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# Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland Implementation Group –Terms of Reference (November 2021)

**Background**

The 2017-2018 Programme for Government made a commitment to develop a Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland. SDS facilitated the development of the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government supported by a wide range of partners across agencies and industry all with a clear understanding of the challenges - but also critically the opportunities - across rural areas. 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.

The purpose of the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland is to build on the activity already underway across rural Scotland and address identified gaps to produce a range of actions which will meet the skills requirements for jobs in rural areas both now and in the future.   It is not a skills action plan focused solely on land based skills. The plan builds on a significant body of work undertaken in recent years, including that of the National Council for Rural Advisors and the Agricultural Champions, and identifies the key issues impacting on skills in rural areas.

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. The evidence provides the rationale for building on existing opportunities and where necessary addressing gaps. It also underlines the critical interdependencies that exist between skills issues, which can be directly addressed through this plan, and other enablers including housing, digital connectivity, transport, childcare and talent attraction and retention.

Partners agreed five priority areas for action. Each of these areas has a series of interlinked themes and activities that partners have committed to work collaboratively to deliver over the lifetime of the plan. The priority areas for action are to:

1. Better understand the skills rural employers need and align provision to support this;
2. Provide individuals with accessible education and skills provision to secure, sustain and progress in their careers in rural areas;
3. Develop the current workforce in rural areas through upskilling and reskilling
4. Build a secure pipeline for the future; and critically to
5. Take a coordinated strategic approach to tackling skills in rural areas.

**Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland Implementation Steering Group (ISG)**

The Action Plan sets out a wide range of actions that partners are committed to delivering, and it is now moving into the implementation stage. The ISG, which will oversee delivery, will be critical to its success. Commitment from industry, partners and stakeholders will be vital to demonstrating partnership working through collaborative actions.

***Purpose***

The purpose of the ISG is to act as the focal point for the delivery of the skills actions identified within the plan and ensuring that progress against these are monitored.

***Role of Chair***

The ISG will be led by a non-public sector Chair. Chair Implementation Steering Group meetings (3-4 per annum over the two year lifetime of the plan). The Chair will:

* Ensure the delivery of the ISG remit – specifically in relation to the delivery of the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland;
* Assess relevance and effectiveness of membership periodically;
* Where appropriate, represent ‘Rural Scotland’ on skills issues.

*ISG membership and participation*

The ISG was set up for the lifetime of the Action Plan (2019-2021). Members include a mixture of industry representatives (from industries with a strong rural footprint) and key rural stakeholders. However the group should be recognised as having a fluid membership to accommodate changes in demand and the operating environment. Current membership is outlined below:

* Henry Graham, National Council of Rural Advisors (Chair)
* Liz Barron-Majerik, CEO, Lantra
* Jackie Brierton, CEO, Growbiz
* Angela Cox, Principal, Borders College
* Marc Crothall, CEO, Scottish Tourism Alliance
* Donna Fordyce, Interim CEO, Seafood Scotland,
* Amanda Fox, Head of Rural Economy, Scottish Government
* Katie Fox, Skills Planning Manager (Rural Economy), Skills Development Scotland
* Andrea Glass, Regional Skills Planning Lead, Skills Development Scotland
* Riddell Graham, Director of Industry and Destination Development, Visit Scotland
* Tom Hall, Policy Officer, Colleges Scotland
* Eddie Abbott-Halpin, Principal, Orkney College UHI
* George Jamieson, Education and Skills Policy Manager, NFU Scotland
* Julia Latto, Project Manager, Scottish Enterprise
* Andy Leitch, Deputy Chief Executive, Confor
* Graeme Ligertwood, Commercial Business Manager, SRUC
* Derek McDonald, Industry Support Executive (Rural & Maritime) Aberdeenshire Council
* Bryan McGrath, Director of Operations, South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE)
* Stuart McKenna, CEO, Scottish Training Federation
* Jane McCormack, Senior Policy Officer, Scottish Government
* Muriel MacKenzie, Senior Policy Officer, Scottish Government
* Klaus Mayer, Senior Education Officer, Education Scotland
* David Reid, Regional Skills Manager, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
* David Richardson, Development Manager, Federation of Small Businesses
* Claudia Rowse, Acting Deputy Director of Sustainable Growth, NatureScot
* Seamus Spencer, Outcome Agreement Manager, Scottish Funding Council

Meetings will be organised by SDS every quarter with the potential for more frequent sub group meetings (arranged and hosted by sub-group members) to drive actions as required. Members are requested to attend meetings, or nominate a substitute where possible. Additional non-members may be invited to attend the group for a relevant purpose where appropriate.

For the Implementation Group to be successful all members will be asked to:

* Act in the interest of rural Scotland; whilst being representative of their organisation’s remit and priorities.
* Attend quarterly steering group meetings and if necessary nominate a seconder.
* Lead or support on specific actions where appropriate and carry out any agreed actions assigned to them in a timely manner
* If required, support subgroup meetings arranged to address specific action areas
* Share relevant industry and/or education and skills related knowledge/expertise as appropriate
* Share examples of existing best practice and be featured in published case studies if required

To ensure the effective delivery of the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland, the establishment of workstream groups led by ‘champions’ identified from within the ISG may be required. These groups will influence the delivery of individual actions within the SIP and may also involve external experts identified by the ISG for the specific task. The workstream group champion role will include: defining the remit of any projects (with assistance from an appropriate stakeholder in terms of any procurement or business case requirements), championing the work of the group, and reporting back to the ISG. Workstream Groups should meet at least quarterly with additional meetings scheduled if required to reflect activity.

***Secretariat***

SDS will provide the secretariat to the Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland and provide support to the Chair. This will include preparing an agenda, circulating papers, meeting notes and action points to all members of the group. Through the development of a detailed implementation plan and monitoring framework SDS will undertake systematic review of the work programme and present regular updates to members.

**Amendment, Modification or Variation**

This Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified in writing after agreement by the Implementation Steering Group of the Skills Plan for Rural Scotland.