Response ID ANON-RJB4-3CT7-K

Part 1 - Scotland's Skills Delivery Landscape

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?

Please give us your views:

Having consulted with our industry members the overwhelming view from them is that greater clarity as to what the skills delivery system can provide and how it is delivered is required.

There is an overwhelming need for the skills system to reflect the needs of industry, as summed up by one member 'For it to be more pertinent/relevant to the ever-changing work world we live in. Everything changes so quickly, and I feel the skills development area remains as it was pre-COVID, despite the multitude of changes the workplace and people have had to adapt to.'

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?

Please give us your views:

Based on the views of our industry members it does not feel as though this is being achieved. It feels, at times, as if the system is built around the needs of the organisations delivering the skills system and not the needs of industry and other users. It has to be agile, responsive and outward looking.

The current system can also be challenging for businesses, in particular SMEs to navigate what appears to be a complex skills landscape. Leading to businesses feeling excluded and struggling to understand what it can do for them and how they can, engage, influence and support.

Comments received included;

Industry expressed challenges with employing young people such as some having less attention to detail and a lack of tolerance to high stringent health and safety requirements necessary in a food production business.

Skills needed for the future include a willingness to learn (and question), problem solving, communication skills, and a sense of personal responsibility.

Some skills/roles remain in short supply such as engineering, quality assurance and technical, planners, purchasing, new product development, production leadership, and the ability to operate machinery including tractors. It can be difficult to hold on to people employed in these roles with a lot of competition from other employers.

Please provide specific examples of success in the work of public agencies or the private/third sector.:

Larger companies with specific HR personnel appear to be more able to access and understand the skills landscape and build relationships with providers. To quote from one large food manufacturer 'To be honest anytime I have worked with a third-party regarding skills delivery they have always taken the ownership whilst listening to and providing what our company needs and what our desired outcome is also.'

The impact and success with public sector agencies can vary but FDF Scotland and SF&D have a very good relationship with Skills Development Scotland and examples of joint activity include:

• SDS worked in partnership with SF&D to develop a Recruitment and Retention toolkit focussed on building knowledge and capability for businesses to adopt best practice. This has been well received by industry and is currently being promoted to support challenges with recruitment.

• To address the challenges and opportunities that the adoption of Fair Work presents to the sector, a series of Fair Work Case studies have been developed by FDF Scotland and SDS. With an increased focus on Fair Work partnership work is underway with the enterprise agencies to support a programme of engagement with industry.

• Development of Sector Skills Assessments (SSA) including industry insights builds a strong evidence base of the performance of the sector and where there are opportunities and challenges. Within the SSA, Oxford Economics provide labour market forecasts, identifying where new job openings will occur. Although the sector has seen an overall decline in jobs, there has been a transition for a demand for more higher-level skills. Over the period 2021-31 the sector is forecast to have 34, 900 job openings (6,700 Manufacturing, 28,200 Primary). This provides an opportunity for businesses to develop a compelling proposition to work in the industry and for individuals to access the pathways into jobs.

• A Food & Drink College Network has been created to support the work of the Skills Advisory Group. The purpose of the network is to support the needs of businesses ensuring their provision meets the needs of employers and individuals who want to work in the sector. Colleges play a critical role developing the sectors workforce, providing access to the Flexible Workforce Development Fund, offering bespoke training interventions to address identified needs within businesses. Following industry insight brought to the Network, two new sub-sectoral initiatives have been developed with a focus on building a pipeline of new recruits into the meat sector.

Please provide specific examples of elements that don't work, are confusing or need to be improved.:

SMEs in the food and drink sector are time poor and do not have dedicated resources to navigate the skills system and often turn to membership organisations for guidance and many just don't know where to start in their quest so give up.

Many also cite the time and resource they have to put into writing submissions and requests for funding is frustrating especially if hurdles are in place or proposals are rejected for want of minor pieces of information, in a nutshell its often very bureacratic and challenging.

