



Economic
Recovery
Group

» CASE STUDY: DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY /SOUTH OF SCOTLAND

ERG PROGRAMME – PHASE 1

Supporting Dumfries & Galloway College as it leads a collaborative initiative responding to delivering regional skills needs.

Partners

Dumfries and Galloway College, University of West of Scotland (UWS), Dumfries and Galloway Council, Developing the Young Workforce Dumfries and Galloway (DYW), Skills Development Scotland (SDS)

Focus

As part of the ERG Programme, Dumfries and Galloway College, with the support of the programme team, has been leading a collaborative initiative to enable co-ordinated planning for and delivery of learning and training to meet the region's skills needs under the auspices of the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and the associated Borderlands Growth Deal.

Success Factors

1. Heighten awareness amongst the College leadership of its role as a key player in regional economic development and a deliverer of the RES for the south of Scotland.
2. Develop enhanced working relations across Dumfries and Galloway's tertiary sector in support of the region's skills agenda.
3. Establish basis for multi-agency, action-focussed plan for delivering learning and training to meet regional skills needs.

Brief Description

In the autumn of 2021, the ERG programme team co-facilitated a self-reflective, investigative conversation with the College's senior leaders, Chair and several Board members on the challenges and opportunities faced by the College with a focus on its role as an anchor institution in the regional economy. The session centred around the three themes of subsidiarity, outcome and consortia, and their relevance to the College's role in the south of Scotland.

Working closely with the Principal and members of her senior team, the ERG programme team designed and delivered a college-convened multi-agency seminar in the spring of 2022 with senior representatives of key agencies operating in the south of Scotland. These included Dumfries and Galloway Council, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) and Developing the Young Workforce Dumfries and Galloway (DYW).

This event was set against the parallel initiative between the College and UWS which focussed on more comprehensive collaboration on learner pathways, particularly in areas of evident regional skills needs and shortages, and exploring how they might join up operational functions

In preparing for this event, the ERG Programme Team collaborated with the College by drawing on the findings on the previous session with the College's leadership team. The Team also linked up with SDS who contributed to the session with detailed analysis of the skills needs of the south of Scotland.

The outcome of this session has been the development of a systematic approach to collaborative delivery between the College and UWS with the physical focal point being the College's Crichton Campus.

It should also be highlighted that the south of Scotland is one of two geographically focussed, SFC-sponsored, Pathfinders and the work of the ERG team has always been conducted in ways which seek to align with its purpose.

Challenges and Solutions

The College is a key anchor institution in the south west of Scotland and is playing a critical role in the ongoing development, design and delivery of strategies and partnerships aimed at securing inclusive sustainable economic growth for the region, most importantly the development of the RES and its delivery plan.

The three 'Ps' are driving the College's agenda: Performance – Academic and Financial; Profile – increasing reach beyond the region and getting seats at the right tables; Positioning – the need to be seen as a driver of social mobility and economic development.

The south of Scotland is an economically diverse region operating across widely dispersed communities and the bedding-in of South of Scotland Enterprise along with the development and delivery of the RES by a properly constituted Regional Economic Partnership (REP) present opportunities for enhanced coordination and collaboration in support of the skills agenda.

The functioning economic geography does not fit neatly with the area's administrative boundaries but overlaps with at least two regional growth deals (Borderlands, South East Scotland and Edinburgh City Region), 4-5 local authorities north and south of the border and at its margins are affected by two further college regions to the north of the area, with a further cross Border dimension with those English colleges operating south of it.



Several universities also have a presence in the south of Scotland at campuses in Galashiels and Dumfries. Consequently, Dumfries and Galloway College's area of operation takes into account the north-south axis of the functioning sub-regional economy as well as the east-west operating environment of the RES for the south of Scotland. The same can also be said for Borders College.

Consequently, a key challenge for both colleges is working within an RES boundary that essentially covers the administrative areas of the two south of

“There are exciting opportunities for the College to make a major contribution to the renewal and inclusive growth of the south of Scotland’s economy. The ERG team provided valuable support as we went about heightening our profile with our partners as a proactive player in delivering the region’s economic strategy.”

Joanna Campbell, Principal,
Dumfries and Galloway College

Scotland local authorities while at the same time operating to meet the skills and training needs of two overlapping functioning economic areas and associated growth deals.

In playing a more proactive role, the College recognises that for both learners and businesses, administrative boundaries are of secondary importance when making decisions about what and where to study and to invest and trade. In response, the College's spatial focus needs to strike and balance between working with the grain of programmes and funding regimes operating within those boundaries and positioning itself to play a key role in the functioning economic sub region of the Borderlands.

In both the session with College senior leaders and the multi-agency seminar, the ERG programme Team helped facilitate discussions on the advantages of taking a thematic approach as opposed to a geographic one when considering how best to take forward a collaborative approach to meeting skills needs. This is now a central stream of work for the College and aligns with the SFC's promotion of a digital skills Pathfinder and presents opportunities for developing a digital skills hub for the south of Scotland.

In adopting a thematic approach, the ERG Team have worked with the College to emphasise the importance of meeting the learning and skills needs of those looking to re-skill and up-skill, many of whom will already be in work as well as those of new entrants to the workforce.

Impact

The College's senior leaders were supported in developing a more comprehensive appreciation of the role of their college as a key driver of inclusive regional economic renewal and transformation as evidenced in their effective participation in the college-convened multi-agency seminar. This also assisted with the College's deepening collaboration with UWS as they develop their joint partnership to deliver a shared skills agenda.

Moving Forward/Next Steps

The College is already in the advanced stages of formalising collaborative comprehensive working relations with UWS with the College's Crichton Campus being its physical locus. It is intended that this will be a platform for a more systematic approach to developing more seamless learner pathways and articulation.

It is hoped that this will enable the College and the University to present a joint FE/HE proposition



to regional partners for making a significant contribution to meeting the skills needs of the regional economy. As such, it will be important to demonstrate the additionality a college/university collaboration will bring to economic development as well as the opportunity it presents to businesses to help co-design and deliver more integrated curriculums and learner pathways.

Such a collaborative approach should also prompt serious discussion amongst other players operating out of the Crichton Campus on the opportunities for enhanced partnerships along with a comprehensive reappraisal of the opportunities for inter-college regional cooperation in the south of Scotland and across the border.

Contacts and links

For further information on the ERG Programme please contact Paul Smart at: paul.smart@cdn.ac.uk

The ERG website can be viewed at: www.cdn.ac.uk/economic-recovery-group