



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

SFC GUIDANCE

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Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund Strategy Reporting Guidance for AY 2025–26



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Issue Date: 30 July 2026

Reference: SFC/GD/17/2026

Summary: This guidance sets out the requirements for submitting Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF) strategy reports for Academic Year 2025–26, including the reporting template for completion and return to SFC.

The reports will be used to monitor progress against five-year KEIF strategies and form a key part of SFC's Outcomes Framework and Assurance model.

FAO: Principals of Scotland's universities and the general public.

Further Information: **EMAIL:** keif@sfc.ac.uk

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Introduction

1. This guidance outlines requirements for the submission of Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF) strategy reports for Academic Year (AY) 2025–26. It includes the reporting template for completion and return to SFC anytime from 1 September 2026 to **30 November 2026**.
2. Please also note that KE metric data for AY 2025–26 is due by the same date (30 November 2026). Earlier returns are encouraged where this is possible.

Background

3. In June 2025, SFC published [five-year KEIF strategies \(AY 2025–26 to AY 2029–30\)](#). These strategies set out institutional priorities for knowledge exchange and innovation activity supported by KEIF and align with Scottish Government national priorities. Alongside KE metric data, they form a key part of KE&I expectations in the SFC [Outcomes Framework and Assurance model](#).
4. Institutions submitted a short transitional report in autumn 2025, capturing the benefits and additionality of KEIF funding in AY 2024–25.
5. Institutions are now required to submit a full annual report that describes progress against the delivery of their five-year KEIF strategy over AY 2025–26. The report should reflect metric data and set out how the institution has adjusted priorities and activities in light of challenges/opportunities where necessary.
6. Annual reports (excluding case studies) will not be published, and institutions are encouraged to be open and detailed in their submissions.

Purpose of the report

7. The annual report should:
 - Provide a clear summary of progress against the institution's KEIF strategy, referring to delivery against forecast data.
 - Highlight key achievements and opportunities where these relate to the overall delivery of the five-year strategy.
 - Clearly evidence the impact and additionality of KEIF funding.
 - Highlight any challenges that have affected or are likely to affect future delivery, outlining how these are being managed. Any 'reportable events' should be highlighted (for example closure/reduction of key support capacity) which SFC are keen to understand at an institutional and sectoral/national level.

- Comment on KE metric data for AY 2025-26,¹ making reference to forecast data and actual activity/income levels with narrative matching priorities and activity set out in the report.
 - Set out priorities and planned activity for AY 2026-27, highlighting any significant changes to the institution's published strategy and delivery of activity/income set out in forecast data.
8. SFC will use the report (including case studies) to:
- Support the SFC outcomes and assurance process.
 - Monitor delivery against institutional KEIF strategies and discuss this with institutions.
 - Evidence the value, impact and additionality of KEIF investment at an institutional and sector level.
 - Communicate the achievements of institutions with external stakeholders, including Scottish Government.
 - Support future evaluation activity.

Content

9. Using the template provided, institutions should submit a report on progress against their KEIF strategy for AY 2025–26 and outline/reaffirm priorities for AY 2026–27.
10. In addition to a high-level performance summary, institutions should report against each section of their strategy. This should include confirmation that the Platform Grant has been matched, specifying whether this is cash or in-kind.
11. To support the embedding of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across KEIF and supported activities, **institutions should describe relevant EDI approaches and progress within each section of the report, where applicable.** Additional information may be provided in the dedicated EDI section where necessary.
12. The report should clearly set out any significant changes or deviations from the approved strategy in the context of delivery. SFC will review these with the relevant institution and may agree appropriate adjustments. Where changes are agreed, minor amendments to the published version may be permitted and hosted on the SFC website.

¹ SFC KE metric return guidance for AY 2025-26 has been issued in parallel with the KEIF reporting guidance and should be returned to SFC by 30 November 2026. Institutions should ensure that data presented in the KEIF strategy report is accurate and consistent with the information submitted in the KE metric return. KEIF reporting leads may therefore need to liaise with relevant colleagues across their institution during preparation of the report.

13. Recognising the financial and capacity challenges reported by institutions, we invite institutions to provide updated information on their KE&I capacity. This information will support SFC's understanding of current delivery capacity and any emerging or potential risks to strategy delivery and wider implications.