Access to funding for recruiting and training new people is the most commonly asked question and where to start, who to talk to and how much time will it take?

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?

Please give us your views:

Absolutely, there is a general lack of awareness of what each of the agencies do / deliver and many businesses are time poor and do not have time to investigate and understand, they would prefer a single point of entry. There is also a perception that there is a lot of reinventing the wheel and duplication of effort within the public sector who also are perceived to add layers of difficulty /complexity to accessing funding and help. This is exacerbated with different agencies having differing approaches and requirements for application systems, often these applications are time bound and feel restrictive and demand copious amounts of information, all of which is off-putting for business. The system should be more straightforward and responsive.

Most commonly asked questions to ourselves is who do we go to for funding X, where can I find courses for x, how do I engage with with skills delivery, where do I start?'

Other comments from members below

'Industry also gets frustrated by what can seem to be a cumbersome and slow system.

Companies expressed that governments need to understand that businesses can only invest in people if they are profitable which will in turn have a positive impact on the economy.'

'Scotland has a great education system but how the industry need to find ways to best leverage that'

Even for individuals working in the skills system it can be confusing to understand the detail of what each individual organisation delivers and the systems employed to deliver to end users.

4 Thinking about how our economy and society is changing and the Scottish Government's ambitions for a skilled workforce as set out in the National Strategy for Economic Transformation, 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 give us your views. Please provide evidence to support your answer.:

The current skills system really does have to change to reflect the future needs of industry. It needs to fully understand the needs of key sectors, what they actually do (food and drink is NOT catering and hospitality) the current and future skills needs and how these can be delivered effectively through the skills system to support our economy.

Educators also need to understand that they are teaching students to go into the workplace and not merely to pass exams. Educators need educating about the world of work. There is evidence of teachers saying ' I don't need to train students for the workplace'

Input from industry includes;

From a large employer; I think we need a bigger focus on science and engineering from an educational purpose. We are a company, for example, where these 2 skill sets are relied on heavily to keep taking us forward in industry. We struggle to find adequately skilled workers in the market, we have some engineering roles that have taken 6 months to fill due to the lack of skilled workforce available. We need to start focussing on these in schools to ensure we are able to meet the growing demand for these roles.

The challenges of the past two years including Covid, Brexit, labour availability, cost of living, increased costs of energy and wider increases to cost of manufacturing, changing sales channels and market consolidation have meant businesses are fighting to survive.

Automation will be important to support productivity and the need for a different skill set than they currently employ.

Some skills/roles remain in short supply such as engineering, quality assurance and technical, planners, purchasing, new product development, production leadership, and the ability to operate machinery including tractors. It can be difficult to hold on to people employed in these roles with a lot of competition from other employers.

Net zero / greener / sustainability skills are becoming more important with a lot of businesses being really new to this and there is a need for the skills system to be ahead of the game and be delivering these future skills - in partnership with will industry partners.

Other comments from industry include;

There are difficulties having the time to train employees including the inability to have buddy systems that were previously in place.

Having a SVQ module-based learning system within employers worked well in the past but businesses have a lack of assessors/trainers in place to manage this.

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?

Please give us your views:

We have no evidence of other skills structures but a system that placed equal value of vocational training and academic would be a good place to start

Part 2 - Apprenticeships

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?

Please give us your views:

Employers, particularly UK wide employers struggle to understand the funding systems for apprenticeships and how the Skills Levy is allocated north and south of the border.

In trying to deliver the Foundation Apprenticeship for Food and Drink Technologies a cross organisational group tried to deliver a virtual programme. Within individual local authorities there were not enough candidates to run a viable course but across Scotland there were a number of candidates who wanted to undertake the qualification and would have formed a significant co-hort. The funding system to support candidates in this delivery is allocated to the local authority where the candidate lives. It was not possible to engage one local authority to take responsibility for overall delivery to all candidates as that would have required a complex system of reclaiming the monies due from the other local authorities, so it did not run and another year of not training young people too enter the food and drink industry has passed. Had the structure been simpler a programme could have been put in place a large co-hort of potential recruits for the industry would have been in training.

