

Workforce North – Operational Road Map for Highland Region

Theme 1: Extensive Campaign

<i>Enabling our schools and communities to better understand the scale of local opportunity</i>	Understand workforce demands across Highland			Develop and deliver an inclusive local campaign				Monitor workforce flow into Highland Labour Market	
Actions	H1.1 Collate job and skills requirements for Highland Council region based on growth, inward investment and replacement demand	H1.2 Utilise Employers' group to finalise most critical in-demand jobs, careers and skills across Highland Council region	H1.3 Identify / agree information to be included in the campaign	H1.4 Design awareness raising campaign to target audiences -pupils (primary / secondary) -FE/ HE students -community and underrepresented groups -parents / carers -unemployed /underemployed -career changers Etc.	H1.5 Align to local campaigns such as 'Love Lochaber' etc	H1.6 Deliver awareness raising CPD to career influencers (School, College, University Staff, DYW, DWP, Career Practitioners	H1.7 Deliver campaign to audiences -pupils (primary / secondary) -FE/ HE students -community and underrepresented groups -parents / carers -unemployed /underemployed -career changers	H1.8 Review pupil preferred routes / occupations data and pupil voice survey responses to monitor pupil aspiration alignment to workforce demands	H1.9 Engage with employers, FE / HE, Training Providers to monitor if campaign is improving supply of talent pipeline into key sectors
Anticipated Output	Highland Job and skills slide deck created	Employer group approve Highland Job & Skills slide deck content	Campaign sector content finalised, incorporating H1.1 / H1.2 feedback.	Content produced in different formats for different audiences such as videos, social media content, etc.	Completed WFN campaign content produced that aligns to local initiatives.	Career Influencers take part in CPD enabling them to understand the current and emerging local labour market opportunities.	Campaign delivered to all target groups.	Report produced outlining current pupil aspirations in relation to current workforce demands. (Data Hub and Pupil Voice)	Produce data to review uptake of FE / HE / WBL opportunities in key sectors aligned to campaign.
Partners	SDS Employer Group, HIE, UHI, Highland Council	Employer Group , SDS, Highland Council, UHI, HIE,	SDS (WFN Comms Group) , Highland Council, DYW, HIE, DWP, Schools, Employer Group, HEP, UHI, Community Groups	SDS (WFN Comms Group) , Highland Council, DYW, HIE, DWP, Schools, Employer Group, HEP, UHI, Community Groups	SDS (WFN Comms Group) , Highland Council, DYW, HIE, DWP, Schools, Employer Group, HEP, UHI, Community Groups	Highland Council , DYW, HIE, SDS, DWP, Schools, Employer Group, HEP, UHI, Community Groups	Highland Council , DYW, HIE, SDS, DWP, Schools, Employer Group, HEP, UHI, Community Groups	SDS , DYW, UHI, Highland Council	SDS , Highland Council, DWP, Chamber, DYW, Employer Group, FSB, HIE, SFC
Industry Partner			ICFGF	ICFGF					
Expected completion Date	Nov '25	Jan '26	Dec '25	Mar '26	Mar '26	Jun '26	Jun '26	Oct '26	Mar '26

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Theme 2: School & Wider Community Focus (1)

