cross-cutting skills will be of primary importance to young people to ensure that they can successfully be considered for existing employment opportunities and can compete in a labour market that has tended to favour candidates with experience and that have had longer to develop these skillsets.

When discussing career support, young people believed that they would benefit from increased touchpoints with careers guidance,

18 SDS (2018) Skills 4.0 A Skills Model

before starting courses, during, and towards the end, and that careers guidance should have an additional focus on mature students in the further and higher education system as well as young people. This plan will implement the recommendations of the [National Career Review](#).

## 4.2 Skills-related Opportunities

The Ayrshire Growth Deal is regarded as a significant and transformational investment in the regional economy. Sourcing and supplying the right mix of skills is seen as vital to achieving the potential impact of the capital investments currently underway.

Shorter-term priorities aligned to the ambitions of the Ayrshire Growth Deal were identified:

- invest in and encourage more engagement with apprenticeship opportunities in regional key growth sectors such as construction, engineering, tourism, hospitality and culture, electric vehicles, aerospace, digital, health and social care
- priority to engage and inspire young people to increase understanding of opportunities in the region and provide an “anchor” - retaining talent for the future

- a mapping exercise for capitalising on significant clean growth employment opportunities - with public sector, academic and industry partners engaged
- completion of the Ayrshire Energy Masterplan to clarify direction of travel and skills requirements.

Medium to longer-term opportunities were identified:

- opportunities for young people in Hunterston and the surrounding area, with investment promotion underway to develop land at the port. This requires monitoring and scoping with industry partners
- in the blue economy, following more scoping work with industry and academic partners to understand Ayrshire’s assets and position in the market
- increased investment and talent attraction is required to raise awareness of opportunities in Ayrshire and the quality of life on offer. There are wider policy implications around housing, transport, and travel to increase the attractiveness of Ayrshire as a place to live and work.

## 4.3 Skills Infrastructure and Interventions

Ayrshire’s skills infrastructure is well connected to the regional economy, with new assets bringing the potential to enhance skills in growth sectors.

Ayrshire College and the University of the West of Scotland are both well-established within the regional economy and have excellent relationships with a wide range of regional employers and institutions. They remain crucial for future success of the regional skills system.

In addition, there are some important developments of facilities within the Ayrshire Growth Deal infrastructure including the aerospace training at Aerospace and Space Innovation Centre (ASIC) in Prestwick, the Digital Processing Manufacturing Centre (DPMC) in Irvine and low carbon energy technologies and solutions in Cumnock and Hunterston.

Work is also currently ongoing to scope out marine technology priorities at the International Marine Science and Environment Centre (IMSE) in Ardrossan, and Ardeer is one of the short-listed sites for the UK’s prototype fusion energy plant.

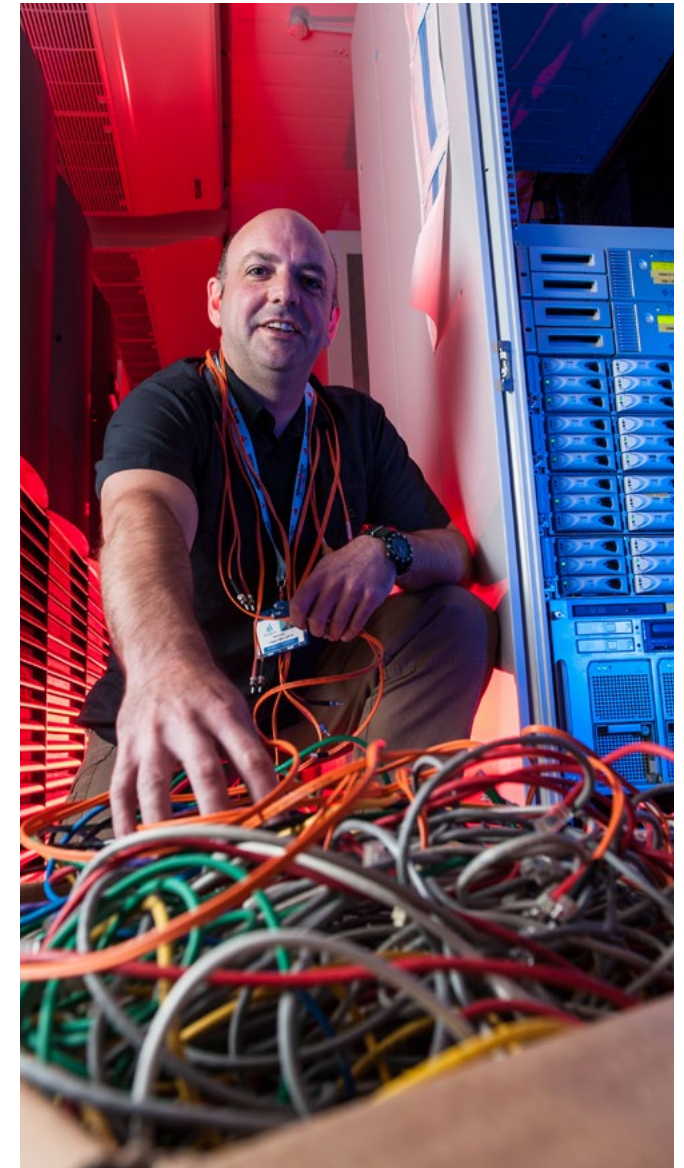
It is hoped that the Ayrshire Growth Deal and other investments will bring together and complement wider higher education and private sector providers, as well as the local further and higher education institutions.