Other comments from industry include;
It was felt that the apprenticeship levy was not working for some businesses who felt they were not getting enough benefits from the money they put in. A new system similar to R&D text credits was suggested where costs invested in people and skills could result in tax deductions or if there was some way that the funds that businesses pay could go into a food and drink specific pot rather than a general pot for skills delivery which could help industry have control over how this is spent.

Larger businesses that have a site in Scotland can have challenges making changes due to decision powers often lying with London/or the rest of the world.

7 Do you have any views or evidence on how changes to the operation of apprenticeship programmes could support the ambition for apprenticeship programmes to be an embedded part of the wider education system?

Please give us your views:

Apprenticeship schemes and vocational training MUST have parity of esteem with academic qualifications and further and higher education.

The funding to support these must be more easily accessible, see point above.

Quote from a member
The only thing I can think of is to introduce apprenticeship information/possible pathways earlier in school. I do appreciate this is very vague, but if learners are showing an interest is there a way to ensure they still attain their core subjects such as Maths/English however allow them to also focus on the skills required by industry and an apprenticeship

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.

Please give us your views. Please include suggestions of how the development process could be enhanced.:

From experience the process and time taken to develop a framework is too long and can be cumbersome and can lead to the qualifications not being entirely fit for purpose by the time they are finally approved.

The skills system working more closely with industry and looking towards the future skills needs should improve this process and engaging industry in the development should help, but with support of external agencies including those who support development f future skills like NMIS

From an employer who delivers a successful apprenticeship programme;
'I think this is very difficult as no apprenticeship/education will ever be one size fits all. Would it be possible to offer more variety of modules within an apprenticeship, something similar to educational courses, where there are X amount of core modules you must take then you get to pick specialist

subjects you would want to focus on? '

9 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 give us your views. Please include suggestions for how the governance of apprenticeship design and delivery could be strengthened.:

I have experience of developing the Foundation Apprenticeship, with industry, to ensure the quality of potential recruits the standard was set to be high, SCQF level 6. This has subsequently been criticised as being 'too hard' but that attitude devalues the level of skill required by the sector. This framework is equivalent to 2 highers and is very science based, which is a primary requirement of the sector. This is indicative of the lack of understanding by the education sector of the level of STEM skills required by food and drink and the Foundation Apprenticeship not being recognised as being of high value by educators and parents. There is an impression that it is about cooking and the calibre of students encouraged to undertake the qualification do not always have the ability to achieve such a high level of scientific rigour.

Other comments from industry include;
I would suggest that being employer led must take into consideration the needs of a wide range of employers of different sizes.

The qualifications could be more flexible to suit the needs of a wide range of employers

The value of apprenticeships should be enhanced and appreciated widely as equal to academic qualifications.

Part 3 - National Occupational Standards

10 Do you have any evidence on how the current arrangements for National Occupational Standards are delivering against the intended ambitions of the National Occupational Standards Strategy?

Please give us your views:

I know that the NOS are reviewed regularly but it is incredibly difficult to engage industry in this review process and it always feels like it is being done retrospectively so by the time the review has taken place industry needs have moved on.

FDF Scotland have worked with NSAFD to support the review of NOS and encourage industry engagement but this is very challenging and I am not aware of a great response from industry to input into this. There is a general lack of awareness of what NOS are and their importance to developing and meeting the skills needs of the industry.

Possibly industry does not feel equipped with the knowledge or skills required to contribute.

11 Do you have any evidence to support how changes to the delivery landscape for developing and championing National Occupational Standards could support the ambition for National Occupational Standards to be the foundation of vocational training and learning in Scotland?

Please give us your views:

We do not have any evidence but given the difficulty in engaging employers, I believe that participating in this development should be something that is encouraged from the highest level and be seen as something that industry should take pride in being involved with.

