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## Regional Tertiary Pathfinders Programme Project Overview: SoS Learning & Innovation in the Land-Based Sector

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The tables below provide insights into projects delivered through the Regional Tertiary Pathfinders Programme, which aimed to strengthen collaboration between colleges, universities, employers, and local authorities.

Each project includes two tables:

1. **Collaboration & Impact** – covering the history of partnerships, project focus, geographic reach, and target beneficiaries.
2. **Delivery & Leadership** – outlining governance structures, project characteristics, stakeholder involvement, and key aims.

These tables highlight the context in which projects tested new ways of working, enhanced learner pathways, and improved regional skills planning. For further details, please refer to the System-Level Report.

### Definitions of Project Characteristics

#### History of Working Together

- **None** – individuals and teams had not worked together previously.
- **Emergent** – individuals and or teams and organisations had previously done some work together. Relationships existed which could be built on and developed.
- **Previous positive experience** – individuals, teams and organisations had a history of successfully working together, in some cases over many years. These existing relationships were an accepted part of ‘how work was done’ and could be built on and further developed and strengthened.

#### Project Focus

- **Tight** – the project was tightly focussed on delivering specific products/pathways/outcomes.
- **Broad** – the project explored a broad range of topics or areas for improvement and developed associated products/pathways/approaches to deliver outcomes.
- **Multi-theme** – the project explores multiple themes which may be distinct or may intersect and overlap with each other, delivering products/pathways/outcomes related to the themes.

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## Target Beneficiaries

- **Providers** – colleges, universities and schools, benefit from the work done through the project e.g. increase student numbers, develop complementary provision which reduces competition etc.
- **Learners** – new products, pathways and provision are developed which improve the opportunities, experience and outcomes of learners.
- **Employers** – employers establish positive working relationships with the colleges and universities and become involved in the design of products/provision to meet their needs. Learners acquire the qualifications and skills needed by employers.

## Geographic Reach

- **Regional** – for the Pathfinder programme this means aligning to the boundaries of the Regional Economic Partnership (REP).
- **Sectoral** – aligned to the needs of a particular sector e.g. Health, Energy.
- **Local Authority/Community Planning Partnership/Local Employability Partnership** – working within a particular LA Boundary rather than across the REP.

## Starting Emphasis

- **Efficiencies** – cost saving as a result producing the desired outcome with little waste of time or resources.
- **Pre-considered improvement** – changes and improvements which had already been identified as needing to be made but which this programme gave the opportunity to catalyse and deliver with renewed focus and pace.
- **Innovation** – the development and delivery of a new method, idea or product to achieve desired outcomes.

## Leadership and Sponsorship

- **Diffused** – responsibilities are spread between organisations and groups.
- **Central individual** – a leader/coordinator acts as the main driver for change and delivery.
- **Small group** – a small number of people champion and lead the work acting as a guiding coalition.

## Who Was Involved at the Outset

- **Project beneficiaries** – learners, employers and organisations which would benefit from the outputs/outcomes from the project were involved from the outset.

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- **Frontline staff** – staff who would be developing/delivering products/courses were involved at the outset.
  - **Senior decision makers** – senior staff able to provide authorisation and create the conditions for project success were involved at the outset.

### Character of Project

- **Pragmatic** – projects were identified and developed based on practical considerations and a realistic view of what could be achieved.
- **Adaptive** – projects evolved to take account of changing contexts or as a result of gaining more understanding/information about what was needed/possible.
- **Radical** – project affecting fundamental/far-reaching change.

Table 1

Project: SoS Developing a Joint Prospectus for Learning & Innovation in the Land-Based Sector			
History of working together	None	Emergent	Previous positive experience
		<p>Prior to the Pathfinders project there had been limited formal working and no structured collaboration between SRUC and Borders College. The institutions had worked together on the SOSEP funded Rural skills and entrepreneurship project previously.</p> <p>Under the guidance and encouragement of the Senior Management Teams at both institutions the staff teams were supported to reach out to their respective counterparts to collaborate alongside facilitated workshops. This resulted in open communication and shared learning and planning becoming a feature of practice between</p>	

**Project: SoS Developing a Joint Prospectus for Learning & Innovation in the Land-Based Sector**

		Borders and SRUC curriculum teams.	
<b>Project focus</b>	<b>Tight</b>	<b>Broad</b>	<b>Multi-theme</b>
	<p>This project’s initial focus was on creating a working group including institutional senior representatives and stakeholders to map and document land-based provision across the region and produce a joint prospectus showcasing available provision and pathways for learners and stakeholders. It aimed to identify the gaps in subject areas, level of provision, articulation and progression. It also sought to appoint an innovation broker.</p>	<p>The project sought to increase provision for skills relevant to the land-based sector in the South of Scotland. This was done by bringing staff together to share their expertise and ideas. Project partners are developing new provision, with the intention for collaborative delivery (e.g., Therapeutic Horticulture, and Agriculture).</p> <p>The innovation broker is developing a place-based innovation scheme to encourage stakeholders in the Agri-tech space to develop locally applicable solutions which drive upskilling and innovation in the region. They are currently</p>	<p>SRUC and Borders College Principals signed a strategic statement of intent between the two institutions. The partnership has signalled an intent to progress beyond the original collaborative scope of the Pathfinders project to include additional curriculum areas and consideration of other areas for joint work including deployment of resources.</p>

<b>Project: SoS Developing a Joint Prospectus for Learning &amp; Innovation in the Land-Based Sector</b>			
		liaising with various partners in both industry and education to initially develop the PDA Therapeutic Horticulture.	
<b>Geographic reach</b>	<b>Regional</b>	<b>Sectoral</b>	<b>Local Authority/CPP</b>
	The project addresses the South of Scotland region, with SRUC's footprint in both Dumfries and Galloway and Borders Council, and the college operating in the east of the region.	The land-based sector, which is the fourth largest employer in the South of Scotland region, was the specific focus of the project.	Both institutions are members of the Education Skills and Strategic Coordination Group (ESSCG) chaired by Russel Griggs, SOSE. ESSCG has recognised the land-based sector as one of the priority areas to focus on developing proposals to ensure land-based sectors are supported in a just transition to net zero, with initial focus on expansion of forestry provision and an interest in peatland restoration.
<b>Target beneficiaries</b>	<b>Employers</b>	<b>Learners</b>	<b>Providers</b>

**Project: SoS Developing a Joint Prospectus for Learning & Innovation in the Land-Based Sector**

	<p>Employers in the nature-based industry benefit from the provision of more training for employees and an increasing talent pool through greater provision for new learners and retention and attraction of talent to South of Scotland.</p>	<p>Greater levels of provision in land-based sector skills and clearer pathways for progression create more opportunities for learners to gain employment in the region and/or upskill. Realignment of both institutions' curriculum offer from SCQF Level 4 – 12, thus offering individuals opportunities in education, research, and innovation.</p>	<p>Both institutions are reporting benefits from this project including signing a strategic statement of intent for collaboration and joint work. The institutions are sharing their expertise in joint provision planning and delivery, which also helps reduce and balance the risks associated in developing provision by an institution on their own without having the expertise i.e.: Therapeutic horticulture award – Borders College with expertise in care and SRUC with expertise in horticulture. Sharing resources such as work based learning assessors.  BC and SRUC plan to continue working together beyond Pathfinders.</p>
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Table 2

<b>Project: SoS Developing a Joint Prospectus for Learning &amp; Innovation in the Land-Based Sector</b>			
<b>Leadership sponsorship</b>	<b>Diffused</b>	<b>Central individual</b>	<b>Small group</b>
		Senior leaders from the two institutions.	A steering group was created who meet monthly and whose main focus is to provide direction, establish opportunities and oversee progress. Membership of the steering group includes Senior Managers from both institutions, sector experts / senior staff from both institutions, SFC and SOSE.
<b>Who was involved at the outset</b>	<b>Senior decision-makers</b>	<b>Frontline staff</b>	<b>Project beneficiaries</b>
	Members of the steering group in addition to senior leaders from the institutions.	The working groups established at sector level and chaired by the innovation broker work towards identifying gaps in provision and the areas for joint provision development, and the delivery of these opportunities,	Learners, both institutions and local employers in the land-based sector.



<b>Project: SoS Developing a Joint Prospectus for Learning &amp; Innovation in the Land-Based Sector</b>			
		with progress being reported back up to the steering group at the monthly meetings	
<b>Character of project</b>	<b>Radical</b>	<b>Adaptive</b>	<b>Pragmatic</b>
	Creating an authorising environment enabling curriculum and teaching staff from both institutions to communicate, share ideas and work together to plan provision.	Identifying gaps in provision in the region and collaborating to address the regional skills demand through joint provision planning and delivery by focussing on each other's expertise in the sector, which would result in learners remaining in the region to progress their education.	Place-based innovation scheme to encourage stakeholders in the Agri-Tech space in the region to develop locally applicable solutions which drive upskilling and innovation in the region.  Creation of a co-located tertiary education, innovation, and world class research centre within a place-based approach to realise the potential for green recovery and sustainable and resilient economic growth.
<b>Starting emphasis</b>	<b>Innovation</b>	<b>Pre-considered improvement</b>	<b>Efficiencies</b>
	Creating a collaborative authorising environment for staff members who are at the		Realignment of both institutions' related curriculum offer from SCQF Level 4 – 12, thus offering

**Project: SoS Developing a Joint Prospectus for Learning & Innovation in the Land-Based Sector**

	<p>frontline of the delivery process by giving them time, trust and achievable targets.</p> <p>Initiating the project with simple tangible goals/ products and gradually progressing into strong partnerships (e.g., bringing staff together to map the current provision to create the joint prospectus – leading to identifying gaps and opportunities in provision and joint provision planning and delivery).</p> <p>Creating new pathways that allow learners to remain in the region, leveraging SRUC’s future degree-awarding powers, the project aims to enhance provision, skills, and employability for the land-based sector.</p>		<p>individuals opportunities in education, research, and innovation, e.g., animal care (BC) with vet nursing (SRUC), preventing skills-drain by bridging gaps in regional provision.</p> <p>Project leads have noted that the SFC engagement signalled the significance of the work, enabling the team to convey the importance of effective collaboration to delivery staff promoting joint working between the colleges.</p>
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