
STRATEGIC PLAN

PURPOSE

1. This paper provides a copy of the final draft of the refreshed SFC Strategic Plan and summarises the changes that have been made to reflect feedback from the Board and the Scottish Government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Board is invited to note the changes made and to approve the final draft for publication subject to final approval from Scottish Ministers.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3. The priorities in the Strategic Plan will influence the allocation of SFC's programme funds budget for the period AY 2022-25.

RISK ASSESSMENT

4. The SFC Risk Register will capture risks associated with delivery of the Strategic Plan. An updated version of the Risk Register is presented as a separate agenda item at this meeting.

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

5. An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment has been completed. It confirms that SFC's Strategic Plan is intended to advance equality of opportunity.

ISLAND COMMUNITIES

6. An Island Communities Impact Assessment has confirmed that there is no specific impact on island communities as a result of the Strategic Plan.

CARBON REDUCTION

7. The Strategic Plan makes specific reference to managing carbon reduction and addressing the climate emergency. More specific actions will be carried through into

the Operating Plan and the Net Zero and Sustainability Framework.

PUBLICATION

8. This paper will be published on the Council website.

FURTHER INFORMATION

9. Contact: Karen Watt, Chief Executive , tel: 0131 313 6646 number, email: kwatt@sfc.ac.uk.

STRATEGIC PLAN

PURPOSE

10. This paper seeks Board approval of the final draft of the SFC Strategic Plan for submission to Scottish Government Ministers.

BACKGROUND

11. Over recent months SFC has been consulting on the development of a refreshed Strategic Plan which will cover the five-year period 2022-23 to 2026-27. This will replace the existing Framework which at the time of publication in 2019 marked a new direction for the Funding Council.
12. The refreshed Plan builds on the 2019 Framework, much of which remains relevant today but it also allows us to mainstream recommendations from our Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability. It also reflects new Scottish Government policies and priorities such as the National Strategy for Economic Transformation as well as the changing external environment.
13. The five-year Strategic Plan will be underpinned by an annual operating plan that will be refreshed over the course of the spending review period. It will outline more detail on near-term actions and will be finalised in the coming months.

RESPONDING TO STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

14. We are grateful for the feedback we have received from a range of partners, most recently from the Board and from the Scottish Government. In responding to this feedback we have made a number of changes as follows:
 - We have identified opportunities, including on the front cover itself and in the About Us section, to underline the tertiary nature of provision.
 - We have amended the foreword to make clear the intrinsic value of learning.
 - We have set out our direct accountability to Scottish Government Ministers and the Scottish Parliament but also clarified our role in distributing UK funds.
 - We have introduced a section on Underpinning Themes to reflect cross-cutting themes that are central to our work, including tackling the climate emergency; promoting equality, diversity and inclusion; protecting the interests of students; responding to the NSET; promoting fair work; recognising the importance of place; and understanding the international context.

- We have brought partnership working to the fore as one of our driving principles and have provided clear examples of how we are working with our main strategic partners to deliver our Plan.
- We have developed the Context section, emphasising the uncertain environment in which we are operating and the need for flexibility and articulating more clearly the Purpose and Principles work as underpinning future delivery alongside other Scottish Government priorities.

PUBLICATION

15. Following approval from the Board, the Plan will need to be approved by Scottish Government Ministers before publication.
16. In order to show alignment with our key strategic partner, Skills Development Scotland, we have worked together to develop a complementary approach to design while retaining our distinct identity. This includes a similar colour palette, visuals and graphics.
17. We also plan to publish our Plans simultaneously and support our respective communications activity. A full communications plan is currently being drafted and Board members will be updated on publication plans prior to launch.

RECOMMENDATIONS

18. The Board is invited to:
 - Approve the final draft of the Strategic Plan for submission to Scottish Government Ministers for approval and for publication.
 - Delegate to the Chief Executive any final adjustments that do not substantially alter the direction or meaning of the Plan.