My understanding is that very few employers, if any, would be able to tell you what NOS are and what they are used for and probably see it as something too high level for them to be involved with. For example when consulting with members about this review none responded to this section.

The skills development system is seen as complex and difficult to understand, particularly if you are trying to run a profitable business.

Part 4 - Upskilling and Reskilling

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 outcomes for learners and/or industry and sectors?

Please give us your views:

We recently comissioned a consultant to conduct specific research to understand the current offer to businesses to access support to build digital skills capability and to identify and make recommendations on opportunities for improvement of existing services or new provision.

The findings can be provided in full but in summary;

How Businesses are engaging with Digital technology

Many businesses pivoted to have some sort of online orders service during the pandemic. They used a range of different platforms including Instagram, Facebook, WebShop. The majority of these did this without any external funding or support. All have maintained an online presence. In some case they have invested further and grown these services and in others the volume of orders have reduced substantially as people revert to direct purchase.

The part of the food and drink sector which is thriving, and embracing digital skills the most, is the new alcohol based ones with a wide range of gin, whisky and beer companies starting up in the last 5 years. A number of them received pre-start Business Gateway support and accessed the extra 3 or 4 days consultancy support. 4 or 5 years on any training or investment in their businesses is self-taught or funded. Many of them have invested in digital skills in-house.

There are some very articulate businesses embracing the digital tools and using 'Story telling' to boost their sales! Highlighting the success from a business perspective has been used to get the message out to others through industry recognised communications e.g. British Bakers magazine articles. The Scottish Craft Butchers highlighted a number of butchers who have embraced digital and would make good case studies

Barriers to engaging with digital technology
Several of the businesses stated it was difficult to quantify the business benefit of investing in digital developments which had influenced them in where to invest in developing their business. It is easier to see more immediate results when investing in a piece of machinery to streamline a production process than creating a new website, so when choice have to be made often the digital investment is secondary.

New businesses are more likely to use the digital method to market. Traditional business are more reluctant to embrace and change. Overall food and drink businesses are not using digital channels and many don't see the point or business advantage to doing so.

The shying away from technology is not just for older generations. It should not be assumed that all young people are embracing technology, many young people need support and confidence in the use of technology. One business, who have completely digitised their on-boarding and induction processes, recently had a new employee start and not come back after 2 days. They citied everything being online and digitised as the reason why. Basic training on digital skills for new starts an issue.

Training and events
There is a wide range of webinars, video tutorials and other guides available through the Digital Boost website for any business to access, no matter what stage they are at in their development or what size they are. The majority of businesses were not aware of these resources or that they could access them.

The perception from the partners was that the online services were working well with a strong uptake of people using the resources. In contrast the membership organisations and businesses spoken to said that they would prefer and welcome hands on 1-on-1 practical support tailored to their business. All of the businesses who are aware of the resources cited time as the main barrier to using them.

One company owner has just completed the 'Help to Grow Management' course at Strathclyde University and has found this really beneficial. It has a 'Digital Adoption' module which has helped them to plan and implement digitisation in every aspect of their business. The UK Government paid for 90% of the cost which meant the business contribution was affordable. It was delivered as a Hybrid model which meant they did not have to spend too much time physically out of the business.

Uptake by sector on support available
Feedback from a range of support providers identified it is really difficult to get food & drink businesses to engage with programmes and the support available to them.
Unsurprisingly, the biggest challenges to businesses in further investment and development in digital to consumer services are time, finance and resources.

Many food and drink businesses are not engaging, embracing or investing in the digital skills or infrastructure to increase their digital business to customer market. This is in spite of local authorities or enterprise organisations providing programmes or opportunities for them to do so. The Dumfries & Galloway food and drink economic development team have previously run a couple of programmes for which the uptake has been limited. They ran a 'Place Based' project in Castle Douglas (The Food town) which offered every retail shop a session and training on how to get their business on Shopify. Only 8 or 9 out of 30 shops engaged. They have also invested in a unique and expensive Food & Drink Accelerator programme as part of their North Channel alliance. There were only 5 (31%) Dumfries & Galloway food and drink businesses who participated, there was potentially 16 slots. Feedback from business was "it is not for us".

Main support services focussed on start-up companies
Everyone spoken to acknowledge there is more support for businesses in their first 18 months of trading than there is for established businesses.

Digital Boost funding and consultancy difficult to access
The digital consultancy funding and support is allocated to the Business Gateway provider on an annual basis. It is always oversubscribed and not necessarily equitable in its allocation. There are always more businesses requiring/requesting help than funds available. The money will have been allocated/run out before the end of the financial year (April). In some cases business are carried over into the next financial year but all that means is there is less in the pot for new businesses requesting help the next year.

One business did get 4 days consultancy, as part of the Business Boost programme, to help start their website but with hindsight they felt the advice they had been given had pushed them in the wrong direction, if they were doing it again they would do differently.

In some cases additional support may be available from the enterprise organisations but this is inconsistent and resource constrained.

The Digital Boost Development Grant is not seen as accessible to most businesses. The applications are only once a year, the money runs out within a few hours of going live, and you have to have a full business plan developed as part of your submission.
Only one of the businesses spoken to had managed to successfully bid for the grant but due to the complex and strict restrictions on having to pay the money out upfront they have not been able to draw down on it. They did not have the cash to do this and you are not allowed to finance on credit cards or loans.

The timeline of the fund is dictated centrally and applications are required when businesses are at their busiest. A nonspecific timeline where they are able to work on their plans during their less busy production times would be much better.

Medium sized companies at a mature stage of development are potentially missing out on support due to not meeting funding criteria. One company has been established for 20 years but is not seen as big (19 full time equivalent staff) and they felt they were not seen as an interesting investment case, even though they had a 40% growth last year without any help. They are investing ½ million into a rural community and creating meaningful jobs and career progression as they grow. They are currently financing a new factory and would love to have a tailored meaningful grant and to work with the funding body on the 'journey' together.

Support business would prefer
Most businesses want funds to help them develop a digital presence or invest in software to streamline their business processes e.g. Website development, CRM. A number of the businesses have had to outlay money to external agencies for their website and social media but are now finding the sustainability of this difficult due to the lack of resources and skills within the business.

One business owner, who does all his own digital work, said he may learn by looking at some case studies but he would much rather participate in Learning Journey's to see how other have done things. He indicated the industry are very much "doers" who learning from "seeing" rather than reading about something.

Other general points
Although a lot of services are delivered through national agencies, for example Business Gateway and Digital Boost, the 1-on-1 services they provide varies across local authority areas.

Dumfries & Galloway Council, in conjunction with the food and drink regional group, have created a website https://www.dgfoodanddrink.com/ to promote food & drink businesses, tourism experiences they offer and also provides a supplier directory. All businesses can participate but it is the Council who have put the content together.
It was highlighted by two of the partners that access to meaningful market research is an issue for some new start-ups. As a result, the same type of new business is being started where there is already a crowded market.

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?

Please give us your views:

Please see point above but should there not be some form of return on investment form end user, business and economy measures?

Also we need to identify what we want this national programme to deliver? what are the KPIs

Follow up at different times scales after completion to assess impact in short, medium and long term.

Assessment of perceptions of national skills programme delivery - i.e. are vocational qualifications regarded as equal to or better than academic.

Do private training providers have different / more effective delivery systems, higher rates of success what can we learn from them?

Questions raise by industry included;
What does the Scottish Government wanted to get out of this review and how can economic transformation be made more measurable.
To what extent is the Scottish Government trying to get people back into work.

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?

Please give us your views:

FDF Scotland recently commissioned research into upskilling and reskilling in the sector and the following is taken from the results of this research that was specifically about introducing a Careers Passport made up of 4 units of basic training, but the results may be helpful in this context.

