



# **Scotland's skills delivery landscape: independent review - Call for Evidence**

**December 2022**

**[www.scdi.org.uk](http://www.scdi.org.uk)**

## About us

SCDI is Scotland's Economic and Social Forum. We are an independent and inclusive economic development network representing all sectors and all geographies of the Scottish economy. Our mission is to convene our members, partners, and stakeholders across the private, public and third sectors to deliver inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

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## Skills Delivery Landscape

*Question 1: If there was one thing you would like to see change in how our skills landscape is structured and delivering, what would it be?*

1. SCDI's Skills and Employability Leadership Group published its report *Upskilling Scotland: the Future of Skills and the Fourth Industrial Revolution*<sup>1</sup> in January 2020. This was based on research and engagement with businesses and organisations from sectors and geographies across the Scottish economy. The Leadership Group made recommendations to strengthen the three key pillars of a high skill, high productivity, high wage and high growth economy:
  - i. High Performing Individuals:**  
People with the skills to compete and thrive.
  - ii. High Performing Workplaces:**  
Teams with the skills to compete and thrive.
  - iii. In-Work Development:**  
Reskilling, upskilling, work-based learning and lifelong learning opportunities to strengthen the resilience of People and Teams to social and economic change.
  
2. This work was incorporated and developed in SCDI's *Making a Good Living: A 2030 Blueprint for Scotland*, published in June 2021. The Blueprint identified three themes - A Living Lab for Innovations, Learning Throughout Life and Healthy Places to Live and Work – which support Scotland's Economic Purpose and what it should aim to be known for in the global economy of 2030. In relation to Learning Throughout Life, our vision is of a Scotland which invests in, develops and fully harnesses the skills of people at all stages of their lives, raises leadership skills and fair work to the levels of the best, and scales up work-based learning with a focus on digital, green and meta-skills, including self-management, collaboration and innovation. To achieve the Learning Throughout Life vision, the Blueprint made three key recommendations:
  - i. Scotland should transform its workplaces by closing its leadership skills gap with other countries and becoming a world leading fair work nation**
  - ii. Scotland should scale-up demand for and participation in work-based learning, with an immediate focus on digital, data and green skills**
  - iii. Scotland should transform content, delivery and investment in education and skills to meet the future needs of learners and the economy**
  
3. Both reports found that our learning ecosystem, employers and workers have to become more flexible, adaptable and resilient to change. Scotland's learning ecosystem needs to develop people's 'Meta-Skills' (such as self-management, social intelligence and innovation), and top up technical skills which are task-, technology-, job- or sector-specific. There is increasing demand from both learners and employers for learning opportunities which are flexible to improve access and widen participation; tailored to employer, sector or personal needs and priorities; responsive to new and emerging trends and technologies; informed by enhanced engagement with industry; and delivered in short, modular or bitesize segments. Workers need opportunities for reskilling, upskilling, work-based learning and lifelong learning to strengthen their resilience and increase their adaptiveness to social and economic change.
  
4. A more flexible, adaptable and resilient to change skills delivery landscape is the key outcome that SCDI would like to see from the review. This should facilitate a necessary paradigm shift in the way we think about and invest in learning from our current focus on pre-employment

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<sup>1</sup> [UpSkillScotland-The-Future-of-Skills-and-the-Fourth-Industrial-Revolution.pdf \(scdi.org.uk\)](https://www.scdi.org.uk/UpSkillScotland-The-Future-of-Skills-and-the-Fourth-Industrial-Revolution.pdf)

and early-career stage education to a more holistic commitment to lifelong learning for everyone at all stages of their life, especially those in-work and at mid- or late-career stages. Development of a skills wallet – an individual allowance which every adult can use for education and training purposes at any stage of their lives, with a complete and verifiable digital record of their skills and competencies – is an idea that the review might endorse.

*Question 2: Thinking about the vision in the Terms of Reference for a system that is simple, people-focused and built on collaboration, how well are we doing against that vision just now? Can you provide specific examples of:*

*a) success in the work of public agencies or the private/third sector;*

5. There are many good examples of successful delivery in Scotland's learning ecosystem. The review should seek to take a holistic view of the system, which appreciates that its elements play complementary roles, and should not be presented as in competition with each other.
6. The development of regional structures and partnerships has strengthened joint working across the skills delivery landscape and employers on regional economic and social priorities. Ayrshire is an excellent example of collaboration and forms are also evident in other regions. These are foundations on which the review should build in making its recommendations.
7. The introduction of the Graduate Apprenticeship pathway by Skills Development Scotland is also a strong example of collaboration between public agencies, employers, universities and colleges, which has focused on meeting the needs of people and employers in those sectors.

*b) elements that don't work, are confusing or need to be improved?*

8. Many institutions and delivery bodies in Scotland's skills delivery landscape have had successive real-terms reductions in budgets over a long timescale and continue to face difficult financial situations. The stability and sustainability of the key elements of the system are at increasing risk. The challenges for Scotland's public finances are understood, but a commitment by Scottish Government to 3-year budgets and investment in learning environments would enable the skills system to adapt and respond to changes in demand, and fully contribute to the programmes in the National Strategy for Economic Transformation.
9. Greater economic impact could be achieved from the considerable investments in skills and training that are made every year by the Scottish Government and employers. Consolidation and simplification of the many funding streams would reduce bureaucracy, and increased flexibility in how they are directed would allow for a more agile and responsive ecosystem. This would facilitate the blending of funding around both industrial and regional priorities.
10. Feedback from across the learning ecosystem and employers underlines that they believe that elements of the skills delivery landscape could be simplified and streamlined. A focus on the user journey would help to clarify what is not working or should be improved. Employers, including SMEs, have raised confusion and complexity around information and processes to access funding and/or apprenticeships, and the advantages of a more demand-led system.

*Question 3: Thinking about the different national agencies and partners involved in skills delivery, are there areas where more clarity is required about roles and responsibilities or where you think the balance of responsibilities should be changed?*

11. There is a need for a strategic and whole systems approach around challenges and collective actions. More clarity about roles and responsibilities within this approach would be welcome. The interface between national and regional strategy and delivery should be an area of focus. SCDI does not have specific examples about changes in the balance of responsibilities between agencies and partners, and believes that consideration of substantive changes should be based on evidence that they would produce tangible improvements for users of the service.

*Question 4: Thinking about how our economy and society is changing and the Scottish Government's ambitions for a skilled workforce as set out in NSET, do you have any evidence on where the current skills and education landscape needs to adapt or change and how it could be improved? Please provide evidence to support your answer.*

12. Many of the new market opportunities for Scotland that are identified in the National Strategy for Economic Transformation will increase the demand for young people with STEM skills. Fulfilling this demand will be critical to the decarbonisation and digitalisation of our society. The updated Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan and Digital Economy Skills Action Plan need to specify whole systems actions to address long term declines in the uptake of key skills.
13. The pool of senior management skills in the Scottish economy has been drained over the last 30 years and this has constrained the growth of internationally competitive businesses. There is a need for schemes that upskill leaders and managers in good management practices and global markets, especially those in enterprises with a potential to scale-up. Schemes are also needed to attract leaders and senior managers back to live and work in Scotland. The launch of the Talent Attraction and Migration Service will help, but further policies will be required.
14. Long-term and multigenerational economic inactivity is a major cause of social exclusion and poverty, and has limited the size of the labour force when the demand for skills is high. Many organisations undertake valuable work to help people into work, but, given the prevalence and persistence of economic inactivity, there is a need for systems thinking and cross sector effort to progressively reduce the share of people who are not active in the labour market.