Generating the future workforce and improving access to fair work opportunities	Expand and embed ECL / FAs				Promote Apprenticeship Pathways			Monitor workforce flow into apprenticeships within Highland	
Actions	H2.1 Establish inter-agency partnership to review current ECL & FA provision to identify gaps across Highland in relation to the data from Theme 1.	H2.2 Identify / develop relevant ECL / FA provision to fill gaps identified Secure employer commitment to deliver ECL / FA opportunities	H2.3 FA / ECL offer embedded into curriculum across Highland Address barriers such as timetabling, transport, flexible delivery etc	H2.4 Develop & deliver programme of CPD for ECL / FA delivery leads	H2.5 Design FA, MA, GA promotional campaign (incorporating fair work principles) to highlight benefits of apprenticeship pathways aligned to extensive campaign created in Theme 1 (consider use of ambassadors)	H2.6 Deliver the campaign to parents/carers, pupils and other key groups as well as those furthest from labour market	H2.7 Secure employer commitment to promote apprenticeships in line with preparation for key academic transition points	H2.8 Review uptake of ECL / FA in line with areas of labour market demand	H2.9 Review uptake of MA / GA from school in areas of labour market demand and numbers of young people choosing to stay in the region post school
Anticipated Output	Mapping exercise completed with gaps in ECL / FA provision identified	ECL / FA provision generated and rolled out to cover gaps in provision.	Transport, timetabling and delivery solutions implemented.	CPD sessions delivered.	Promotional campaign designed for talent pipeline groups (school pupils etc)	Campaign delivered to key groups	Employers promoting apprenticeships	ECL / FA uptake report produced	Report produced highlighting GA / MA uptake and young people staying in region
Partners	Highland Council, SDS, DYW, UHI, HISP, HIE, SFC	Highland Council, DYW, SDS, HIE, UHI, HISP, Third Sector, SFC, Education Scotland, Employer Group	Highland Council, Education Scotland	Highland Council, UHI, DYW, SDS	SDS, Highland Council (tied to theme 1), DYW, UHI, Employer Group	DYW, SDS, UHI Highland Council	DYW, Employer Group, Highland Council, DWP, SDS	Highland Council, SDS, UHI, SFC, DYW	SDS, SFC, UHI, other HE institutions
Industry Partner		ICFGF				ICFGF	ICFGF		
Expected Completion Date	Dec '25	Mar '26	Jun '26	May'26	Dec '25	Mar '26	Mar '26	Sept'25 – Aug'26	Sept'25 – Aug-26

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Theme 2: School and Wider Community Focus (2)

Generating the future workforce and improving access to fair work opportunities	Expand work experience opportunities			Targeted response to address urgent industry skills needs			Improve process for WBL applicants		Initiatives to improve access to fair work in areas of labour market opportunity		
Actions	H2.10 Identify critical barriers and solutions to expanding work experience offer such as timetabling, budgets for risk assessments etc	H2.11 Develop improved work experience offer linked to Theme 1 data and embed within overall ECL offer (e.g. 'Apprentice for a Day')	H2.12 Promote expanded offer in areas of labour market opportunity	H2.13 Identify appropriate partners and create local workforce response teams	H2.14 Engage with industry to identify and support with urgent workforce requirements	H2.15 Implement appropriate response approaches to attract workforce / meet industry needs e.g. pop-up shops, careers events, webinars etc	H2.16 Explore portal/platform options to improve application process / experience for WBL candidates including those who are unsuccessful (e.g. PATS model)	H2.17 Promote WBL application process and implement within industry including through supply chains	H2.18 Review existing pre-employment schemes and programmes of support (CECA etc) with guaranteed interviews and identify gaps aligned to areas of labour market need identified in Theme 1.	H2.19 Expand schemes, focusing on all individuals including those removed from the labour market or within marginalised groups	H2.20 Review schemes impact on addressing inequalities, reducing underemployment and unemployment
Anticipated Output	Actions to address work experience barriers identified	Work experience offer available to more pupils	Increased uptake of work experience	Partnership workforce response teams established	Process to identify urgent workforce requirements established	Programme of workforce response approaches implemented	Effective WBL application portal in place	High level of awareness of WBL application portal with key groups	Identify gaps in existing pre-employment schemes.	Greater number of individuals accessing pre-employment schemes	Understanding of schemes' impact on reducing inequality
Partners	Highland Council , DYW, SDS, DWP			SDS , HIE, DYW, Highland Council (HEP), DWP, UHI, Third Sector, Employer Group			SDS , Employer Group, NMIS, CITB, UHI, SDS, DWP		Highland Council (HEP) , DWP, Employer Group		
Industry Partners				ICFGF							
Expected Completion Date	Dec '25	Mar'26	Apr'26	Mar '26	Mar '26	Apr'26	Jun '26	Apr'26	Feb'26	Apr'26	Quarterly

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Theme 3: Apprenticeship Expansion

<i>Develop new approaches to deliver an expanded offer</i>	Frameworks, delivery models & numbers			Employer Uptake		Funding	Articulation Routes
Actions	<p>H3.1 Identify where MA/GA provision needs to be dialled up or down</p> <p>Leading to the identification of in-demand frameworks and no. apprentices required to meet demand (e.g. GAs in Engineering)</p>	<p>H3.2 Establish process for use of co-investment model with employers to drive increased delivery</p>	<p>H3.3 Develop new delivery models eg. host employer, tech enabled' AI, pre-apprenticeships, UHI apprenticeship +, blended approach, increased peer to peer support</p>	<p>H3.4 Engage with and promote MA/GA benefits to employers through best practice support</p>	<p>H3.5 Apprentice targets applied to procurement and CWB plans (Social Value Charter) and confirm employer input into shared apprenticeship or innovative models (e.g. Morrison 'Build Your Future').</p>	<p>H3.6 Ensure appropriate level of SFC credits is in place to allow HEIs to deliver in areas linked to labour market demand, and contract flexibility for training providers to align MA provision to employer needs (equitably across Highland region).</p> <p>Identify and implement solutions to overcome barriers to delivery i.e. SFC funding model for rural areas</p>	<p>H3.7 Map out articulation of vocational learning to FA to MA / GA and embed in Theme1/ 2 promotional activity</p>
Anticipated Output	MA / GA provision increased in line with labour market need	Co-investment model established	New delivery models implemented where appropriate	Increased MA / GAs on offer in Highland	CWB activity encourages increased number of MA / GAs	SFC credits sufficient to enable required delivery across Highland that meets labour market needs.	Apprenticeship pathways mapped and included in Theme 1&2 campaigns.
Partners	SDS , Employer Group, SFC, UHI, RGU, HW, DYW	SDS , SFC, Employer Group, UHI, training providers, DYW	SDS , UHI, training providers, SFC, DYW	SDS , Highland Council, UHI, SFC, training providers, DWP, DYW	Highland Council , Employers	SFC , UHI, RGU, HW, SDS, training providers	SDS , Highland Council, UHI, RGU, HW, SFC,
Industry Partner		ICFGF					ICFGF
Expected Completion Date	Mar '26	Mar '26	Apr-26	Apr'26	Apr '26	Dec '25	Jan '26

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Theme 4: Upskilling / Reskilling

Short, sharp opportunities for those seeking a new role	Increased provision linked to areas of labour market need							Improved Access		Funding	
Actions	H4.1 Map out existing industry focused provision and identify gaps aligned to labour market need data from Theme 1.	H4.2 Map out employers' upskilling / reskilling requirements	H4.3 Develop new/enhanced offer linked to labour market supply (over 50s, armed services early retirement etc) and demand, scope skills passport options (including entrepreneur training options)	H4.4 Identify solutions to overcome barriers to delivery (inc. employer funding contributions; skills academies, Charter)	H4.5 Establish 'Train the trainer' needs and implement CPD as required	H4.6 Create more employer funded internship places to get more people into industry	H4.7 Create unified prospectus & application process. Enhancing and promoting local provision aligned to 'pillars of expertise' to priority market segments	H4.8 Implement Workforce North upskilling / reskilling co-ordinator role to create 'one front door' delivery mechanism for strategic industry engagement	H4.9 Utilise co-ordinator role to provide support for candidate applications from marginalised groups (e.g. ex-offenders)	H4.10 Identify funding requirements for up and re skilling (e.g. FWDF request, ICFGF Skills & Innovation Fund)	H4.11 Create new funding models (low interest loans etc), and communicate finance options to potential applicants via co-ordinators
Anticipated Output	Upskilling / Reskilling gaps identified	Report produced outlining key industry upskilling / reskilling requirements	Expanded upskilling / reskilling offer.	Barriers to delivery removed and upskilling / reskilling offer expanded	CPD implemented	Increase in number of internships offered in H&Is	Production of upskilling / reskilling prospectus	Upskilling / reskilling co-ordinator role in place.	Increased support for marginalised groups	Additional funding needs for upskilling / reskilling documented.	Funding information pack for upskilling / reskilling learners
Partners	UHI, HIE, training providers, DWP	SDS, Employer Group, HIE, DWP, Third Sector	UHI, SDS, Training Providers, DWP	UHI, training providers, employers, DWP	UHI, training providers, employers	Employer Group, DYW, Highland Council (as employer), UHI, DWP	UHI, SDS SFC, DWP, NMIS	UHI, Highland Council (HEP), SDS, DWP, UHI, training providers		SFC, SDS, SG, UHI, Training Providers, consider engaging (not for profit) financial adviser, DWP	
Industry Partner		ICFGF				ICFGF				ICFGF	
Expected Completion Date	Mar '26	Mar '26	Mar '26	Mar '26	Mar '26	Mar '26	Mar '26	Mar '26	Mar '26	Mar '26	Mar '26

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Theme 5: Talent Attraction and Retention

<i>Encouraging people to return home & attract new people to the area</i>	Developing a marketing strategy to attract talent			Supporting new talent into the area		Attracting and retaining FE / HE talent				
Actions	H5.1 Develop a regional marketing strategy outlining both regional & local opportunities to encourage people to work in the region	H5.2 Engage with Highland employers to contribute to marketing strategy outlining the scale of labour market opportunities and place-based benefits to relocating to the Highland region.	H5.3 Incorporate key messages around school provision, housing, local support services etc to attract wider family members to move to the area	H5.4 Implement consistent on boarding approach (potentially web based) for the Highland region to support individuals moving to the area with housing etc	H5.5 Use mixture of digital (AI) and face to face events to promote opportunities internationally or to the remaining home nations of the UK.	H5.6 Expand UHI support packages to attract new FE / HE students (industry bursaries etc).	H5.7 Attract Highland domiciled students back for the summer through summer placements via collaboration between UHI and other HEIs	H5.8 Promote and expand industry/HE Knowledge Transfer Partnerships	H5.9 Promote specialist MSc and PhD programmes	H5.10 Promote, expand, reinstate successful ‘Graduate into Industry’ schemes and Graduate Placement Programmes (HIE)
Anticipated Output	Regional market strategy produced	Employer contributions inform regional marketing strategy	Messaging on Housing / School provision etc included in regional marketing strategy	Highland onboarding process established	Domestic and International promotion of H&I opportunities	Increase student finance support packages	Increase in graduates returning to area to take up summer placements	Industry / HE knowledge transfer partnerships expanded	Increased uptake of specialist MSc / PhD programmes	Increase in graduates staying and returning to H&Is taking up graduates schemes
Partners	HIE, Highland Council, CPP, Visit Scotland, Employer Group, UHI, DWP, DYW	Employer Group , HIE, Highland Council, Visit Scotland, UHI, SDS, DWP, DYW	Highland Council , HIE, CPP, Visit Scotland, Employer Group, UHI, DWP, DYW	Highland Council (Place) , HIE, UHI, SDS, Employer Group	HIE, Highland Council, Employer Group, SDS, UHI, DWP, HIE	UHI, HEIs, SFC Employer Group	UHI, HEIs	UHI, HEIs, Employer Group	UHI, HEIs	UHI, HEIs, HIE Employer Group, DYW