All employers are facing recruitment and retention challenges.

All the businesses and partners engaged indicated there were a range of challenges currently facing food & drink businesses which were a higher priority for them than introducing a new scheme "for the sake of it".

All employers spoken to are experiencing staff shortages and recruitment challenges. The seasonal extras in the run up to Christmas is a particular problem. Historically, organisations used agency staff but this resource now very limited.

A number of the businesses indicated the quality of the candidates is the biggest issue. Getting staff with the right attitude who can be trained is the key. The Passport itself will not fix this although if people have completed it successfully it would show commitment.

Majority of employers think the proposed Career Passport is a good idea

The majority of employers agreed that it was in principal a good idea, as part of the recruitment process, if it can be rolled out easily and with limited cost

to the business.

All the partners engaged were willing to work with NSAFD to support it being rolled out and potentially were open to discussions on being delivery partners if required.

Partners and employer's all agreed that the completion of the passport would demonstrate a commitment/interest in getting into the food and drink industry by applicants. If it was used as a 'screening' tool in the recruitment process it would reduce the time spent on the recruitment process, and in particular the attrition rates of candidates called to interview and offered positions. They also agreed it would give candidates a head start in the induction process when they started work. Everyone agreed this would be a good thing.

The Food & Drink Careers Passport being available as part of the 'toolkit' available to people struggling to get into work was seen as a good thing.

In addition to basic upskilling in the sector, automation and advances in technology will require new skills.

From consultation with industry there is less of a demand for off site training and a real appetite for on-site training and short courses and for these to be as up to date as possible and responsive to the needs of industry.

Reference should also be made to previous questions and responses relating to how the skills levy is distributed and industry's ability to access training and support and the relevance and relevance of existing qualifications.

Short courses, micro credentials and training that enables candidates to stay in the workplace and delivering value for their employers would be welcome.

Greater access to funding to support training that could be delivered quickly

Part 5 - Sector and Regional Skills Planning

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?

Please give us your views:

The Scotland Food and Drink Skills Advisory Group is an example of good practice.

This group is part of the SF&D Partnership and works collaboratively with partners representing the industry, SDS, SFC and further and higher education to identify priority skills actions for the food and drink industry and a plan to deliver these collectively.

Further information can be provided following approval of proposed plans by the SAG.

FDF Scotland work closely with SDS to inform the Sector Skills Assessments (SSA) to provide industry insights to build a strong evidence base of the performance of the sector and where there are opportunities and challenges. This provides an opportunity for businesses to develop a compelling proposition to work in the industry and for individuals to access the pathways into jobs.

However, the education system, as highlighted in previous responses does not always recognise the importance of engaging with industries and sometimes fails to appreciate the skills and attributes required by employers. There appears to be a mis alignment (in some places) between the needs of employers and what education is delivering.

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?

Please give us your views:

See point above and the need for regional responses to labour market demands.

17 Do you have any evidence to indicate how changes to the delivery landscape could better deliver the vision for a system which is agile and responsive to future needs and where labour market insights can inform strategic provision planning?

Please give us your views:

We work closely with SDS to inform the Sector Skills Assessments for food and drink to ensure that these accurately reflect the current state of the industry.

However more could / should / will be done to inform future skills needs and NMIS is a key partner in delivering this vision for the future.

Anecdotally we have heard of skills providers that working with employers to share resources and staff to deliver training in particular short courses can be very effective e.g. one full time apprentice placement providing 2 individuals with part time work - providing the employer with 1 FTE and 2 people gaining training.

Colleges could be key to supporting a more agile system by delivering micro credentials - employers are sometimes reluctant to sign up to courses / training that take employees away from the workplace for prolonged periods, on site training is an alternative.

Close relationships between industry and providers is key to identifying and delivery the required training.

Ensuring education is also bought into the needs of industry and future pathways for students is also crucial.