*Question 5: Can you provide any evidence of skills structures in other places that are delivering outcomes in line with Scotland's ambitions which Scottish Government should look to in achieving its ambitions?*

15. Learning from international best practice is important, although their skills structures may be based within significantly different economic and/or education landscapes from Scotland's. In our Blueprint, SCDI highlighted the strengths of the Nordic Leadership Model and the successful balance that they have struck between a flexible labour market and active labour market policies. We are also aware that Switzerland's apprenticeship system is seen as a gold standard. Norway, Finland and the Republic of Ireland have been cited for the progress they are making in strategies which connect their long-term economic opportunities with skills development. SCDI does not have detailed evidence of successful skills structures in other countries, but welcomes the review's call for evidence and hopes that others will provide it.

## **Apprenticeships**

*Question 6: Do you have any evidence relating to the outcomes of the current funding and delivery of apprenticeship programmes (Modern Apprenticeships, Foundation Apprenticeships and Graduate Apprenticeships) in terms of either outcomes for learners and/or the needs of employers?*

16. SCDI supports all of the Modern, Foundation and Graduate apprenticeship programmes.
17. In our response to Question 2, we highlighted the Graduate Apprenticeship pathway as a strong example of success in the collaborative work of public agencies or the private/third sector. Employers expect that demand for Graduate Apprenticeships will continue to grow. However, the current funding model for Graduate Apprenticeships does present a challenge. Students start Graduate Apprenticeships from September, but the funding for them is not finalised until May, which does not offer enough time to plan and recruit to the programmes. There is a need for earlier confirmation and, ideally, multiyear funding for the programmes.
18. The purpose of the Foundation Apprenticeships is one that we fully endorse. However, fewer learners than anticipated are currently progressing from them to a Modern Apprenticeship. This may be due to how they are being integrated into the senior phase curriculum by schools. There is a need to make the programme more attractive for employers and young people.
19. Employers have fed back that apprenticeship programmes could be administratively streamlined. Some have also asked if they could be opened to over 24 year-olds to help with upskilling and reskilling, raised challenges (for UK employers and providers) with differing Scottish and English models, and proposed that funding from the Apprenticeship Levy could be spent on professional qualifications, especially for young people with limited qualifications.

*Question 7: The Terms of Reference sets out an ambition for apprenticeship programmes to be an embedded part of the wider education system to ensure that there are a range of different pathways available to learners. Do you have any views or evidence on how changes to the operation of apprenticeship programmes could support this ambition?*

20. In relation to Graduate Apprenticeships, these are full-time. The availability of some part-time Graduate Apprenticeships would increase the range of pathways available for learners. Consideration should also be given to the ability to transition from a Graduate Apprenticeship to a different qualification if the learner has reason to leave the Graduate Apprenticeship.
21. Embedding apprenticeships programmes in education could also help to align the course timelines of schools with those of apprenticeships, smoothing this pathway for learners.

*Question 8: Apprenticeships are often described as being 'demand-led'. Do you have any evidence about how process for developing and approving apprenticeship frameworks responds to skills priorities? Please include suggestions of how the development process could be enhanced.*

22. We support a demand-led system. The OECD's review of the apprenticeship system in Scotland said that it was important that the system reflects what employers, trainees and the overall Scottish economy needs<sup>2</sup>. There is a risk that this may confine programmes to those sectors that have traditionally offered apprenticeships and people that have traditionally become apprentices. There is a strong focus on increasing diversity, which needs to be maintained to cover more sectors and participation by more SMEs and people across society.