Within the school system there are examples of excellent business/education partnerships, but there is an inconsistency in approach and quality of networks. Some schools in the region need support to increase their engagement and capacity. In addition to challenges associated with capacity, there are issues with resourcing capital expenditure for equipment in further and higher education, however, the potential exists for industry partnerships to share financial burden.

#### **4.4 Effective Delivery of the Ayrshire RSIP**

Stakeholders identified that more work is required to mature the Regional Economic Partnership and ensure effective delivery of the Ayrshire RSIP. Greater strategic impact can be achieved by utilising and building upon the existing evidence base, to achieve a shared understanding of the regional skills issues and opportunities, engaging with industry partners as well as public sector colleagues, fostering cross-collaboration and sharing resources.

Regional partners noted that there are a wider range of underpinning issues that will impact on the ability of Ayrshire to present a compelling economic and skills offer. This includes aspects such as housing, connectivity, culture and leisure, etc. These issues are outside the scope of the Ayrshire RSIP but may be considered as part of the Regional Economic Partnership development.



Ayrshire's skills infrastructure is well connected to the regional economy, with new assets bringing the potential to enhance skills in growth sectors

## 5. Regional Challenges and Opportunities

Drawing on the desk-based review of the evidence base and further informed by stakeholder consultations, this section summarises the key regional challenges and opportunities that provide the context for the development of the Action Plan.

Table 5.1 Regional Challenges and Opportunities		
	Challenges	Opportunities
Demographics	Ageing workforce - retirements Declining population	Attract new talent and families with new growth sectors and lifestyle opportunities
Economic conditions	Covid recovery – large loss of jobs Brexit impact on labour supply and exporting	Promote reskilling into sectors experiencing skills shortages and recruitment challenges
Drivers of change	Automation Digitalisation	Community wealth building Ayrshire Growth Deal investment
Labour market	Lower wages Areas of high economic inactivity	Encourage employers to embed fair work principles into employment opportunities
Existing workforce	Large retiring workforce in next decade Relatively high skills gap density Small employers have barriers to investing in skills	Upskilling and reskilling Increasing qualification levels in workforce Promote lifelong learning
Future workforce	High youth unemployment Meta-skills are becoming increasingly important for career paths Difficult to pinpoint future skills requirements Time lag developing new courses	Upskilling and reskilling Growing apprenticeships Enterprise education promoting entrepreneurial people and culture Increased investment in careers guidance

**Table 5.1 Regional Challenges and Opportunities** continued

	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reliance on public sector employment</li> <li>Hunterston decommissioning</li> <li>Covid impact on aerospace sector</li> <li>Identifying niche in blue economy</li> <li>Forecast decline in manufacturing jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Space Foreign Direct Investment</li> <li>Green growth</li> <li>Health and social care transformation</li> <li>Digital processing</li> <li>Advanced manufacturing</li> </ul>
Education and skills infrastructure	Fast-changing environment requires flexible and adaptable skills system	New sector-based facilities
Regional partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aligning local authorities</li> <li>Need to improve intelligence and data sharing</li> <li>UK/national/regional policy tensions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-Ayrshire Growth Deal project potential</li> <li>Strategic business/education collaboration</li> </ul>
Equality, diversity and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some sectors have been, and continue to be, dominated by specific genders or equality characteristics</li> <li>Some equality groups (such as those who are neurodivergent) may be underemployed or unemployed across the region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More can and should be done to increase attractiveness of sectors to all equality groups creating a fairer and more equal society</li> <li>Diversity in the regional labour market increases innovation and productivity – (evidence suggests individuals that are neurodivergent are well suited to some occupations in sectors such as digital)</li> </ul>

## 6. Action Plan

### 6.1 Mission

Through engagement with the Ayrshire RSIP Steering Group, building on the analysis of the desk-based review and consultations with stakeholders a skills mission has been agreed for the region.

**“To create an agile, responsive skills system that supports an inclusive, sustainable and competitive regional economy, offers opportunities for everyone to thrive and progress, and enhances Ayrshire’s attractiveness as a great place to invest, live and work”.**

### 6.2 Strategic Goals

Developing Ayrshire’s skills base and capitalising on the opportunities flowing from the Ayrshire Growth Deal and wider investment requires clear strategic direction. Four strategic goals have been identified:

1. Invest in growing talent across Ayrshire by capitalising on sectoral opportunities and ensuring skills provision is aligned to industry demand
2. Ensure that pathways into regional employment opportunities are clearly defined, and support both new entrants and job changers in the labour market
3. Encourage and support investment in upskilling and reskilling provision for the existing workforce
4. Improve employability outcomes across Ayrshire by addressing existing employment barriers and promoting inclusive growth.

Section seven translates these strategic goals into a series of actions that have been agreed by regional economic development and skills partners for implementation.



A key strategic goal is to invest in growing talent across Ayrshire by capitalising on sectoral opportunities and ensuring skills provision is aligned to industry demand

## 7. Priority Actions

### GOAL 1: Invest in growing talent across Ayrshire by capitalising on sectoral opportunities and ensuring skills provision is aligned to industry demand

**Rationale:** Ensuring that the education and skills systems deliver targeted provision that meets both employer and industry demand will be central to the success of the Ayrshire Growth Deal and to ensuring that individuals progress in growth sectors of the future.

Action	Lead and partners	Timescales	Outcomes
Increase awareness and involvement of education providers in Ayrshire Growth Deal developments (e.g. utilising the Aerospace and Space Innovation Centre visitor hub for school and college student engagement).	Ayrshire Growth Deal PMO, local authority, education providers, Developing the Young Workforce	Start in 2022	Schools and colleges have a better understanding of regional opportunities resulting in increased talent retention. Young people are exposed to local industry.
Work with regional employers and education providers to ensure that meta-skills are embedded in all vocational training programmes and qualifications.	Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Qualifications Authority, University of the West of Scotland, Ayrshire College, Scottish Funding Council	By 2025	Regional vocational training programmes and qualifications have meta-skills embedded as core principles of delivery, improving resilience of the workforce.
Develop provision and training that meets the needs of and industry in key growth sectors such as aerospace and space, green jobs, digital and care and aligns to areas of economic opportunity.	Education departments, Skills Development Scotland, University of the West of Scotland, Ayrshire College	Ongoing	A pipeline of work-ready candidates equipped with the relevant skills needed to transition into regional employment.
Promote employer engagement with Scottish apprenticeships in key growth sectors across Ayrshire.	Skills Development Scotland, local authorities, Ayrshire College, employers	By 2023	Increased awareness amongst employers of the benefits of Scottish Apprenticeships would result in additional regional apprenticeship opportunities for local talent.
Improve digital skills provision across Ayrshire with a particular focus on rural and islands communities. Ensure that digital skills provision supports the targets set out in the Ayrshire Growth Deal.	Ayrshire College, University of the West of Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, local authorities	Start in 2022	Digital skills provision is available across Ayrshire regardless of geography and allowing individuals to benefit local digital opportunities and developments.

## GOAL 2: Ensure that pathways into regional employment opportunities are clearly defined, and support both new entrants and job changers in the labour market

**Rationale: Evidencing current and future demand will allow skills gaps in the regional labour market to be addressed more quickly and ensure that skills amongst the existing workforce are not underutilised.**

Action	Lead and partners	Timescales	Outcomes
Partners to work together to develop a catalogue of innovative pathways into emerging regional opportunities, based on previous models of successful pathways.	Local authorities, Skills Development Scotland, Ayrshire College and University of the West of Scotland	By 2024	Better informed pupils and parents and streamlined progression through education and skills systems.
Ensure existing key growth sector apprenticeship models meet regional industry and individual skills needs.	Skills Development Scotland, Ayrshire College, University of the West of Scotland, employers, schools	Start in 2022	Gaps in existing apprenticeship provision for Ayrshire key growth sectors identified and potential for pilot models explored.
Support all Ayrshire schools to strengthen their plan for employer engagement and identify gaps through the current brokerage service between industry and education.	South west education improvement collaborative, Developing the Young Workforce, schools, Skills Development Scotland	By 2023	Improved education and business networks, enhanced knowledge in schools about local industry.
Provide additional support for enterprise education.	Ayrshire College, University of the West of Scotland	Start in 2023	Increased enterprise support for individuals and for those looking to transition into self-employment.
Improve digital skills provision across Ayrshire with a particular focus on rural and islands communities. Ensure that digital skills provision supports the targets set out in the Ayrshire Growth Deal.	Ayrshire College, University of the West of Scotland, local authorities	Start in 2022	Digital skills provision is available across Ayrshire regardless of geography and allowing individuals to benefit local digital opportunities and developments.



### GOAL 3: Encourage and support investment in upskilling and reskilling provision for the existing workforce

**Rationale: The pace of digital transformation, the transition to net zero, automation, and other strategic drivers in the labour market means that the skills needs of the workforce are changing. Individuals and communities need to be supported to benefit from opportunities in a transforming economy.**

Action	Lead and partners	Timescales	Outcomes
Community Wealth Building (CWB), fair work: promote upskilling at work. Anchor institutions build progression routes for workers.	Local authorities, other anchor organisations	Start in 2022	Higher productivity and job satisfaction. Improved career prospects.
Deliver national upskilling and reskilling programmes (e.g. Flexible Workforce Development Fund/Individual Training Accounts/University Upskilling Fund)	Skills Development Scotland, Ayrshire College, University of the West of Scotland,	Ongoing	Higher workforce skills leading to higher-value jobs and decrease skills shortages.
Review the upskilling needs of SMEs and continue to fund short skills programmes that address the gaps.	SMEs, Ayrshire College, University of the West of Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland	Start in 2022	Improved business confidence and success rates amongst SMEs, improved economic activity.
Implement the findings of the Career Review in Ayrshire to ensure that services meet the needs of people and the labour market.	Skills Development Scotland, Ayrshire College, University of the West of Scotland	Ongoing	Enhanced career support for all in the labour market regardless of their current position.
Support a just transition in Ayrshire by ensuring that emerging green opportunities are promoted to individuals in jobs and sectors impacted by the transition to net zero.	Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Ayrshire College, University of the West of Scotland	By 2025	Workforce in sectors that do not promote a carbon neutral economy upskill and reskill into sectors that support the green economy.

## GOAL 4: Improve employability outcomes across Ayrshire by addressing existing employment barriers and promoting inclusive growth

**Rationale:** Through embedding inclusive growth in the skills system and supporting employers to adopt principles of fair work, we can tackle barriers to employment. Utilising and building on Ayrshire's existing evidence base will allow the region to identify communities in need of employability support and measure overall progress.

Action	Lead and partners	Timescales	Outcomes
Create and deliver an integrated approach to employability across Ayrshire that fosters enhanced collaboration and partnership between further and higher education employability services and Skills Development Scotland and provides targeted employability and skills interventions.	Local authorities, Skills Development Scotland, Ayrshire College, University of the West of Scotland, Department of Work and Pensions, third sector	By 2024	Better informed support for young people and an awareness of industry skills needs. Reduction in unemployment, underemployment and economic inactivity.
Ayrshire Growth Deal Working for a Healthy Economy - continue to develop health, wellbeing and work programme for people with health barriers to employment.	Local authorities, NHS Salus	Ongoing	More people with employability health barriers secure employment.
Support employer engagement with the Ayrshire Growth Deal Fair Work Strategy and the principles of fair employment, moving towards a region that pays the living wage and offers job security.	Local authorities, Community Wealth Building Commission Lead Officers Group, Skills Development Scotland	Start in 2022	Increased productivity and employment across the region. Improved worker wellbeing and progression.
Work across all partners to help deliver a fairer and more equal Ayrshire.	All partners	Ongoing	An improved understanding of regional employment and skills barriers and responsive action to address these.

## 8. Delivering the Plan

### 8.1 Financing the Plan

There is already significant investment in skills across Ayrshire from Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Funding Council, local authorities, businesses and others. To deliver the actions outlined in the Ayrshire RSIP, regional partners must prioritise making the best use of the available resources.

Recent developments in terms of the Flexible Workforce Development Fund and the National Transition Training Fund have highlighted the need for a focus on upskilling and reskilling. Evidence of demand for this type of activity is a key feature in the Plan.

Funding is available to support employability through programmes such as Fair Start Scotland, Developing the Young Workforce and No One Left Behind.

In addition to the skills and inclusion funding already secured through the Ayrshire Growth Deal, including the Ayrshire Skills Fund, there are a number of complementary opportunities in terms of regional funding, including Community Renewal Funds, Levelling Up Funds, and UK Shared Prosperity.

All of these opportunities need to be mapped out against the agreed actions in the Ayrshire RSIP and investigated further, with specific proposals developed to secure appropriate resource.

### 8.2 Implementation, Governance and Monitoring

While Skills Development Scotland, Ayrshire College, University of the West of Scotland and the Ayrshire Growth Deal Programme Management Office have led the development of the Ayrshire RSIP, its successful implementation is dependent on the input of wider partners. The ownership of this Plan must be shared by all the key regional stakeholders, led in partnership by the Ayrshire Skills Group, under the direction of the Ayrshire Economic Joint Committee and Regional Economic Partnership.

For this RSIP to achieve its goals, it must be seen as a shared responsibility. In addition to the Ayrshire Skills Group, the regional sectoral groups will have a critical role to play. These groups will help to develop detailed sector and industry plans that will identify specific challenges and opportunities that will articulate the demand for and provide the basis to secure a pipeline of skills for the future.

In order to truly adopt shared ownership and responsibility of the Plan, a communication strategy will be critical to ensure all stakeholders and potential beneficiaries are aware of the ambitions.

The Ayrshire RSIP provides a framework to guide partnership action and inform the investment decisions that will improve the performance of the regional labour market in the short, medium and longer-term. However, it should be recognised as a starting point from which more fine-grained activities will emerge. The further implementation and expansion of this Plan will require the ongoing inputs and ideas from a wide range of regional and sectoral partners providing the necessary information, strategy and leadership and a commitment to identifying the necessary resource.

This is particularly true with the work underway to develop the Regional Economic Strategy, as well as other workstreams to develop the Energy Masterplan, Digital Plan, etc. — all of which will help to inform future iterations of the Ayrshire RSIP. In this fast-changing environment, it is vital that the Plan is a living document, that is able to flex to changing needs and requirements and makes good use of existing resources and partnerships.

The Plan must be shared with the region's sectors, education and training providers, schools, and other partners to take forward and enhance the high-level actions set out here.

An annual implementation report and summit should report on and discuss progress against the delivery of the actions, and the changing economic and social conditions, and address new challenges and opportunities.

This should include a number of key performance indicators, in line with the agreed actions.



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- Business representatives
- DSM
- DYW Ayrshire (Ayrshire Skills Group member)
- East Ayrshire Council (Ayrshire Skills Group member)
- HALO
- Microtech
- National Air Traffic Services
- NHS Ayrshire and Arran
- North Ayrshire Council (Ayrshire Skills Group member)
- Scottish Enterprise (Ayrshire Skills Group member)
- Scottish Funding Council (Ayrshire Skills Group Member)
- Skills Development Scotland (Steering Group and Ayrshire Skills Group member)
- South Ayrshire Council (Ayrshire Skills Group member)
- South West Regional Education Improvement Collaborative (Ayrshire Skills Group member)
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- The Ayrshire Community Trust (Ayrshire Skills Group member)
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