To note the FDF is responding to the DEFRA Independent Review into Labour Shortages. We understand this report will be published in early 2023 and would encourage this review to include information and data relevant to Scotland.

18 Do you have any evidence to demonstrate the success of Skills Investment Plans or Regional Skills Investment Plans on sector and regional skills outcomes?

Please give us your views:

A recent report commissioned by FDF Scotland commissioned to advise on how industry can better engage with education to promote careers in the sector delivered the following recommendation;

Align STEM Ambassador activity with existing industry growth projects, such as, the Ayrshire Manufacturing Innovation Corridor, North East SeedPod and the South West Digital Dairy Chain Projects, to explore STEM activities which could be delivered both during the development and establishment of the projects.

19 Thinking about the current delivery landscape, how well is it structured to deliver the Scottish Government's ambitions for a just transition to net zero?

Please give us your views:

Feedback from our industry members indicates that there is a real need to support industry.

Net zero skills are becoming more important with a lot of businesses being really new to this.

Automation will be important to support productivity but some members mentioned a lack of space for such technologies on site and the need for a different skill set than they currently employ.

Others thought being able to hire co-bots on lease basis would support financial constraints.

A lot of members have indicated that they really don't know where to start in delivering Net Zero. The Net Zero team at FDF are working with the sector to support delivery and initial feedback indiactes a real interest and appetite for businesses to engage. This will result in more information and resource to support others but this is at a very early stage and industry will require significant support.

Part 6 - Careers and Young People

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?

Please give us your views:

From my own experience of working in the skills area I have found that careers information and advice varies greatly across the country.

The quality of information is also variable and there is a requirement for up to date and consistent information across all sectors. Real and serious emphasis should be given to careers education within the education system and beyond to inform students from early years and throughout the system, educators, career influencers and wider. This should should be well informed and based on real and current information from industry, employers and beyond. It is evident that many educators and also many career influencers do not understand the needs of industry and employers in general and have biased views of certain sectors (food and drink has a negative perception for example).

There is also a need for educators and influencers to understand the importance of business, industry et al to the economy, many do not appreciate this fact.

There is a requirement for education to deliver meta skills and drive understanding of why these are important post education and their real relevance to the future of the country.

Sources of information about careers also has to be up to date and well informed, for food and drink only a small section of careers are listed on MyWoW.

Employers should be actively encouraged to participate in delivering careers education to support themselves and wider sector and should be made aware of the benefits to everyone involved in doing so.

In summary information should be clear, consistent, up to date and easily accessible for all parties to use.

Evidence from industry

Some expressed challenges with employing young people such as some having less attention to detail and a lack of tolerance to high stringent health and safety requirements necessary in a food production business.

Skills needed for the future include a willingness to learn (and question), problem solving, communication skills, and a sense of personal responsibility.

Some skills/roles remain in short supply such as engineering, quality assurance and technical, planners, purchasing, new product development, production leadership, and the ability to operate machinery including tractors. It can be difficult to hold on to people employed in these roles with a lot of competition from other employers.

Different areas of Scotland have different skills needs within their communities – it would be helpful if local institutions could be given more freedom to run courses that suit the needs of their community with regional funding to support that.

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 give us your views. Please include details about who you think should be responsible for providing this support.:

I think all young people should be exposed to the real world of work, not just during work experience in S4.

Having access to employers coming in to speak to them, going on industry visits, gaining experiences like industry challenges replicating the real world of work all help.

DYW, STEM Ambassadors and others, like trade bodies and employer representative organisations, are all key to supporting the delivery of these experiences but awareness of, participation in and uptake of these offerings does seem to vary greatly across the country. The approach should be consistent and inclusive and give equal status to all sectors, academic and vocational qualifications..

FDF Scotland are in the process of refreshing and relaunching a Food and Drink Ambassadors programme to engage the industry in helping to promote the sector as a STEM career destination by offering site visits, attending careers fairs, offering placements and running workshops.