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<sup>2</sup> [Strengthening Skills in Scotland \(oecd.org\)](https://www.oecd.org/skills/scotland/)

23. The development of Graduate Apprenticeships followed a demand-led approach. Independent research commissioned by the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board has confirmed that Scottish employers value and would like more of them covering more sectors<sup>3</sup>.
24. SCDI has been made aware of cases when sectors have expressed interest in new frameworks, and are unsure why there seems to have been no follow up activity or communication. We have also heard that some existing frameworks are not particularly suited to rural industries.
25. SCDI recommends building upon Scotland's apprenticeship family to make sure that it offers the places, skills, jobs and flexibility that people and businesses (including SMEs) will need and ensuring barriers to expanding the take up of the scheme are addressed. We are interested in the UK Government's flexi-job apprenticeship model for apprentices to work across a range of employers and with different employers in sectors with flexible employment patterns and short-term roles in which individual businesses have struggled to offer a full apprenticeship.

*Question 9: SAAB and AAG are described as employer-led groups. Do you have evidence on the benefits or risks of employer leadership in apprenticeship development or the impact it has on outcomes for apprentices and/or employers? Please include suggestions for how the governance of apprenticeship design and delivery could be strengthened.*

26. While SAAB and AAG are employer-led, a range of organisations are represented, including on SAAB's sub-groups. One gap in the current SAAB Group Board seems to be a college.
27. Membership of the SAAB Group Board and, to a lesser extent, its Employer Engagement sub-group does appear to be dominated by larger employers, which is not unexpected. There is a risk this means that it represents the views of a relatively small group of existing employers of apprentices, when a priority is stimulating participation by a wide range of small employers. Membership of the SAAB should be regularly reviewed for opportunities to strengthen leadership by a broader diversity of businesses, including size, model, sector and leadership.

### **National Occupational Standards**

*Question 10: Do you have any evidence on how the current arrangements for NOS are delivering against the intended ambitions of the NOS Strategy?*

28. SCDI members have, in general, not commented in detail on this section. SCDI understands that Sector Skills Councils often find it difficult to engage with employers on NOS, which can mean that standards and the vocational qualifications that they underpin do not keep pace with changes in occupations in the workplace and meet the evolving skills needs of industry.

*Question 11: The NOS Strategy positions NOS as the foundation of vocational training and learning in Scotland. Do you have any evidence to support how changes to the delivery landscape for developing and championing NOS could support this ambition?*

29. SCDI members have, in general, not commented in detail on this section.

### **Upskilling and Reskilling**

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<sup>3</sup> [Graduate Apprenticeships are a win-win for everyone | Skills Development Scotland](#)

*Question 12: Do you have any evidence to demonstrate how the existing delivery arrangements for upskilling and reskilling, including the specific funding programmes, are impacting on intended outcomes for learners and/or industry and sectors?*

30. As we stated in response to Question 1, SCDI believes that a more holistic commitment to lifelong learning for everyone at all stages of their life, especially those in-work and at mid- or late-career stage, is essential to the success of Scotland's future society and economy. A long-term funding programme is crucial to the sustained expansion of upskilling and reskilling.
31. The Flexible Workforce Development Fund has not yet stimulated rising business investment in training and upskilling. Some businesses and sectors have found it hard to access due to its criteria and are not utilising a share of their Apprenticeship Levy contributions. The flexibility, scale and ambition of the Flexible Workforce Development Fund should be enhanced.

*Question 13: Do you have any evidence about what measures, if any, should be in place to understand the quality of national skills programme delivery funded by public investment through independent training providers?*

32. SCDI does not have evidence on this question at this time. It would be our expectation that this data would be part of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation's monitoring.

*Question 14: Thinking about the government's ambition to optimise the existing system for upskilling and reskilling throughout life, do you have any evidence to support how changes to the delivery landscape could help to achieve this ambition?*

33. Scotland should aim to increase participation in lifelong learning significantly to the levels of countries such as Sweden, Finland and Denmark, and learn from their cultures and systems. In Sweden, people in work and people who are losing their jobs, for example due to automation, can access opportunities from job security agencies (partnerships between trade unions and employers) to change their skills. In Germany, workers are entitled to paid leave for education, which does not have to be related to their job, in addition to their annual leave.
34. Scotland will need to raise both public and private investment in our people to expand adult learning opportunities for those who are in-work and at middle or later stages of their career. Participation in work-based learning opportunities will need to be scaled-up substantially, including working with employers to develop them for more subject areas and sectors. It will be critical that Scotland develops a demand-led, high-quality, diverse and flexible offer. Scotland's workers will need to be able to direct and access learning and development opportunities. Most workers will be unable to fund their own learning fully but will have a contribution to make. Government and employers will therefore have to work together to raise levels of investment in the workforce, building on the National Transition Training Fund.
35. As previously stated, SCDI called in our policy Blueprint for the creation of a new Skills Wallet which would give every citizen a personal learning account through which they can combine and draw down public, business and personal funding throughout their lives and careers.
36. A key challenge will be to build demand from people, from all backgrounds and at all stages of their careers, to understand the value of and be motivated to participate in learning. Scotland's National Retraining Partnership of employers, unions, colleges, universities and training bodies should be tasked with drawing up a consultation on how this can be achieved.



37. Scotland's universities, colleges and CLD organisations have been developing their provision of short courses in a flexible way to enable more people to access skills learning, and this work will need to be accelerated. More modules from existing undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications will need to be unbundled to offer 'micro-credentials' of a high level and quality.
38. This would be facilitated by greater cross-sector communication on innovative learning practices which help a wider breadth of learners access training opportunities based on skills which they have developed in the workplace or in other non-formal learning environments.

### **Sector and regional skills planning**

*Question 15: Thinking about the overall ambition to ensure that the skills and education system is aligned to local, regional and national skills priorities, what aspects of the current delivery landscape are working well to support this ambition?*

39. Please see comments in response to Questions 2 and 3.

*Question 16: The Auditor General recommended that the Scottish Government take urgent action to deliver improved governance on skills alignment. Do you have any evidence to support whether the current arrangements are likely to deliver progress?*

40. As stated in the consultation, the first work packages from the series of pathfinder projects on approaches to skills planning which are being led by Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council are due to conclude before the end of 2022. SCDI will be interested in the evidence from them and better placed to comment on the action which is being taken.

*Question 17: The NSET sets out a vision for a system which is agile and responsive to future needs, where labour market insights can inform strategic provision planning. Do you have any evidence to indicate how changes to the delivery landscape could better deliver this vision?*

41. A Culture of Delivery, Programme 6 in the new National Strategy for Economic Transformation, calls for a transformation in the way we "listen to, support and work with each other" to ensure that Programmes flex and adapt to respond to economic challenges. It aims to strengthen accountability and transparency, and track and monitor success, to enable all elements in the landscape to respond in an agile manner and prioritise with confidence. This can only happen with more regular qualitative feedback from a wider range of employers. The Skilled Workforce Programme Board, of which SCDI is member, is a new mechanism which can support better partnership working, and employer engagement in policy and delivery.
42. The vision of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation could better be delivered through significantly greater flexibility in public funding which allows public-private partnerships to blend funding to address key national and regional missions and find solutions.

*Question 18: Skills Development Scotland currently leads and coordinates approaches for Skills Investment Plans for sectors and Regional Skills Investment Plans. Do you have any evidence to demonstrate the success of this approach or to support the impacts of SIPs on sector skills outcomes or RSIPs on regional outcomes?*

43. SCDI members have engaged constructively in the development of SIPs and RSIPs. Delivery organisations in the ecosystem report that they are helpful in guiding their skills planning. While both sectoral and place-based planning have useful roles, there is some duplication.

Sectoral plans also have a tendency to view people gaining employment in a sector not directly related to their qualification as a failure in the pipeline rather than as a positive destination for the individual and employer; while regional plans may not acknowledge that people move between regions to learn or work, or may opt for online learning delivered outside the region.

44. Some members have said that after publication of skills assessments for their sectors there has been a gap before production of the related skills investment plan causing uncertainty.
45. As with national and regional economic strategies, some members have said that health and social care, and housing, should be included as key sectors in them, especially for rural areas.

*Question 19: One of the major challenges and opportunities facing the economy is the just transition to net zero. Thinking about the current delivery landscape, how well is it structured to deliver this ambition?*

46. SCDI's Clean Growth Leadership Group published its report *Manifesto for Clean Growth* in December 2020<sup>4</sup>. This identified seven Clean Growth Opportunities for Scotland. One of these is to drive a Green Skills Revolution which builds green skills across society and invests in the reskilling, upskilling and lifelong learning of our people to prepare them for the green industries of the future to create new green jobs, boost productivity, raise wages and attract inward investment. It highlighted the International Labour Organisation's analysis of the impact of the just transition to net zero on the demand for green skills across three priorities:

- i. **Green Restructuring**
- ii. **New Green Occupations**
- iii. **Greening Existing Jobs**

47. The Manifesto made three key recommendations for a Green Skills Revolution:

1. **Build core green skills across society**
2. **Harness all of Scotland's talents to get to Net Zero**
3. **Prepare workforce for green jobs of the future**

48. Investment by the public and private sectors in areas which will require lots of jobs – such as the bioeconomy, the decommissioning and recycling of oil rigs and older windfarms, building and maintaining active travel infrastructure, rail electrification, reducing emissions from buildings, peatland restoration and the remanufacturing of products – should go hand-in-hand with programmes to train and develop workers and people who are not currently in work.

49. SCDI welcomes the focus that there is on the skills people need to thrive in a net zero economy, such as through Skills Development Scotland's the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan<sup>5</sup>. There are a wide range of positive initiatives across the skills delivery landscape. SCDI is currently working on a project on natural capital and skills shortages across the supply chain have been identified as a potential barrier. These are acute in rural and remote areas which are facing falling population challenges. We welcome the establishment of the Commission for the Land-Based Learning Review to undertake a 'root and branch review' of learning in Scotland's land-based and aquaculture sectors and advise the Scottish Government<sup>6</sup>. We understand that it will be available soon to inform the review of the skills delivery landscape.

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<sup>4</sup> [Clean Growth: Download our Manifesto - SCDI - SCDI](#)

<sup>5</sup> [climate-emergency-skills-action-plan-2020-2025.pdf \(skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Commission for the Land-Based Learning Review - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

50. The energy sector is key for Scotland's economy and the transition to a net zero society. The skills challenge for the energy sector is in continuing to ensure a stable supply of talent to support oil and gas for as long as it remains in the energy mix, and in building a supply of skills for low carbon sectors. The oil and gas industry has many of the skills required for the transition to net zero – including technical skills, deep energy sector knowledge, and required problem solving skills – which it needs for its own vital decarbonisation journey. Low carbon sectors are scaling up before a sizeable oil and gas workforce is available for redeployment. With skills applicable across both sectors of the energy industry, there is a risk that not supporting the full energy system exacerbates talent shortages and inhibits the ability of Scotland to produce and export energy that is reliable, affordable and increasingly low carbon.
51. The skills delivery landscape should have a focus on and the capacity to increase labour supply across energy sources, supporting new entrants to the industry and helping the existing workforce transition into low carbon (whether from the energy industry or from other sectors). As part of this, skills passports can play a crucial role in recognising existing skillsets, and allowing people to move sectors without needing to completely retrain by porting over existing training. Increasingly modular training is also key to enabling people to top up skills where they do not meet industry requirements – at times, this can require substantial retraining. The skills delivery ecosystem should ensure close partnerships with employers to ensure skills interventions are truly demand-led, including skillsets across energy sources, and people are ready to work, and foster great collaboration and wider industry partnerships.
52. A key point is that skills barriers to net zero are not always in new green industries themselves. For example, increasing numbers of planners will be urgently needed in local authorities to assess planning applications for the onshore infrastructure connected with offshore wind developments in Scottish waters. The skills shortages may also be in the complementary skills that are needed for the transition to a net zero economy, such as leadership, financial and commercial skills. There is a need for joined-up delivery across the skills delivery landscape.
53. This concern about the greening of existing industries reinforces SCDI's overall comment that everyone needs opportunities for reskilling, upskilling, work-based learning and lifelong learning at all stages of their careers, informed by enhanced engagement with industry. All schools, colleges, universities, training providers and employers should embed core green skills and carbon literacy across curricula, professional learning and work-based learning.

### **Careers and young people**

*Question 20: Do you have any evidence to inform how the new Careers by Design Collaborative could be embedded within the wider education and skills system and delivery landscape to enable the recommendations of the Careers Review to be taken forward to ensure people can access the advice, information and guidance that they need?*

54. SCDI members have, in general, not commented in detail on this section. We would certainly underline the benefits of collaboration with employers and opportunities for work experience.

*Question 21: Alongside Careers information, advice and guidance, do you have any evidence to demonstrate what additional support young people, including those from marginalised groups, might need to develop their skills and experience to prepare them for the world of work? Please include details about who you think should be responsible for providing this support.*

55. The development of 'Meta-Skills' is especially important to prepare young people for the world of work. Meta-Skills should be embedded in all learning across the skills and education system. Participation in Interdisciplinary Learning – which makes connections across learning – and social innovation and entrepreneurship should be nurtured among all learners. Extra-curricular activities, including volunteering, are often effective in engaging young people from marginalised groups and helping to prepare young people for the world of work. Young people who want to start a business and learn at the same time should also be encouraged. New, more flexible approaches to student loan funding may be needed for more diverse pathways.
56. Skills development at all ages and stages must be inclusive of all learners and all communities by improving access, widening participation and increasing diversity. While the Careers Review and this question are concerned with young people, it should be noted that a large share of college and university graduates are over 25 and also need help to prepare for work.
57. SCDI believes that funding should be available from the Scottish Government for new approaches to reach hard-to-reach groups of disadvantaged adults which help them access flexible support from partnerships of college, Community and Learning Development organisations and voluntary sector staff before they progress to further education courses.

### ***Employer Support and Engagement***

*Question 22: Do you have any evidence about how the current arrangements for employer engagement in skills and education are supporting delivery of Scottish Government's ambitions and outcomes?*

58. There are many arrangements for employer engagement in skills and education at all levels. However, individual employers are still often uncertain about where and how they can engage. Some clarification about roles and responsibilities would undoubtedly be helpful, along with building on and rolling out regional arrangements where they are successful. Many of the skills risks and opportunities extend beyond a single employer's direct workforce. This is where wider employer-led industry partnerships offer great value. It is important that the all elements of the ecosystem continue to encourage and engage with these partnerships.
59. The Developing the Young Workforce programme has improved partnerships between some employers, schools, colleges and universities, and made it easier for young people to move within and between education, training and jobs. The interactions between employers and education should be examined closely with all unnecessary barriers to partnerships removed.
60. Part 1 summarises a range of recent reviews into the post-school education and skills system. It has been a challenge for many employers, especially SMEs, to follow and engage with these reviews and their implementation as a result of the economic circumstances of recent years. Following the completion of the existing reviews and with work starting to deliver the National Strategy for Economic Transformation's Projects, there should be more of a focus on delivery.

*Question 23: Thinking about the different aspects of the system in which employers have an interest, and the existing mechanisms for feeding into policy and delivery, do you have any evidence to support how changes in the delivery landscape could improve the partnership working between Scottish Government, its public bodies and employers?*

61. Please comments in response to Question 17.

62. In the post-pandemic, digital world, the use of learning spaces, along with that of many buildings and places, should be rethought. This offers an opportunity to be innovative and integrative, repurposing educational institutions, libraries and community centres as flexible hubs within communities, and places where people, educators and employers can meet.