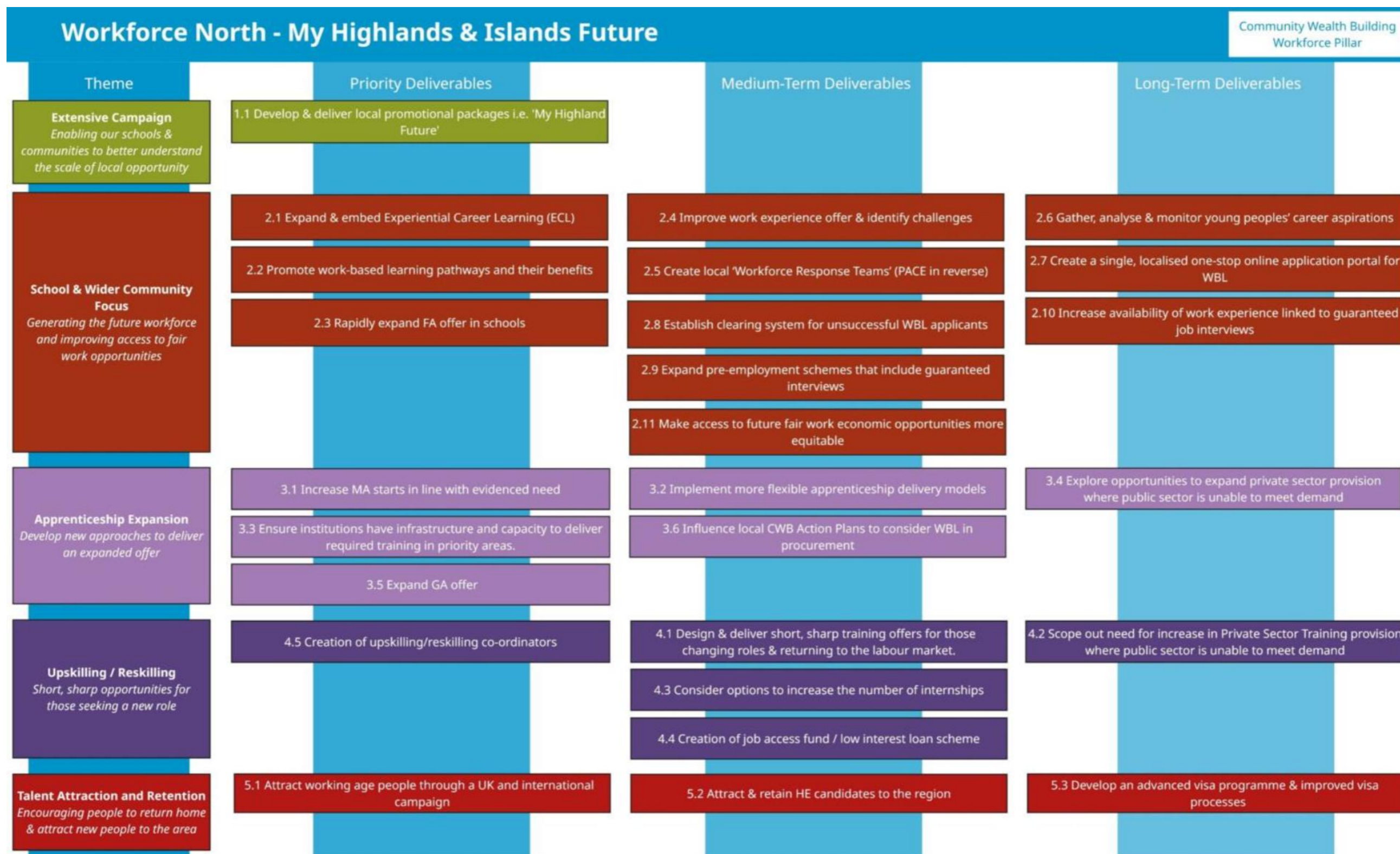
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Industry Partner	ICFGF	ICFGF	ICFGF			ICFGF				
Expected Completion Date	Jan'26	Jan '26	Jan'26	Mar '26	Mar '26	Mar'26	Mar '26	Apr '26	Apr'26	Aug'26

Appendix 1: Highlands & Islands Regional Workforce North Implementation Plan

The Operational Road Map for Highland has been developed from the overarching regional implementation plan for the Highlands and Islands created from the initial Workforce North Summit in April 2025. A summary of which is below.

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Appendix 2: Terms of Reference for the Highland Workforce North Operational Delivery Plan

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Terms of Reference - Highland Workforce North Operational Delivery Plan

1. Purpose

To oversee, coordinate, and drive the delivery of the Highland Workforce North Operational Roadmap, ensuring all themes and actions are implemented effectively to meet regional workforce needs, support economic growth, and improve opportunities for people and employers across the Highland region.

2. Objectives

Deliver the five key themes of the Operational Roadmap:

1. Extensive Campaign
2. School & Wider Community Focus
3. Apprenticeship Expansion
4. Upskilling / Reskilling
5. Talent Attraction and Retention

Monitor progress against agreed actions, milestones, and outcomes.

Foster collaboration between all partners and stakeholders.

Identify and address risks, barriers, and resource needs.

Report progress and make recommendations to the SDS / Highland Council joint programme management team.

3. Membership

Project Lead: SDS

Project Management: SDS, Highland Council

Core Members: Representatives from SDS, Highland Council, HIE, UHI, DYW, SFC, DWP, HEP, Employer Group, ICFGF, Industry Partners, Third Sector, Education Scotland, Training Providers, Community Groups, and other relevant agencies.

Additional Members: As required for specific themes or actions.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

Project lead: Alignment to WFN High Level Plan, HIREP Skills & Labour subgroup governance process & reporting to COHI

Project Management: Liaise with project members to monitor and report on delivery against actions

Members: Lead/participate and deliver against assigned actions, share data and insights, escalate issues & barriers to delivery.

Theme Leads: Coordinate delivery, monitor progress, and report progress to PMO.

5. Governance & Reporting

Project lead will report to HIREP Labour & Skills subgroup.

SDS will provide written progress report to COHI on November 25 and at future COHI meetings as requested by DFM.

7. Resources

Members will contribute staff time and expertise as part of their organisational commitment.

Additional financial or co-investment opportunities may be identified and agreed as required for delivery.

8. Review

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually or as required to ensure they remain fit for purpose and aligned with regional priorities.