Case studies

14. Institutions should provide **at least two case studies** demonstrating the impact of KE&I activity supported by KEIF. These will contribute to our evidence base on the importance of core funding to support KE&I in Scotland and demonstrate the value and impact of these activities.
15. To help build a balanced database of case studies and demonstrate alignment with areas of Scottish Government priority we may provide guidance on the focus for these each year.
16. For the AY 2025-26 report at least one case study should be on the specific benefits of KEIF to the delivery of Scottish Government's net zero ambitions.
17. Case studies should:
 - Be suitable for a non-specialist audience, avoiding jargon or excessive acronym use.
 - Be of publishable quality and include hyperlinks where appropriate.
 - Clearly reference the contribution of KEIF to the activity.
 - Be a maximum of 300 words in length.
18. SFC may wish to use case studies for a variety of purposes and audiences and institutions. **Case studies shared with SFC will be considered publishable.** They should not, therefore, contain personal data or any other confidential information.

Approval

19. KEIF strategy reports should be approved by the Principal or Head of Institution on behalf of the Governing Body.

Format and submission

20. A template is provided at [Annex A](#) to support consistency of submission.
21. We recognise the time taken to prepare and approve the annual report and welcome submission anytime between 1 September and the **end of November 2026**.
22. Please return your completed report to keif@sfc.ac.uk.

Further information

23. For further information please email: keif@sfc.ac.uk.

Annex A: KEIF strategy report template (AY 2025–26)

Reporting institution:

KEIF strategy lead:²

Job title:

Email address:

Section A: Summary of performance

Please provide a summary of progress in delivering the institution's KEIF strategy over Academic Year (AY) 2025-26. This should:

- Highlight any key achievements and impacts enabled by KEIF over AY 2025-26, making reference to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) approaches/ progress where relevant.
- Highlight progress/trends and variance from the strategy, drawing on KE data (forecast and actual).
- Clearly demonstrate alignment with Scottish Government national priorities (Scotland's National Innovation Strategy and the four priority areas set out in Scottish Government's Programme for Government: eradicating child poverty, growth of the economy, tackling the climate emergency and high-quality public services).
- Include main priorities and planned activities for AY 2026-27.

You may wish to use this space to highlight any other significant challenges and delivery risks, including how these are being managed.

Max 500 words

Insert text

² Personal data collected as part of the report will be used for internal purposes only for the purpose of assessment and assurances relating to sign-off. No personal data will be shared or published wider. For further information relating to how SFC processes and manages information, including data subjects' rights, [please refer to our privacy notices](#).

Section B: KE&I capacity

Platform Grant

Please confirm that the Platform Grant (£250k) has been matched, specifying cash or in-kind.

Match funding provided:

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please specify:

☐ Cash

☐ In-kind

Please provide a brief summary of how the Platform Grant has been used to support and enhance capacity and improve performance in KE&I. If matched by cash and in-kind, please include detail of breakdown.

Max 200 words

Insert text

Overall Capacity for KE&I

Institutions were asked to provide details on the number of staff supported by KEIF and capacity for KE&I as part of their KEIF strategy. Making reference to previous information submitted as part of your strategy, please provide an update on the estimated number of staff (FTE) directly supported by KEIF and an estimate of staff who have KE&I as a significant part of their role, highlighting any changes since the strategy was submitted. This may include both professional services staff and those in academic/leadership roles. We are aware of the financial challenges faced by institutions and are seeking to understand the impact of this from a KE&I perspective.

You may also wish to use this space to provide any other information on the institution's capacity for KE&I that will support our understanding at an institutional and sector level.

Max 200 words

Insert text

Section C: Outcome Grant activities

The KEIF formulaic element (Outcome Grant) is driven by data submitted through the KE metric return and the HE-BCI Survey (graduate start-ups and spin-outs active and survived at least three years). These KE&I activity categories, reflect Scottish Government priorities.

KE metric activity

Please provide an update on progress in delivering the ambitions and approaches set out in your strategy relating to the KE activities/income captured through the SFC KE metric return. This should reflect and include comment on institutional forecast data and actual data submitted through the KE return (AY 2025-26 collection³). It should describe how activities and resources have been prioritised to deliver on Scottish Government ambition, making explicit reference to KEIF support and what it has enabled.

Max 500 words

Insert text

³ SFC KE metric return guidance for AY 2025-26 has been issued in parallel with the KEIF strategy reporting guidance and should be returned to SFC by 30 November 2026. Institutions should ensure that data presented in the KEIF strategy report is accurate and consistent with the information submitted in the KE metric return. KEIF reporting leads may therefore need to liaise with relevant colleagues across their institution during preparation of the report.

Graduate start-ups and spin-outs/Entrepreneurial Support

Please provide an update on progress in delivering the ambitions and approaches to entrepreneurial support, including support for graduate start-ups and spin-outs (and their survival for 3 years or more) as set out in your KEIF strategy.

