



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
higher value
jobs

Shared
prosperity

Inclusive skills
ecosystem

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

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
- Any queries or clarifications on the Flexible Skills Fund should be sent to flexibleskills@clacks.co.uk