



# REPORT

Joint Committee 31 October 2024

Agenda Item: 6.3

## City Region Deal Flexible Skills Project

### Executive Summary

This report provides the Stirling Clackmannanshire City Region Deal (CRD) Joint Committee with an update on the work of the Flexible Skills Project (FSP) as a component of the overall CRD programme. This includes the development of CRD Project Skills Pathway Plans to assist projects in the planning and delivery of skills and employment opportunities as a contribution to the CRD Inclusive Growth objectives.

The report also seeks approval from the CRD Joint Committee on the establishment of a Flexible Skills Grant Fund that will be available to CRD projects to support them develop a range of skills and employment opportunities from CRD Project investment (**see Appendix 1**).

The Joint Committee is also asked to note that the FSP will be seeking to realign its timeline and budget to maintain its support across CRD projects over the remaining years of the City Region Deal. This realignment will form a part of proposed adjustments to the overarching CRD Implementation Plan for 2024/2025 and extend the FSP from its original completion date of March 2026 to March 2029.

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## Recommendations

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The Joint Committee is asked to:

1. Note the update on the Flexible Skills Project activities.
2. Note the developing Skills Pathway Plan approach.
3. Note the proposed realignment of the Flexible Skills Project timeline and budget will be a component of the City Region Deal Implementation Plan 24/25.
4. Approve the establishment of a Flexible Skills Grant Fund.

## Implications

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1. Establish a CRD Flexible Skills Grant Fund open to all CRD projects to support their work on skills and employment opportunities for targeted individuals and communities across Stirling and Clackmannanshire.
2. Develop Skills Pathway Plans to assist CRD project leads and managers develop and deliver skills and employment pathway opportunities generated through CRD activities and investment, targeting individuals and communities facing barriers to participation.
3. Realign the Flexible Skills Project with the broader CRD programme to support skills and employment development activities over the CRD programme period.

## Legal & Risk Implications and Mitigation

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The proposals in this report have been developed in accordance with the governance arrangements associated with the CRD.

## Background

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The Flexible skills Project (FSP) is a component of a set of priority projects that make up the Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal, the project commenced in the 2021 financial year for a 5-year period. The CRD investment themes and projects are set out below –

Investment theme	Project/Program
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scotland's National Environment Centre</li> <li>The National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub</li> <li>Intergenerational Living Innovation Hub</li> </ul>
Digital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital District</li> <li>Regional Digital Hubs</li> </ul>
Culture, Heritage & Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing Culture, Heritage &amp; Tourism Assets</li> <li>Japanese Gardens</li> </ul>
Transport, Connectivity & Low Carbon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active Travel Routes</li> <li>Walk Cycle Live Stirling</li> <li>Energy Masterplan</li> </ul>
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Defence Land at Forthside</li> </ul>
Skills & Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Flexible Skills</b></li> <li>Inclusion Investment Fund</li> <li>Clackmannanshire Lone Parent Programme</li> </ul>

### The Flexible Skills Project and the City Regional Deal Portfolio

The FSP has been designed to work alongside the CRD projects and the broader regional employability/skills practitioners to achieve inclusive growth outcomes. It is anticipated that this boost from the CRD infrastructure investment will increase the number of employment and skills opportunities available to individuals and communities facing barriers to participation.

CRD infrastructure projects have been given responsibility to develop Skills Pathway Plans to assist them in identifying the employment and skills opportunities that will be available through project activity now and into the future, as well as identifying the skills local people will require accessing these opportunities.

The FSP currently employs a Skills Lead to work with CRD projects and the various national and regional stakeholders delivering employability and skills support services across Stirling and Clackmannanshire. The FSP has an annual budget to support CRD related project activity that develops new programs or approaches that engage CRD target populations in

pathways to employment or skills outcomes. CRD inclusive growth target populations are set out below -

Low income and workless households particularly where there are children	Caring responsibilities
Women	Refugee and asylum families
Lone parent families and young mothers	Risk of transport poverty or travel limitations
Those suffering poor physical and/or mental health or alcohol and substance misuse	Those in remote rural or very remote rural geographies
Unemployed and inactive young people	Those in low-paid work and/or in-work poverty
Those in and leaving the care system	Those with low levels of literacy and/or digital skills
Criminal Justice service users	Those with low qualification levels.
Residents of Alloa South and East, Raploch & the area around the Mercat Cross	Those people formerly working in sectors particularly impacted by COVID (e.g. hospitality & tourism) who require retraining)
Disabled people	Residents of Plean, Cowie, Fallin and rural west Stirlingshire

The CRD investment in the Stirling and Clackmannanshire region is estimated to be ongoing for a 15-year period from the deal commencing in 2020. CRD projects, although agreed in principle, undertake a rigorous business case process prior to approvals from both the Scottish and UK governments. Final approval is then provided by the CRD Joint Committee.

