



Economic
Recovery
Group

» CASE STUDY: DUNDEE AND ANGUS COLLEGE

ERG PROGRAMME – PHASE 1

Working with Dundee and Angus College as it delivers co-ordinated planning and delivery of skills needs in the Tay Cities region.

Partners

Dundee and Angus College, Perth College UHI, Abertay University, University of Dundee, Dundee City Council, Fife Council, Angus Council, Perth and Kinross Council, Skills Development Scotland (SDS)

Focus

As part of the ERG Programme, Dundee and Angus College, with the support of the programme, has led a multi-agency initiative under the umbrella of the Tay Cities Region Growth Deal to build collaborative working to enable co-ordinated planning for and delivery of learning and training to meet the region's skills needs.

Success Factors

- Heighten awareness amongst college leadership of its role as a key player in regional economic development.
- Build shared appreciation amongst partners of crucial role of the college as a driver of inclusive regional growth.
- Develop enhanced working relations across the region's tertiary sector in support of its skills agenda.
- Establish basis for an action focused plan for delivering learning and training to meet regional skills needs.

Brief Description

Over the last 18 months the ERG programme team have worked closely with the College Principal, Chair and senior leaders as they reappraised the College's role as an anchor institution within the Tay Cities region against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and significant national and regional policy developments and their impact on the area's operating environment.

This enabled the programme team to work alongside the College as it planned for and delivered two major multi-agency workshops which highlighted the role of the College as a principal partner in the delivery of the Tay Cities Regional Growth Deal, Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and the Regional Skills Investment Plan (RSIP). The preparation for these sessions, initiated by the College and jointly facilitated with the programme team enabled us to prompt cross-sectoral discussion on the effective design and delivery of an action plan for the Tay Cities Region Skills Advisory Board (SAB).

They also enabled the College to further strengthen its relations with both Dundee and Abertay universities and Perth College UHI to establish the basis for closer cross-tertiary collaboration in pursuit of a more impactful contribution to meeting the region's skills and learning needs and demands.

Challenges and Solutions

The ERG Programme's work with Dundee and Angus College has been undertaken against an established regional operating environment covering a geographic area which includes four local authorities (Dundee City, Angus, Perth and Kinross, and Fife) comprising urban hubs, suburban towns and villages and more dispersed rural communities.

The Tay Cities Regional Growth Deal, launched in late 2020, backed the priorities of the RES and the RSIP by earmarking £20 million of revenue support to a Skills and Employability Programme.

In 2018 the Tay Cities Region SAB was formed to be the forum for collaboration on skills and employability matters across the region and, with the subsequent development of the RES and the RSIP has adopted the remit of driving, monitoring and evaluating their delivery and of the skills elements of the Growth Deal and its Skills and Employability Programme. The College is a member of the SAB alongside the four local authorities, DYW, DWP, Scottish Government, UHI Perth, Dundee and Abertay Universities, NHS, SDS, third sector and the enterprise forum. Together they have overseen the development of the Outline Business Case (OBC) for Skills and Employability Programme which was signed off in April 2022.

The ERG programme team began working closely with the College as it emerged from the 'response phase' of the Covid-19 pandemic and turned its attention to recovery planning, identifying a number of significant opportunities to help rebuild the region's economy in collaboration with key partners. The College was in a pivotal position to support regional inclusive growth and also define, shape and cement its position as an anchor institution in both the regional and national ecosystem.

From the ERG programme team's involvement to date with the College and its partners, it is evident that the SAB has demonstrated a commitment to more effective regional collaboration on the investment in education and skills through



identifying the strategic goals for the region.

The ERG programme team worked alongside the College to provide a 'safe space' for honest conversations amongst partners on the need to recalibrate the purpose of the SAB and enable the embedding of collaborative regional working. In doing so there is ample opportunity to foster the sharing of expertise, knowledge and capacity across organisations operating in the region and fulfil the shared ambition of deeper partnership working leading to more effective delivery of services including:

➤ **“The College has been at the forefront of collaborative working to develop and deliver a shared mission for meeting the skills, training and learning needs of the Tay Cities region. The ERG team’s approach to facilitating honest, self-reflective discussion among partners has been instrumental in securing commitment to this mission.”**

Simon Hewitt, Principal, Dundee and Angus College.

- Shared understanding on why people are opting out of the workforce against the backdrop of the decline in economic activity rates among young people and the 50+ population. To effectively re-engaged these groups, there needs to be a collaborative skills strategy that matches individuals with specific skills needs.
- A shared understanding of the skills needs of employers, in particular SMEs and Micro SMEs. This could be developed through a multi sector forum covering the full spectrum of learning from entry level qualifications to degree and postgraduate.
- Exploring the opportunities for integrated cross-tertiary approaches to modular learning and micro-credentials with clear pathways of progression and accreditation with multiple entry and exit points. This will be particularly relevant for those who want to re-skill and up-skill.
- There is recognition that the funding landscape is complex and often difficult for stakeholders to navigate. Nevertheless, there is opportunity for streamlining and a pooling of resources to create capacity and enable medium term planning and delivery.

Impact

As a result of its reappraisal of its role as a driver of economic transformation, aided by its joint work with the ERG team, the College has developed a Regional Inclusive Growth Action Plan with the stated ambition *'To become an exemplar model of how a regional college can play a leading role in the enhancement of human capital by co-creating, developing and delivering their Regional Economic Strategies and driving inclusive economic and social growth.'*

The College intends to use the plan and associated detailed action plan as a framework for optimising the deployment of its capacity and capability in support of its active participation in regional economic partnership working including its involvement with programmes and projects such as the Tay Cities Regional Growth Deal, the Michelin Scotland Innovation Parc and the new eSports Arena.

Moving Forward/Next Steps

The ERG programme team have found that there is a shared ambition amongst partners to develop an action-focussed strategic approach that provides an overarching prospectus for co-ordinated operational delivery. The SAB could provide the structure for this and it would be useful to understand the purpose of the Regional Skills and Employability Development Programme in this respect and how a more strategic approach can influence the co-

development and co-delivery of an action plan. The recent publication of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation should also act as a trigger for reviewing the RES.

There are opportunities for enhancing the connection between places and communities and the effective targeting of regional and national policy delivery. It is essential for those co-designing and co-delivering FE/HE learning and training to have a more granular understanding of the varied needs of the region's communities.

The College has itself identified the benefits of developing a deeper level of collaboration through the refocussed SAB including:

- Opening-up new and diverse talent pools to business that help minimise skills gaps and promote an inclusive approach to recruitment and workforce development.
- Streamline, and integrate the region's employability and skills system to enhance its capacity to drive inclusive growth and create added value for the partners.
- Driving the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Skill and Employability programme within the Tay Cities Regional Deal.
- Bringing a regional focus to other policy activities e.g. No One Left Behind, FairWork, Levelling Up Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund.

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



College Development Network

www.cdn.ac.uk