This should:

- Reference relevant KE data (forecast and actual), highlighting progress against targets or explaining variance where relevant.
- Describe how KEIF funding has contributed to the development, growth or sustainability of start-ups and spin-outs.
- Provide examples of how the institution has strengthened and expanded entrepreneurial support, including through specific projects, partnerships or collaborations.
- Highlight targeted activity to address underrepresentation and promote inclusivity within entrepreneurship and innovation activity.

Max 300 words

Insert text

Section D: Wider KE&I activities

KEIF supports a broad range of knowledge exchange activities at Scottish universities that are delivered in partnership with industry, public and third sector organisations.

These knowledge-based interactions result in significant economic and social benefits; however, they may be difficult to quantify as may be non-income generating.

Wider societal impact

Please provide a progress update on the delivery of ambitions and approaches set out in your KEIF strategy relating to non-income generating activity that contribute to wider societal and economic value.

This should:

- Highlight activity enabled or supported by KEIF, making this contribution explicit.
- Describe key outcomes and impacts, including relevance to Scotland's wider societal and economic priorities.
- Include examples of non-income generating KE&I activity such as public engagement and public policy.

Max 300 words

Insert text

Collaboration

Collaboration is a core principle of KEIF and is reflected across institutional strategies.

Please provide a progress update on the delivery of your ambitions and approaches to collaborative working. This should:

- Highlight partnership activity across the sector (universities and colleges).
- Highlight engagement with SFC supported innovation infrastructure (e.g. Innovation Centres, Interface, Converge).
- Include examples of how collaboration has enhanced delivery, scale, or impact, including the role of KEIF funding.

Max 300 words

Insert text

Regional approaches

Referring to your strategy, please provide a progress update on the role your institution has played at a regional level in delivering KE&I activity.

This should:

- Highlight contributions to regional partnerships, including collaboration with colleges and shared service models where relevant.
- Describe how KEIF has been used to support regional activity and coordination.
- Outline any notable outcomes or added value resulting from regional engagement.

Max 250 words

Insert text

Section E: Embedding and promoting EDI

The promotion and advancement of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is embedded in KEIF and its ongoing development. Please describe progress in delivering institutional ambitions and activities at an individual and collaborative level to enhance equity and inclusivity, outlining targeted activities undertaken that address underrepresentation, drive inclusive KE&I not otherwise included in the report.

Max 250 words

Insert text

Section F: KE&I culture

Institutions were asked to commit to the principles of the KE Concordat as part of their KEIF five-year strategy. Referring to your strategy, please provide a progress report on the approaches taken to support a positive KE&I culture.

Max 200 words

Insert text

Any other information

Institutions may wish to use this section to provide any relevant KE&I information not otherwise covered in the report.

Max 250 words

Insert text

Case studies

Please provide **at least two case studies** demonstrating the impact of KE&I activity supported by KEIF.

Case studies should be clear on the specific benefits of KEIF to the highlighted activity, articulating its contribution to the delivery of Scottish Government national priorities (including the National Innovation Strategy and the four priority areas outlined in the Programme for Government (eradicating child poverty, growing the economy, tackling the climate emergency, and ensuring high quality and sustainable public services) and should showcase how KEIF supports these strategic goals.

For the AY 2025-26 report **at least one case study should be on the specific benefits of KEIF to the delivery of Scottish Government's net zero ambitions.**

Institutions are also encouraged to provide a case study on wider KE&I activities that are likely to be non-income generating which add societal and economic value to Scotland and beyond.

Case studies should:

- Be suitable for a non-specialist audience, avoiding jargon or excessive acronym use.
- Be of publishable quality and include hyperlinks where appropriate.
- Clearly reference the contribution of KEIF to the activity.
- Be a **maximum of 300 words** in length.

SFC may wish to use case studies for a variety of purposes and audiences and institutions and if shared **will be considered publishable**. They should not, therefore, contain any personal details or other confidential information.

Case study 1

INSERT TITLE

Insert text (max 300 words)

Any weblinks associated with this case study?

Please provide link(s)

Please provide 2-4 key words associated with this case study

Insert text

Case study 2**INSERT TITLE**

Insert text (max 300 words)

Any weblinks associated with this case study?

Please provide link(s)

Please provide 2-4 key words associated with this case study

Insert text

Additional case studies may be submitted, following the structure and guidance above, including word limit.

Approval

Please confirm that this KEIF report has been approved by the Principal or Head of Institution and provide date of approval.

I confirm that this KEIF report has been approved.

Signature:

Job title:

Date approved: