

Colleges' Partnership West

Context Statement

We share more than a common geography. We can evidence a deep-rooted regional connection that is borne from a shared socioeconomic, demographic and cultural heritage. These important features provide powerful links that motivate us to work together for the common good of our area now and in the future.

Beyond these inherited links, there are region-specific policy drivers that both encourage and expect us to work together to secure robust regional benefits. These form distinct, place-responsive policy framework for the West, which in itself offers an opportunity for the Colleges' Partnership West (CPW) to be an important agent for regional advancement. Collectively, this challenge provides opportunities for us to advocate, empower and facilitate change and improvement to improve the lives of the people in the west of Scotland.

Pre-eminent in the region's policy landscape in the Glasgow City Region (GCR), City Deal. Arguably, the [GCR – Regional Skills Investment Plan \(2019-2024\)](#) (GCR-RSIP) is the particular “dimension” of the City Deal strategy that speaks directly to the work of the CPW. With a decision to treat skills as one of the key support columns for the [Regional Economic Strategy](#) (GCR-RES), the background priorities of the skills plan are to address high levels of inequality, the insufficient investment in upskilling and reskilling existing employees, poor responsiveness to business needs, the paucity of good intelligence on the region's skills capability and the lack of skills system alignment and coordination at City region level. Of this latter point, the Skills Investment Plan states that “active collaboration must replace competition and reluctance to engage if the City Region is to develop a skills system that will work effectively for it in a competitive national and global environment for the next few decades”. In response, the Skills Investment plan sets seven priority areas, of which two clearly align to the work of the CPW.

Priority 6 is to “build an evidence base and analytical capacity to underpin City Region level skills planning and investment to exploit fully skills interventions that will address City Region needs and opportunities – including building intelligence and evidence based interventions on critical emerging needs around digital and meta skills.” Priority 7 is “to conduct a full review of funding and other mechanisms prior to bringing forward an action plan to promote greater education and skills alignment and collaboration at City Region level, but also increase the agility and adaptive resilience of the City region skills system.

The planned activity for 2020-2024 in support of priorities 6 and 7 makes explicit reference to the City Region's colleges on a number of occasions including:

- Sharing lessons from the Glasgow City Alignment Pilot and roll-out to remaining College Regions.
- Work towards integration and alignment of College Regional Outcome Agreements and programmes.
- Further integrate education and training services to help meet the employment plans of the City Region.
- Work with our GCR Colleges and Universities, funding and qualification agencies to introduce meta-skills to all vocational programmes and qualifications and to develop an accreditation system for meta-skills.

Notwithstanding an assessment of the credibility of the factors identified above, it is clear that there is inadequate interaction between Colleges and the Team supporting the City Plan delivery.

It is unclear as to whether any or all of the elements contained within the original plan remain active. Assuming that it is active, CPW has an opportunity to secure a better influence over the Regional Skills Investment Plan, principally in relation to skills intelligence, planning and investment, as articulated in Priority 6. Similarly, active engagement with Priority 7 activity, concerned with greater education and skills alignment and collaboration at City region level necessitates the full and active involvement of the CPW.