Projects and programmes belonging to the CRD Portfolio are at varying stages in their business case development. Some started later than anticipated due to factors such as the COVID response and for other projects cost of living challenges have culminated in reconfiguration of initial plans to mitigate increasing delivery costs as well as responding to emerging local priorities.

Acknowledging the challenges of the business case process and infrastructure delivery, CRD projects are at differing stages of development relative to the establishment of employment and education opportunities for local people. It is anticipated that CRD employment and skills opportunities will be generated throughout the life of the overall CRD programme as each project works through their specific development stages.

## Considerations

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### Flexible Skills Project Update

1. The Flexible Skills Project development timeline has included the following activities -
  - Discussions with Scottish Government on the core objectives of the emerging FSP project during the latter half of 2020
  - Approval of the FSP Outline Business Case by Joint Committee at its meeting in February 2021
  - FSP Business Justification Case submitted to the Scottish Government in May 2021
  - CRD Joint Committee approval of the FSP Business Justification Case at its meeting in March 2022
  - Appointment of a CRD Flexible Skills Lead in November 2022
  - Skills Pathway Plans Report first phase development completed October 2023
  - Reassessment of FSP approach and the development of a proposed Flexible Skills Grant Fund for CRD projects with associated guidance and application process during 2023/24
  - Reassessment of the FSP delivery schedule and the development of re profile proposals to better align the FSP with CRD project activity over the remainder of the CRD programme provided to the CRD Chief Officers Group in May 2024
2. Discussions and connections are ongoing with a CRD projects and other stakeholders on potential skills and employment programmes to support individuals and communities facing barriers to participation in the labour market.
3. The establishment of a Flexible Skills Grant Fund will provide CRD Projects the opportunity to continue to formulate their skills and employment programmes and access available FSP funds to support the establishment and implementation of these approaches.
4. It is important that strong engagement between CRD projects and existing employment and skills service providers is established. Local service providers hold a depth of experience on successful skills and employment approaches, and this offers a platform for joint or partnership working to enhance on shared outcomes.
5. Local Employability Partnerships covering both Stirling and Clackmannanshire provide ideal fora to discuss and unpack skills and employment approaches as well as potentially engaging important service providers in the development and delivery of any future programme interventions. Equally, the Employer Engagement Forum covering both Stirling and Clackmannanshire also provides an opportunity to gauge the views of local employers on skills and employment support issues.
6. Work is also currently underway to use existing council employability management systems to register, monitor and follow up participants during and after their participation in any skills and employment programmes funded through the proposed Flexible Skills Grant Fund. The FSP is working in partnership with Clackmannanshire Council's

Economic Development team to finalise this aspect of the grant programme to ensure processes are as streamlined as possible for both participants and CRD projects

7. Across the CRD, skills and employment outcomes are reported to Joint Committee as a component part of the CRD Benefits Realisation monitoring arrangements across CRD project activities

### **Skills Pathway Plans**

8. Skills Pathway Plans (SPP) are a key component of the Flexible Skills Project outputs and have been designed to provide support to CRD projects as they develop skills and employment opportunities as part of their Benefits Realisation from CRD investment. It is anticipated that the Skills Pathway Plans will assist CRD projects to identify the key skills required at their project now and into the future; identify and support targeted individuals and communities to access skills and employment opportunities; and work with regional and local stakeholders to create skills and employment pathways that provide a platform for local individuals and communities to experience the benefits of CRD investment.
9. Work to date on the Skills Pathway Plans (SPP) has focussed on the following areas of CRD investment –
  - Digital hubs and digital districts
  - Culture, Heritage and Tourism projects including the Japanese Gardens
  - Scotland’s International Environment Centre
  - National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub
  - Intergenerational Living and Innovation Hub
10. There are also an additional two SPP themes that consider the construction sector and business/entrepreneurialism as cross cutting CRD themes that potentially impact on all CRD projects through development and ongoing operations.
11. It is anticipated that additional work on the development of the overall Skills Pathway Plan Report will be commissioned later in 2024, and will focus on the proposed adjustments to the overall CRD programme, including further work on the Culture, Heritage and Tourism theme and, subject to further discussions, the film and television opportunities emerging from the Ministry of Defence site at Forthside in Stirling.
12. The SPP approach provides a backdrop on each SPP theme through analysis of the representation of key groups at school, college and university. CRD projects will focus on increasing the number of target groups including, for example, women and girls, people with a disability and those living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) neighbourhoods, that access skills and employment opportunities. It is important then that CRD projects are fully aware of baseline representation levels in their sector/occupation areas to develop skills acquisition approaches that engage with target groups and create pathways to future opportunities as it relates to CRD project activity and the broader labour market.
13. Work on the SPPs to date also lays emphasis on the importance of the broader skills and employment service sector across the Stirling and Clackmannanshire region and the



success or otherwise of the SPP approach. The importance of joined up working and collaboration between CRD projects and the broader sector will be essential to draw on existing expertise and resources and engage local individuals and communities in the opportunities that become available over the period of CRD investment. In the context of the broader skills and employment sector, the SPP report views the CRD projects as key employers who can develop skills and employment opportunities, provide supportive and flexible workplaces, and are strong collaborators across local and regional service providers to achieve inclusive growth outcomes.

14. The SPP report points to a number of CRD project level actions to assist in the development of the overall CRD SPP approach. These are summarised below and include:
- Modelling out occupational profiles in terms of future employment and building this into business cases that demonstrate an understanding of skills supply and demand
  - Reviewing the regional economy summary to understand its composition, noting the challenges and inequalities that are evidenced.
  - Reviewing their specific SPP, as well as the Construction/Business Entrepreneurship SPPs, to gauge under representation across CRD target groups and consider approaches that engage with these individuals and communities on skills and employment opportunities.
  - Engaging with the broader skills and employment sector, including local employability partnerships, education sector, community sector and local and regional service providers to collaborate and collectively deliver on skills and employment outcomes for CRD target groups.
15. It is anticipated that the second phase work on the development of the SPPs will be commissioned later this year with the final SPP report being available to CRD projects on completion of the additional work.

### **Flexible Skills Project – Realignment**

16. The Flexible Skills Project (FSP) is a 5-year programme to support CRD projects maximise the skills and employment opportunities available from CRD investment in Stirling and Clackmannanshire. The FSP was established in 2021 and is scheduled to complete its activities at the end of the 2025/26 financial year.
17. The total FSP CRD budget allocation over the 5-year period is £1,502,590.
18. The FSP has a significant underspend that is associated with a range of delivery challenges including the COVID 19 Response and the ongoing cost of living pressures affecting all CRD partners and projects. These challenges have resulted in, in some cases, delayed business case development and the subsequent changes to CRD implementation timescales.
19. Moreover, ongoing review of CRD project activity has also resulted in proposed adjustments to current project business case development activities and subsequent project delivery timescales.
20. The Stirling and Clackmannanshire CRD was end loaded from inception with increasing levels of investment towards the latter part of the CRD programme. Further adjustments

to CRD projects may result in this end loading increasing to a degree to meet the challenges of refocussing CRD priorities and intended outcomes.

21. The FSP activities and expenditure has been designed to support CRD projects to develop and establish employment and skills opportunities from CRD investment. It is therefore important that the FSP matches the development and implementation timescales of the majority of CRD projects.
22. Taking into account the challenges of the Covid Response; cost of living pressures across CRD project delivery; and the refocussing of CRD projects, it is proposed that the FSP is re profiled to better align with the current CRD programme schedule to maximise the employment and skills outcomes for local individuals and communities.
23. It is proposed that the FSP is realigned to the continuing CRD programme of activities within its current budget limits and draws down on the FSP underspend to extend the work of the project. Moreover, original FSP outputs and outcomes remain unchanged.
24. It is proposed that the Flexible Skills Project is extended from its current end date of March 2026 to a re-profiled date of end of March 2029, extending the FSP by an additional 3-year period.
25. The proposed re profile of the FSP budget increases funding available to CRD projects incrementally from 24/25 through to 27/28 and reduces in the final year of the project. The FSP timeline and budget adjustment will realign with broader CRD project development activities to maximise funds available to support the delivery of skills and employment opportunities over the CRD programme period. A reduced funding amount will be available in the final year of the FSP to continue a level of support to CRD priority projects, it is anticipated that, if required, successful CRD skills and employment programmes will have the potential to attract a level of local funding to sustain successful activities beyond the lifetime of the CRD programme period.
26. The CRD Joint Committee will be in a position to formally approve or otherwise the re profiling of the FSP as component part of the overall CRD Implementation Plan proposals for 2024/2025.

### Flexible Skills Grant Fund

27. The CRD Flexible Skills Project has an amount of discretionary funding available within its budget to support CRD Projects develop skills and employment opportunities from the implementation and future operations of their CRD investment activities.
28. The CRD Flexible Skills Project is a 5-year CRD support programme that is currently in year 4 of operation.
29. The funding profile of the Flexible Skills as agreed in March 2021 is as follows:

	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	Total
Budget	£388,500	£343,825	£337,483	£274,975	£157,807	<b>£1,502,590</b>



30. An amount of approximately £60,000 per year is allocated to the costs of the CRD Skills Lead position associated with the Flexible Skills Project.
31. Flexible Skills Project funding support for CRD project skills and employment activities for the financial year 2024/25 is at approximately £200k, taking into account the ongoing costs of the CRD Skills Lead position. The £200k will form the basis of the Flexible Skills Grant Fund and be available to CRD Projects via grant application. FSP funding support is allocated on an annual basis with each year's allocation confirmed through a Grant Offer Letter provided by the Scottish Government.
32. If approved by Joint Committee, the proposed re alignment of the FSP timeline and budget will reduce the funding support amount available for 24/25 Financial Year to £100k and then extend the FSP budget to March 2029, providing a Flexible Skills Grant Fund allocation for each of those out years. The proposed FSP realignment of timeline and budget is a component part of the CRD Implementation Plan 24/25 proposals to be formally approved by the CRD Joint Committee.
33. A CRD Flexible Skills Grant Fund will be established and made available to CRD Projects, with the attached guidance information provided to all CRD Project Senior Responsible Officers and Project Managers. Guidance information is provided in **Appendix 1**.
34. The grant programme will be available to CRD projects for the remainder of the 24/25 financial year until it is expended for that particular period. A further grant programme will then be made available for the 2025/26 financial year, the final year of the FSP. Subject to Joint Committee approval, a realignment of the FSP timeline and budget will result in the Flexible Skills Grant Fund being available through to March 2029
35. As set out in the grant programme information, it is anticipated that CRD projects will access grant funds to assist them develop a number of skills and employment supports including:

Training or skills development activities and accredited courses
Community based activities focussed on preparing people for employment or education
Job placement/work experience programs
Business start-up programs
Workshops or information sessions focussed on employment and education pathways linked to CRD themes
Development of volunteering programs
Recruitment Incentives
Apprenticeships or internships
Costs associated with barriers to participation

36. It is proposed that the decision-making process on all grant awards will be provided by a 3-member panel representing CRD partners at a Head of Service level or equivalent. Final decisions on grant awards will be provided by the CRD Chief Officers Group with delegated authority to award grants of up to £300k to any individual CRD project and £300k in total on an annual basis.
37. It is proposed that the Skills Development Scotland Regional Skills Planning Lead covering the Forth Valley is also invited to join the 3-member assessment panel.
38. The Flexible Skills Grant Fund Information encourages CRD projects to engage broadly with existing skills and employment stakeholders to draw on their knowledge and expertise as they develop their project ideas through to delivery. This engagement may also have the potential to identify other funding sources to work alongside Flexible Skills investment and support CRD project activities.
39. CRD Joint Committee is asked to approve the establishment of the CRD Flexible Skills Grant Fund

## Resource Implications

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### Financial Details

The full financial implications of the recommendations are set out in the report. This includes a reference to full life cycle costs where appropriate. **Yes**

Finance Officers have been consulted and have agreed the financial implications as set out in the report. **Yes**

### Staffing

The full implications on staffing are set out in the report. **Yes**

### Exempt Reports

Is this report exempt? Yes  (please detail the reasons for exemption below) **No**

### Equalities Impact

Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations? **N/A**

## Legality

It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Joint Committee is acting within its legal powers. **Yes**

## Sustainability and Environmental

It has been confirmed that sustainability and environmental issues have been considered within the report. **N/A**

## Policy Implications

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The report is fully consistent with the policy intentions of the City Region Deal.

## Consultations

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The RPMO has been consulted on the intent of the report.

Skills Development Scotland have been consulted on the development of the Skills Pathway Plans.

CRD Projects have been consulted in the development of the Skills Pathway Plan approach.

Clackmannanshire Council as lead authority for the Flexible Skills Project has been fully consulted on the proposals contained in the report.

Discussions have taken place with the CRD Chief Officers Group on the contents of the report.

## Background Papers

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Have you used other documents to compile your report? **Yes**

The contents of the report fully aligns with the intent of the Flexible Skills Project business case.

## Appendices

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Please list any appendices attached to this report. If there are no appendices, please state "none".

### 1. **Appendix 1: Additional Background Information and Application Example**

Approved by:

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**Kevin Wells**, Strategic Director: Place, Clackmannanshire Council.  
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Stirling &  
Clackmannanshire  
City Region Deal

## City Region Deal - Flexible Skills Background and Funding Information

### Background

The Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Region Deal is an exciting package of significant investment in innovation and infrastructure that will drive inclusive economic growth throughout the city region. The UK Government and Scottish Government are investing up to £90.2 million into the city region over a 10 year period. Alongside this joint Government investment, regional partners, including Stirling Council, Clackmannanshire Council and The University of Stirling will invest up to £123.8million, resulting in a Deal worth in excess of £214 million. City region partners have an ambition that the interventions created by the City Region Deal will unlock private investment in excess of £640 million, and deliver over 5,000 new jobs across a wide range of sectors.

The City Region Deal is focussed on delivering outcomes across four strategic themes –



- **Inclusive Economic Growth** – Creating conditions for businesses to thrive both locally and globally, increase job density and access to opportunity, maximising our regional assets
- **Creating higher value jobs** - Investing in the creation of clean, green innovations, digital entrepreneurship and cultural opportunities to deliver a more diverse regional economy
- **Shared prosperity** - Removing barriers to participation and supporting inclusion to share prosperity and wellbeing across the region
- **Inclusive skills ecosystem** -Broadening access to opportunity through inclusive skills pathways that target those who face exclusion across our region

The City Region Deal will boost infrastructure investment and make a significant contribution to transforming the region. Subject to ongoing business case development and approvals, the following priority projects will provide the platform to achieve the City Region Deal strategic outcomes in the context of the ongoing commitments of the public, private and community sectors across the Stirling and Clackmannanshire area -

Investment theme	Project/Program
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scotland's National Environment Centre</li> <li>The National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub</li> </ul>
Digital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital District</li> <li>Regional Digital Hubs</li> </ul>
Culture, Heritage & Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing Culture, Heritage &amp; Tourism Assets</li> <li>National Tartan Centre</li> </ul>
Health and Social Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intergenerational Hub</li> </ul>
Transport, Connectivity & Low Carbon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active Travel Routes</li> <li>Walk Cycle Live Stirling</li> <li>Energy Masterplan</li> </ul>
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Defence Land at Forthside</li> </ul>
Skills & Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexible Skills</li> <li>Inclusion Investment Fund</li> <li>Clackmannanshire Lone Parent Programme</li> </ul>

### The Flexible Skills Project

The Flexible Skills Project has been established as a component of the overarching City Region Deal in Stirling and Clackmannanshire. The project is focussed on maximising the inclusive growth outcomes that can be achieved from the significant City Region Deal investment in infrastructure projects across the region. These inclusive growth outcomes are firmly focussed on individuals and communities that currently face a range of barriers to education, training and employment opportunities. The Flexible Skills Project will support City Region Deal projects to develop new employment and skills approaches that capitalise on City Region Deal investment and provide opportunities for inclusive growth across Stirling and Clackmannanshire.

The City Region Deal projects will provide a boost to the existing employability and skills investment provided by partners and other national and local organisations operating across the region. The City Region Deal projects have an opportunity to work in collaboration with key agencies and organisations to draw on their skills and expertise and unlock the benefits coming from City Region Deal investment. It is anticipated that this approach will provide a platform for a broad range of stakeholders to support the work of the City Region Deal projects to maximise education, training and employment outcomes for local individuals and communities.



## City Region Deal Projects

City Region Deal projects will create education, training and employment opportunities associated with the establishment and operation of their individual projects. Projects are in varying degrees of development and it is anticipated that opportunities will be created over the lifetime of the City Region Deal, generated from a variety of activities underway at project level.

In the context of the Flexible Skills, infrastructure projects will be encouraged to focus on the City Region Deal's inclusive growth objectives and develop opportunities for individuals and communities facing barriers to education and employment. To achieve this, City Region Deal projects will develop Skills Pathway Plans that will provide insight into the occupational areas that can offer opportunities for local people. These plans will also establish an improved understanding of the individuals and groups facing barriers to attaining skills, as well as an understanding of the skills provision available across the region.

City Region Deal projects will focus in on their operations to pinpoint immediate or future opportunities for local people. Supply side support will then be required to address engagement, skills acquisition and employment support to ensure that individuals and communities can take advantage of CRD project opportunities. This is where City Region Deal projects intersect with local employability and skills activities to meet supply side demand for project opportunities. Crossover areas include –

- **Engaging and identifying local people who may wish to take up a project opportunity**
- **Support to overcome any immediate barriers to participating in opportunities**
- **The provision or development of any skills training or similar that may be a prerequisite to advance on a pathway to any opportunity**
- **Ongoing individual support to ensure that participation is maintained and that any education or employment outcome can be sustained in the medium to longer term**
- **Available funding support for the development and delivery of City Region Deal project opportunities**

The employability and skills landscape can be complicated with a range of organisations and agencies operating strategically across the region, alongside a number of direct service providers. National and regional frameworks provide direction and guidance to achieve effective service delivery and outcomes. Funding and resources specific to targeted activities are provided by different levels of government, local authorities and national agencies. Direct service provision can be delivered through the community and private sectors, as well as directly by the public sector.

The intersection of the region's employability/skills landscape and the City Region Deal priority projects will require communication, collaboration and co design to develop a range of opportunities for local people. This joint working approach, alongside the effective deployment of limited resources, establishes an alignment of activities and has the potential to maximise the employment, education and training outcomes available to individuals and communities facing barrier to participation.

## City Region Deal Projects – Themes

City Region Deal projects are at varying stages in the development process. Projects can be at Outline Business Case; drawing up plans for construction activity; nearing works completion; or delivering programs on the ground, each have their own specific timeline and challenges. However, a number of employability and skills themes emerge from each of the City Region Deal projects that represent industry sectors where education and employment opportunities will become available now and into the future. The table below covers off on those themes and provides commentary on each -

Theme	Commentary
Net Zero/Climate and Green Skills	It is anticipated, alongside Scotland’s national priority on climate change, that Scotland’s International Environment Centre will provide opportunities in this skills area
Digital Inclusion	The vast bulk of jobs will require a level of digital skills and the City Region Deal investment will focus on those experiencing digital exclusion
Construction	With significant City Region Deal investment in infrastructure across the region, a variety of opportunities will become available over the lifetime of the deal
Health and Social Care	City Region Deal investment in intergenerational support services and the increasing demand for health and social care services will provide future employment opportunities in this sector
Hospitality and Tourism	Investment push across culture, heritage and tourism projects aims to boost this sector across the region
Business/Entrepreneurialism	There is a limited number of people from CRD target populations considering this as a pathway to employment and improved income
Individual and Community Engagement	Local people experiencing barriers to making a start on an education, training and employment pathway may require early engagement in the process

## City Region Deal Flexible Skills Project – CRD Project Proposals 2024/25

The Flexible Skills Project will provide funds for proposals from City Region Deal projects that are focussed on the themes as set out in the previous table. CRD projects are asked to consider employment and skills opportunities coming from their projects that add value at the local level and support those facing barriers to participation. Project applications will be required to link activities to one or more of these themes and provide opportunities for individuals or communities across City Region Deal target populations. Flexible Skills funding is a limited amount of revenue support for CRD projects, successful projects will be expected to complete their activities by 31 March 2025, it is anticipated that another Flexible Skills funding amount will be available at 1 April 2025 for a further 12 month period.

Flexible Skills Funding will be open to applications throughout the 24/25 period until funds are expended for that year. Early discussion with the CRD Skills Lead will provide an opportunity to consider project proposals in the context of available funds at any given time and whether, if the project is awarded funds, the available funding can meet specific project costs in the timescale being proposed. Where funds may not be available in any given period, CRD project applicants may consider submitting their proposal in the context of the following year’s funding.

Projects will focus on individuals and communities facing barriers to education, training and employment, and provide either the beginnings of a pathway or a direct line of sight to employment and/or education outcomes. Projects should be focussed on a City Region Deal theme(s) as set out previously and to develop projects that draw on their CRD activities, building on the employment and skills sector experiences across the region. The table below outlines some key questions to consider in the development of projects -

Some key questions for developing your project
Is your project focussed on a City Region Deal project skills theme(s)?
Can you demonstrate that the project you are proposing is not duplicating delivery by any other stakeholder/service provider across the local authority area or region?
Why is your project needed? What evidence do you have to demonstrate why your project is needed. Can you demonstrate the consultation you have undertaken to develop your project?
Can you demonstrate how you will ensure that individuals and communities facing challenges to accessing education and employment opportunities take up your project offer?
Can you demonstrate the potential outputs and outcomes for local people or the broader community?
Can you demonstrate the measures you will have in place to support project participants through the duration of your project?
Can you advise of support arrangements for project participants during their time on your project?
Does your project attract any in kind or actual funding to deliver your project outcomes?
Can you demonstrate the pathway to employment, training or education participants will be on if they participate in your project?
Can you demonstrate your track record in delivering projects like this? Can you demonstrate the management and supervisory arrangements that will be established to deliver your project?
What risks are there in the successful delivery of your project? And how do you propose to mitigate these?

## Types of Project Investment

Flexible skills investment will be targeted at local people facing barriers to participation. Projects should be focussed on activities that move participants towards an employment or education outcome. It is understood that an individual pathway may not lead immediately to a job or entry to an accredited course. It may be the case that engagement activities are required early in a person's pathway and these types of activities may be the starting point for some individuals and groups. Focussing on the City Region Deal project themes, examples of the types of activities that Flexible Skills funding can support include -

Training or skills development activities and accredited courses

Community based activities focussed on preparing people for employment or education

Job placement/work experience programs

Business start up programs

Workshops or information sessions focussed on employment and education pathways linked to CRD themes

Development of volunteering programs

Apprenticeships or internships

Costs associated with barriers to participation

Projects are encouraged to consider whether there are existing funding sources for their project activity. It may be the case that funding is partially available for project activity and the Flexible Skills support can cover the gap in any overall package. Again, there may also be opportunities to combine funding sources to resource specific components of project activity. An example could be combining Flexible Skills funding with existing Employer Recruitment Incentives to create a skills development/work experience program where Flexible Skills supports skills and training costs, alongside the Employer Recruitment Incentive underpinning the work placement.

Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs) are the focal point for employability/skills development for people facing barriers to participation in employment, education and training. LEP partner expertise straddles both strategic and operational responsibilities for the delivery of employment and skills outputs/outcomes in the context of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire local authorities. LEPs have a deep understanding of their employability and skills landscape and have knowledge and expertise on the types of activities that will make an impact at the local level. Projects should consider engagement with local LEPs to discuss project ideas early in the development phase. LEP stakeholders will be in a position to provide valuable insights to assist in the development of potential projects. LEP stakeholders may also be in a position to partner or work jointly with projects at both the project development and delivery phases of any new intervention

Applicants are also encouraged to provide information on the value of any "actual" or "in kind" contributions that are part of their project.

**Please note that Flexible Skills funding is available for revenue costs and any purchasing of equipment or similar should be specified in project budgets to determine whether they meet funding guidance.**

### Assessment of Project Proposals

Flexible Skills funding will be available to CRD partners through their specific CRD projects. CRD projects may partner with other organisations and agencies to deliver programme outcomes but the project will be the sole applicant for Flexible Skills funding. CRD projects will then be expected manage any partner input to their projects and to disburse any costs associated with this work to relevant partner contributors.

It is anticipated that a Flexible Skills application assessment process will be established to ensure consistency in any funding decisions on CRD project proposals. It is likely that this process will be the delegated responsibility of nominated officers across the three City Region Deal partner organisations, supported by the CRD Skills Lead.

### Participant Registration

Although requiring further discussion and agreement, it would be preferable that all City Region Deal project participants are incorporated into the local authority employability registration arrangements in each location. This means that any project participant follows the existing registration arrangements operating in the local authority with an adjustment to the registration form incorporating their involvement with a City Region Deal Flexible Skills funded activity. It is anticipated that arrangements will be established to provide a level of access to the registration process for CRD projects to provide the necessary information

### Participant Output/Outcome Monitoring

CRD projects will be required to provide output and outcome data from their project for up to 12 months after the completion of their project subject to participant outcomes. Output/outcome data requirements include –

Number participating in Flexible Skills Delivery
Number entering employment including self employment
Number improving employment
Number sustaining employment gain at 13 weeks
Number sustaining employment gain at 26 weeks
Number sustaining employment gain at 52 weeks
Number participating in work-related activity
Number gaining qualification
Number entering FE/HE

### Real Living Wage Requirements

Payment of at least the real Living Wage -

In general, a grant recipient must demonstrate they are paying at least the real Living Wage before it can access a grant.

All staff who are directly employed by the grant recipient and work in Scotland must be paid at least the real Living Wage. This applies to all directly employed staff aged 16 and over, including apprentices. In addition, all workers who are directly engaged in delivering the grant funded activity, even those not directly employed by the grant recipient such as sub-contractors and agency staff, must also be paid at least the real Living Wage. This applies to workers aged 16 and over, including apprentices, who are based anywhere in the UK, not just those who work in Scotland.

## Target Population Groups

The following groups represent the target populations for City Region Deal Flexible

Skills investment —

Low income and workless households particularly where there are children	Caring responsibilities
Women	Refugee and asylum families
Lone parent families and young mothers	Risk of transport poverty or travel limitations
Those suffering poor physical and/or mental health or alcohol and substance misuse	Those in remote rural or very remote rural geographies
Unemployed and inactive young people	Those in low-paid work and/or in-work poverty
Those in and leaving the care system	Those with low levels of literacy and/or digital skills
Criminal Justice service users	Those with low qualification levels.
Residents of Alloa South and East, Raploch & the area around the Mercat Cross	Those people formerly working in sectors particularly impacted by COVID (e.g. hospitality & tourism) who require retraining)
Disabled people	Residents of Plean, Cowie, Fallin and rural west Stirlingshire



## **The Application Form**

A Flexible Skills funding application form will be provided to City Region Deal projects and will cover off on the following requirements

### **Applicant Information**

This section asks for details on your organisation and for you to nominate your lead officer as the main contact for correspondence or general follow up on your project. This section will also ask if there are any other organisations contributing to the delivery of your project.

### **Project Summary**

This section will provide your project name and the intended start and end date of your activities, cover the geographical area of your project and also the City Region Deal target group(s) that will participate in your project. This section will also ask which City Region Deal project theme(s) your project is addressing. A short summary of your project will also be required in this section

### **Project Information**

Key project information, including the following questions –

- ***Please describe what your project will provide for participants and the main activities that require funding***

This section should describe the scope of your project; who will participate in the project; what your project will deliver in terms of outputs and outcomes; and how you will expend the funds over the project period

- ***Please provide evidence of why your project is needed and who has been consulted in the development of your project***

This section should demonstrate why your project is needed in terms of any qualitative or quantitative information you may have that provides a better understanding of the need. It is also an opportunity to provide any information on engagement or consultation activities that have been undertaken as part of your project development work. This is also an opportunity to provide information on how your project adds value and meets any gaps in current provision

- ***Please provide us with information on your project approach that will ensure that the target participants will be engaged and take up the opportunities your project is providing***

This section is asking you to demonstrate how you will engage with the target group to ensure your project is successful on the ground. For example, this might be your marketing approach to attract participants or any joint working that establishes a referral network for potential participants. How will your target participants know about your project and then be motivated to sign up for the opportunities on offer

***Can you tell us about the anticipated outputs or outcomes that will be delivered by your project***

This section is asking about the specific outputs/outcomes that will be delivered by your project and is also an opportunity to explain how your project may be a component of a longer pathway for participants. Outcomes can be participants moving to jobs, participants gaining qualifications, participants becoming job ready, participants moving on to further study or participants moving to another stage in a pathway to an employment, training or education outcome. Outputs can cover the number of people participating, number of activities undertaken or similar.

A table or similar will be incorporated in this section and should be completed in terms of numerical outputs or outcomes, for example -

Number of participants into employment  
Number of participants attending further training  
Number of participants entering local employability services

- ***Can you tell us how your project relates to the City Region Deal project theme(s) and how the project fits with any other national, regional or local strategies***

Applicants can refer to any strategies or policies that may be relevant and demonstrate how their project contributes to their aims and objectives. This can include references to for example-

Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Deal  
Local authority Local Outcome Improvement Plans  
Employability strategies and action plans  
National strategies or policies connected with City Region Deal project themes  
Skills Development Scotland strategies and programs  
UK Shared Prosperity Fund  
No One Left Behind

- ***Can you tell us how your project participants will be supported at the completion of your project if they wish to continue on a pathway to other employment or education opportunities***

It is important that project participants have the opportunity to build on any experiences or skills they have gained during their time on your project. Participants may be on a pathway to a longer term outcome so it is important to explain how you see them staying on track beyond your project period

- ***Can you tell us about your organisation's experience and capability in delivering projects like the one proposed. Can you explain how your project will be managed overall including oversight, day to day operation and financial management?***

This section covers off on your organisation's capacity and capability to deliver the proposed project. You should demonstrate that you have delivered projects like this one and how effective your organisation was in achieving the desired outcomes. You should also explain how the project will be managed across your organisation and the functions that support the delivery of the project

- *Can you provide details on any risks to the project's successful delivery that you have identified and how your organisation has worked to mitigate these risks*

The successful delivery of projects can be hampered when unforeseen circumstances impact the progress of the project. This section is asking you to tell us the risks you have identified as you have developed your project and what interventions or actions you have taken to minimise any impacts on the project's successful delivery

### **Fair Work and Real Living Wage**

This section asks you to explain how your organisation approaches implementing Scotland's Fair Work Convention. This may cover your organisation's response to the convention components of Effective Voice, Opportunity, Security, Fulfilment and Respect as well as demonstrating your organisation is paying the real Living Wage

### **Budget and Expenditure**

A project budget is required in this section with a breakdown on categories of expenditure against the funding requested. Any other funding contributions to the project costs should also be stated, providing the amount going into the budget and the source of that funding amount.

Any in kind costs should not be included in the overall budget figures but organisations should specify the detail and monetary value of any in kind contribution in a statement in this section of the application form

### **Monthly Activity Milestones**

This section asks the applicant to set out the key activities that the project will undertake for each month as well as providing key outcomes for this period. Project applicants should set out what they will achieve in each month of the project and also provide participant outcomes throughout the period of the project. This section will be central to project reporting and to monitor progress against stated activities and progression for participants

### **Grant Agreement**

Successful project applicants will be provided with a grant agreement through Clackmannanshire Council as the lead CRD partner for Flexible Skills investment.

### **Submitting Your Application**

- Completed application should be sent to [flexibleskills@clacks.co.uk](mailto:flexibleskills@clacks.co.uk)
- Any queries or clarifications on the Flexible Skills Fund should be sent to [flexibleskills@clacks.co.uk](mailto:flexibleskills@clacks.co.uk)

