



Economic
Recovery
Group

➤ CASE STUDY: AYRSHIRE

ERG PROGRAMME – PHASE 1

Strengthening the alignment of Ayrshire College with the strategic priorities for regional economic development in Ayrshire.

Partners

Ayrshire College, North Ayrshire Council, East Ayrshire Council, South Ayrshire Council, Key Business Leaders

Focus

The principal focus of the ERG Programme's engagement with the College has been to support it as it strengthens the alignment of its work with Ayrshire's strategic priorities for regional economic development. In particular, the programme worked with College leaders to address the challenge of how it should best position itself to optimise its influence over the development of the region's economic strategy (RES) and skills investment plan (RSIP).

Success Factors

1. Heighten awareness amongst the College's leadership of its role as a key player in Ayrshire's economic renewal and transformation.
2. Consolidate and enhance the College's profile amongst key partners as an anchor institution enabling regional inclusive economic growth.
3. Strengthen the College's participation in multi-agency, action-focused collaboration for developing and delivering a RES for Ayrshire.

Brief Description

- Introductory discussion with the College Chair and Principal to identify challenges for the College as a key player in regional economic recovery and inclusive growth.
- Facilitated session with College's senior leadership team (SLT) to generate self-reflective discussion on the College's role as a driver of economic development; how aligned it is with the region's priorities for economic growth; and, how best to position itself to drive.
- Supported the design and delivery of a SLT review of engagement with stakeholders as part of the review of the College's strategy and its alignment with regional economic development.
- Co-facilitated a session along with the College's SLT for the Board away day with a focus on strengthening its role as a driver of inclusive economic growth in Ayrshire

Challenges and Solutions

The One Ayrshire Regional Growth Deal covers most of the functional economic geography in which the College operates and is largely contained within the boundaries of the three Ayrshire Local Authorities. However, its southern and northern limits overlap with those of the south of Scotland and greater Glasgow respectively.

The College is well-connected with a wide range of partners across sectors and is recognised as a pan-Ayrshire body. As such it is well placed to act as an enabler and facilitator of region-wide collaboration.

The College's engagement with the region's communities is viewed by its leaders as one of its key strengths, particularly with those areas with higher levels of deprivation and where labour market inequalities are more acute and participation rates are lower, especially amongst young people.

Its ambition to be a catalyst and facilitator for driving regional collaborative working and be a key partner is evident, not least from its involvement with the Ayrshire Growth Deal.

There is also an evident willingness by the College to meet the fast-changing demands for skills and a recognition of the need to be agile and adaptable in ensuring that curriculums align closely with the demands of businesses, especially those sectors of regional economy which are growing and where future demand is likely to be greatest. Examples include the collaborative, cross sectoral work on skills and training needs for Health, Social Care and Early Years.

The establishing of the Aerospace and Space Innovation Centre (ASIC) at Prestwick is another good example, notably with the development of the Aircraft Decommissioning Project, where the College is partnered with Strathclyde University, National Manufacturing Institute for Scotland (NMIS) and Chevron.



Going forwards, the College has a clear focus on deepening its collaboration with the three Ayrshire councils, demonstrated by its commitment of senior staff to the task of developing a shared, more coherent view of learner pathways through school and on to training, further and higher education.

Participants in the sessions did note the uncertainty around being at the right tables across the three councils to ensure there is no duplication of effort and allow for a genuine region-wide prioritisation of programme delivery.

The production of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) expected in Autumn 2022, alongside the Ayrshire Growth Deal and the region's Regional Skills Investment Plan provides an opportunity for a more collaborative, action-focused direction of travel

➤ **“Working with the ERG Team enabled us to have an honest appraisal of how the College can enhance its active involvement in developing and delivering the agenda for Ayrshire’s economic renewal and transformation.”**

Carol Turnbull, outgoing Principal, Ayrshire College

to deliver regional economic transformation with the College at its heart.

Despite the absence of a RES, it is clear from the sessions with the College that the development of the RSIP along with delivery of the Growth Deal have been a catalyst for multi-agency conversation, identifying shared priorities and outcomes, and the respective roles of the College and other partners. Intelligence from the RSIP is also helping with curriculum planning and review to ensure close alignment with skills and training needs of partners.

Impact

The ERG Team’s engagement with the College has assisted its leadership, both SLT and Board, with undertaking a more systematic and strategic assessment of how it can best position itself within its operating environment at a time of significant change and challenge. In doing so the ERG Team has created a ‘safe space’ for its leaders for honest self-reflection on the opportunities and challenges for the College as an anchor institution in the regional economy. The Team has contributed to the process of building organisational capability and supported the reassessment of how to optimise the College’s time and effort in support of regional economic development.



Moving Forward/Next Steps

On the back of its key role in developing the emerging Ayrshire RSIP and as a prominent partner initiating the development of the RES, the College is very well placed to convene a multi sector workshop with the specific remit of highlighting the critical role of tertiary learning in the successful delivery of whatever become the priorities of the RES. This will be given added impetus by the National Strategy for Economic Transformation, with its recognition of the importance of regional diversity to the successful planning and delivery of economic renewal, together with the ongoing Scottish Government review of regional economic policy and the completion of the Ayrshire RSIP.

In line with key themes of the SFC's review the tertiary sector and the priorities of the forthcoming RES, there will be clear benefits in exploring opportunities for deepening and broadening collaboration with existing and potential university partners on more integrated learner pathways, curriculum design and more comprehensive articulation agreements tailored to the needs of the regional economy. This could be aided by joint engagement with business leaders to identify with them how a more integrated tertiary offer could better deliver their present and future skills needs.

In addition, it will be advantageous for the College to consider how best it might take forward closer inter-college region collaboration, especially with those regions that operate within adjoining function economic geographies.

Contacts and links

For further information on the ERG Programme please contact Paul Smart at:
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The ERG website can be viewed at:
www.cdn.ac.uk/economic-recovery-group