Industry has a responsibility for promoting itself as a career destination of choice and working with the wider skills network to help raise awareness and change the negative perceptions often associated with food and drink.

Finding from our consultation with industry found the following themes emerging that would support industry engaging with careers delivery:

• The majority of food and drink employers are willing to engage with the Ambassadors programme but not until 2023.
• A planned and structured programme of events Ambassadors can easily get involved with delivering should be created and provided well in advance.
• Existing food & drink STEM resources for delivering activities should be refreshed and pulled together in a 'toolkit' for easy access.
• The communication to Ambassadors about opportunities to get invoked and the support to help them deliver activities & events should be improved and provided well in advance.
• Collaborate more closely with DYW and other delivery partners
• There should be closer alignment with other delivery partners and in particular other Food & Drink STEM projects and initiatives.

Part 7 - Employer engagement and support

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?

Please give us your views:

It is challenging to engage food and drink businesses in education as many don't have the time or spare people resource, although this is getting better post Covid as on site visits are now allowed.

Several of our members have admitted that they have not engaged with skills promotion and that they should. This can be lack of time, unsure about what they could offer and an element of fear of the unknown.

DYW regional teams can be a great way of engaging but the quality of these teams varies across Scotland.

Quotes from members include;

Scotland has a great education system but how the industry need to find ways to best leverage that.

Businesses need to find creative ways of engaging with the community – not just young people but also people that are looking to come back into work/change industries.

Taking young people into business has worked well in the past, helping students learn how food and drink is made including the skills and machinery that are needed.

Problems remain in ensuring the food a drink industry is seen as attractive career destination - It is vital that the sector takes responsibility and play their part in changing that perception. See previous comments relating to image and attractiveness of the industry, understanding of what food and drink actually does and that its not catering and hospitality. Often when food and drink events take place educators put forward their most difficult and low achieving students in the mistaken belief that it will be a cooking activity and this can be very disheartening for volunteers giving up their time and expertise.

Many members are working to promote the variety of different roles with their business to local schools and it is important that this is sustained but resource in supporting this work can be an issue.

FDF Scotland recently commissioned research into the refresh of a Food and Drink Ambassadors Programme, the following themes emerged;

The 6 main themes which have emerged out of the research are:
• The majority of food and drink employers are willing to engage with the Ambassadors programme but not until 2023.
• A planned and structured programme of events Ambassadors can easily get involved with delivering should be created.
• Existing food & drink STEM resources for delivering activities should be refreshed and pulled together in a 'toolkit' for easy access.
• The communication to Ambassadors about opportunities to get invoked and the support to help them deliver activities & events should be improved.
• Collaborate more closely with DYW and other delivery partners
• There should be closer alignment with other delivery partners and in particular other Food & Drink STEM projects and initiatives.

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?

Please give us your views:

From discussions with members, in particular SMEs, many are unsure of where to start so turn to membership or employer organisations as a 'trusted' source. Many are confused by the system and feel the easiest way to feed into policy and delivery mechanisims would be through trade bodes or industry representative organisations, like FDF Scotland, to deliver a collective view. For individual organisations it may be more difficult but local or regional forums may provide a good mechanisim for this. There is a real requirement for regions to ensure accurate representation for their industries and sectors and for industries to take a collective responsibility for promoting their sector as a career destination of choice and not leave this to others.

Suggestions from our industry members include;

City Deals/regional growth funds could have a role to play in delivering jobs to support growth.

Different areas of Scotland have different skills needs within their communities – it would be helpful if local institutions could be given more freedom to run courses that suit the needs of their community with regional funding to support that.

About you

What is your name?

Name:
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What is your email address?

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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:
FDF Scotland

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

Publish response with name

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

I confirm that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy.

I consent

Evaluation

Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)

Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?:
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Please enter comments here.:

I felt that some of the questions were very broad and could be interpreted in several ways which made answering them quite challenging as I flip flopped between my interpretation and subsequent responses.

Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?:
Slightly satisfied

Please enter comments here.: