



Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development

Indicators Framework 2024-25
Highlight Report

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Introduction

The Scottish Local Authorities' Economic Development (SLAED) Group is the professional network for economic development officers from across Scotland's 32 local authorities. The work of local authorities in economic development is extensive – they cover a range of core areas including employability support, business support, and the development of place-making and regeneration. This results in a significant contribution to the economy by helping build better places, improving quality of life, and making areas more attractive to investors.

The SLAED Indicators Framework provides a consistent source of data and evidence on what councils across Scotland are delivering as local economic development organisations. The framework collates data based on input and feedback from all 32 Scottish local authorities, as well as from a range of public sector partners. The purpose of the SLAED Indicators Framework is to assist Local Authorities to:

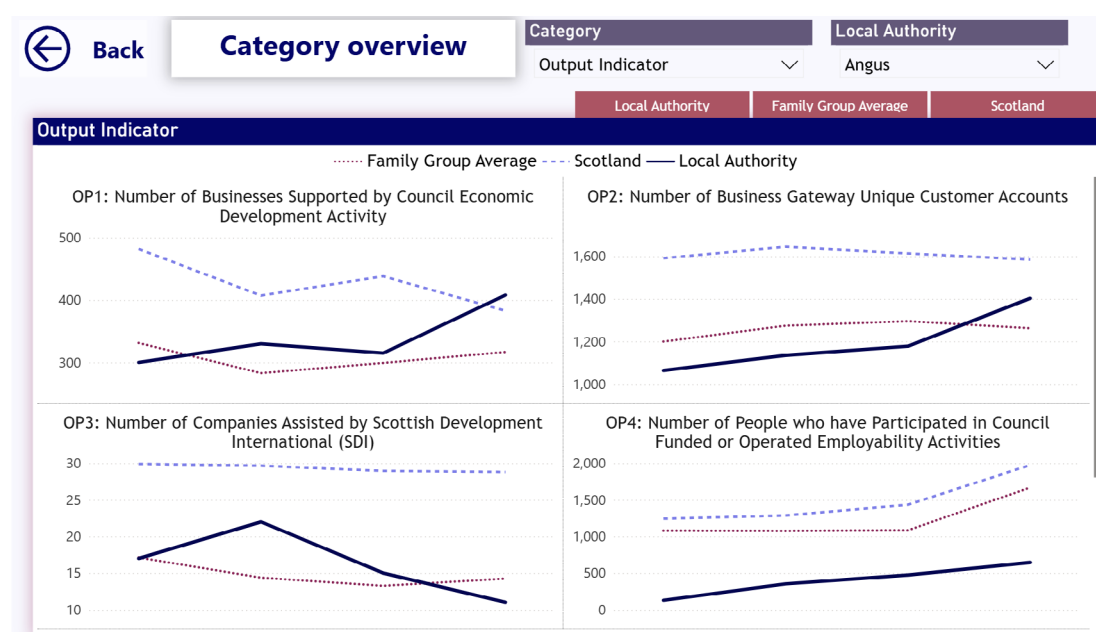
- evidence and publicise the contribution that they make to Scotland's economy through their economic development activities; and
- provide a basis for collating consistent data which can be used to better understand impact and identify potential areas for improvement.

The SLAED Indicators Framework has been in place since 2012 and is embedded within council economic development services. Since the introduction of the framework, it has been kept under continuous review by the SLAED Performance Group, with support from the Improvement Service, to ensure it remains reflective of local authority economic development priorities and delivery and is of practical use to councils and their partners.

Annual reports have been produced since the establishment of the framework in 2012, and these are available on the Publications page of the SLAED websites.

<https://www.slaed.org.uk/documents>

This year, an online, interactive dashboard has been developed to display the SLAED indicators. The aim of the dashboard is to make the data easily accessible to a wide range of members, stakeholders and the wider public. The dashboard will enable users to interrogate and download data relevant to them, supporting evidence-based decision-making and allowing them to identify emerging trends and opportunities.



The dashboard can be accessed from the SLAED Indicators Framework page on the SLAED website <https://www.slaed.org.uk/slaed-indicators-framework>.

This report highlights just some of the key indicators from the framework, considers national trends and local variations. The following thematic reports will be published over the coming months:

- Business
- Employability and Skills
- Economy and Wellbeing.

This report and the dashboard do not include detailed analyses of the comparative performance of councils and are not intended to be used to develop 'league tables'. Different output levels between councils might be reflective of different policy priorities, available funding pots, demographics or other contextual circumstances that are not explained in the report. The indicator framework is therefore intended to provide a basis for further discussion and analysis.

Whilst the Improvement Service has liaised with SLAED and individual councils in seeking to ensure consistency of data returns, it has not undertaken an audit of the data, systems and processes used to capture the data within the 32 councils. The data submitted by councils is, therefore, presented in good faith, acknowledging that some disparities in data may be due to variations in data collection methodologies. The transition to the interactive dashboard means that any amendments made to data estimates can be reflected efficiently for local authorities.

Acknowledgements

The Improvement Service is grateful to a wide range of individuals and organisations for their support in collating the data for this report, including SLAED, the 32 Scottish councils, Business Gateway National Unit, the Supplier Development Programme, Scottish Enterprise (SE), Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) and the Scottish Government.

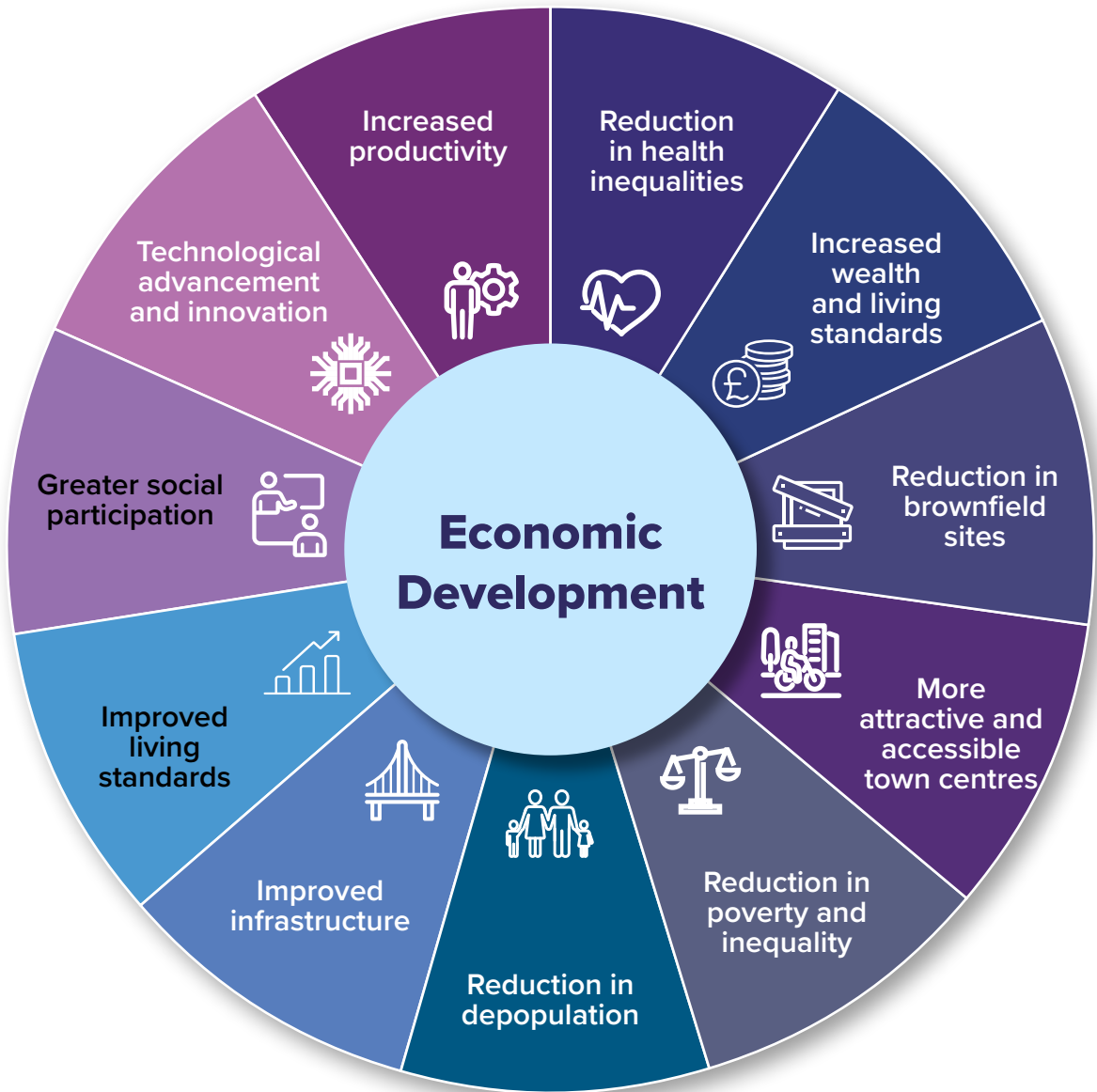
Please email slaed@improvementservice.org.uk if you have any queries regarding this report.

Improvement Service
June 2026



The Measures

1. The indicators within the framework are classified into five broad categories: Input, Activity, Output, Outcome and Wellbeing Economy Indicators. Data for some of the indicators are sourced directly from councils, and several others are collected from publicly available sources such as ONS, NOMIS and the Scottish Government, or from other partner agencies. This approach is designed to minimise the reporting burden on councils and means they are only required to report on the data that they individually collect and hold.
2. The SLAED Indicators Framework is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the indicators remain relevant and useful to councils and stakeholders.
3. The indicators for which councils provide their own data are reflective of local economic development and employability delivery in their respective areas. Many of the indicators reflect the broader economic context of an area and whilst councils may not have direct control over these, they contribute to and are affected by them.
4. The indicators demonstrate the wide-ranging nature of services and support provided by local authorities' economic development functions. They also highlight how councils are contributing towards the delivery of wider economic development outcomes set out below:



Source: SLAED Strategic Plan 2026-29

5. The full range of indicators included within the SLAED dashboard are set out in the table below:

Ref	Input Indicators
I1a	Economic Development & Tourism Expenditure - Total
I1b	Economic Development & Tourism Expenditure – Capital Spend
I1c	Economic Development & Tourism Expenditure – Revenue Spend
I2	Economic Development Staffing
Ref	Activity Indicators
A1	Number of Attendees at Webinars and Events Organised by Business Gateway
A2	Number of Attendees at Business Events provided by the Council
A3	Number of Companies Registered with the Supplier Development Programme
Ref	Output Indicators
OP1	Number of Businesses Supported by Council Economic Development Activity
OP2	Number of Business Gateway Unique Customer Accounts
OP3	Number of Companies Assisted by Scottish Development International (SDI)
OP4	Number of People who have Participated in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities
OP5a	Availability of Employment Land - % of Marketable Employment Land
OP5b	Availability of Employment Land - % of Immediately Available Employment Land
OP6	Number of Businesses Participating in the Supplier Development Programme
Ref	Outcome Indicators
OC1	Gross Value Added Per Capita
OC2a	Median Weekly Resident Earnings
OC2b	Median Weekly Workplace Earnings
OC3	Employment Rate
OC4	Number of New Business Starts per 10,000 Working Age Population
OC5	3-Year Business Survival Rate
OC6	Claimant Rate (% of the Working Age Population Claiming Out-Of-Work Benefits)
OC7	Percentage of the Working Age Population with No Qualifications
OC8	Town Centre Vacancy Rates
OC9	Number of Start-Up Businesses Supported by Business Gateway that are Trading
OC10	Amount of External Funding Secured
OC11a	Number of Jobs Expected to be Created from Completed Inward Investment Projects
OC11b	Completed Inward Investment Projects
OC12a	Number of People who have Progressed to Employment as a Result of their Participation in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities
OC12b	Number of People who have Progressed to a Positive Destination as a Result of their Participation in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities
Ref	Wellbeing Economy Indicators
WE1a	GVA per hour worked and job filled
WE1b	GVA per job filled

WE2	Percentage of those earning less than the Living Wage
WE3	Percentage of 16-19 Year Olds Participating in Education, Training or Employment
WE4	Percentage of Premises able to receive Full Fibre Broadband
WE5	Percentage of People who Rated Life Satisfaction Good or Very Good
WE6	Greenhouse Gas Emissions per Capita
WE7	Gender Pay Gap
WE8	Housing Affordability Ratio
WE9	Number of Social Enterprises per 10,000 of the population



Analysis

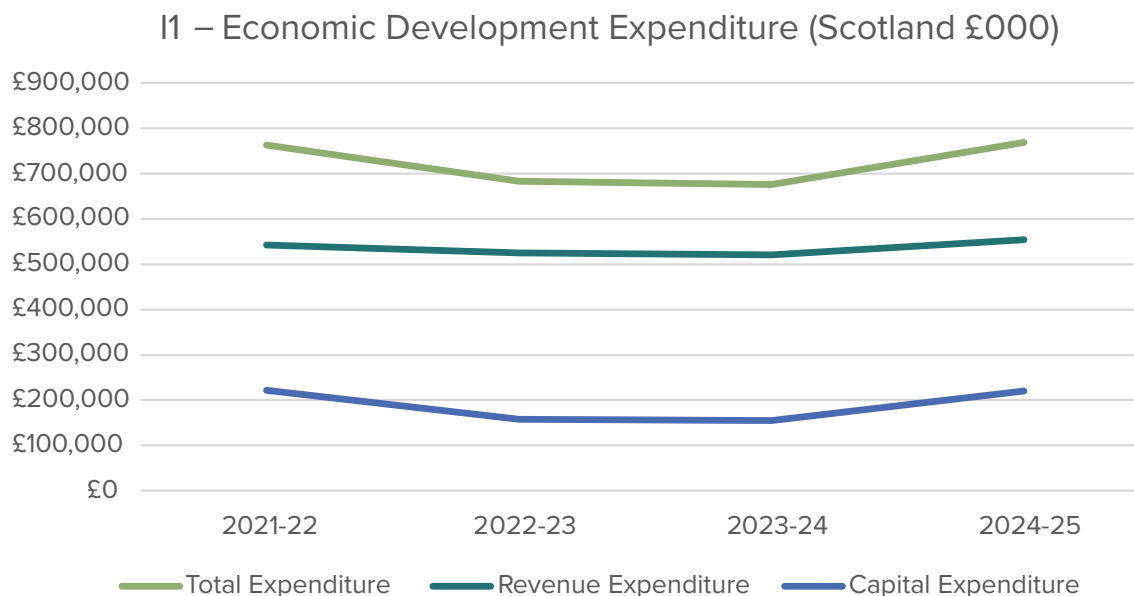
6. Whilst only limited data are presented for some of the indicators in this report, additional information is provided in [the dashboard](#). Where available this includes individual council data, numerator and denominator data, and breakdown by type of support.

I1 – Economic Development Expenditure (2024/25)

Economic Development & Tourism Expenditure – Estimated (I1)	Capital Spend (£000)	Revenue Spend (£000)	Total Spend (£000)
	£220,244	£554,217	£769,606
In 2024/25, Scottish councils spent over £769m on economic development and tourism. This was made up of over £220m of capital spend and over £554m of revenue spend.			

This measure provides details of each council's expenditure on the delivery of their economic development service, both in terms of capital projects and revenue costs (including staff). This expenditure is extracted from the Local Finance Return (LFR) data which is supplied by councils to the Scottish Government and includes both Economic Development and Tourism capital and revenue spend. Figures shown are real expenditure, so are adjusted for inflation.

In 2024/25, Scottish councils spent over £769m on economic development and tourism. This was made up of over £220m of capital spend and over £554m of revenue spend.



The graph above shows that:

- Revenue expenditure reduced from around £542m in 2021-22 to £520m in 2023-24, before increasing to £554m in 2024-25.

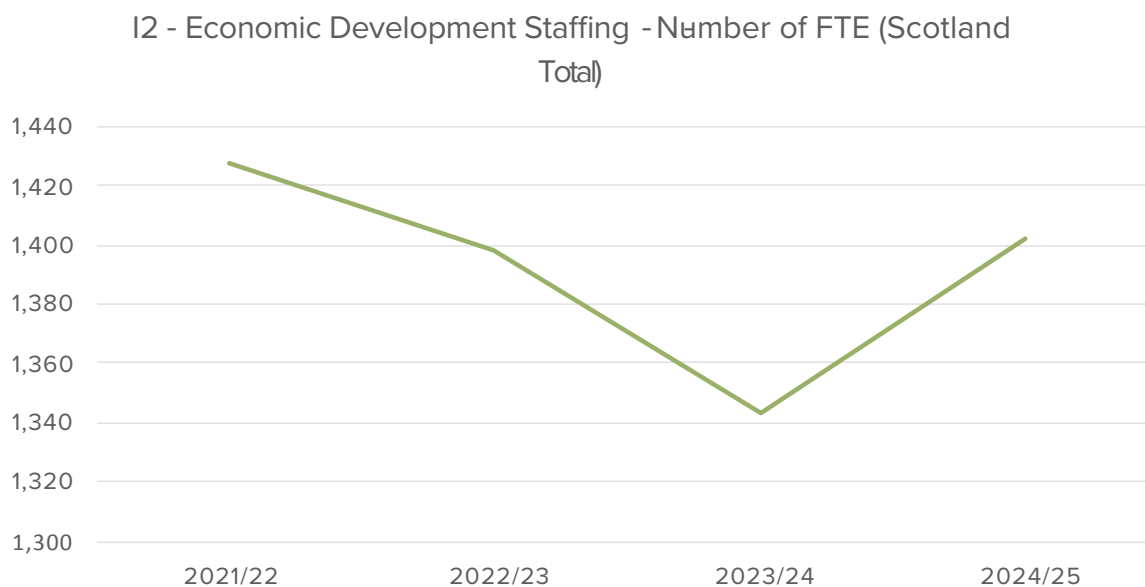
- Capital expenditure tends to fluctuate more than revenue expenditure and differs greatly between councils, depending on specific projects in any year. Total capital expenditure decreased from around £222m in 2021-22 to £156m in 2023-24, then increased to £220m in 2024-25.
- Total expenditure decreased from £763m in 2021-22 to £676m in 2023-24, before increasing to almost £770m in 2024-25.

I2 – Economic Development Staffing (2024/25)

Economic Development & Staffing (I2)	Total FTE Staff
	1,402
In 2024/25, an estimated 1,402 FTE members of staff were employed in economic development within Scottish councils.	

This is a measure of the total number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff working on the delivery of councils' economic development and employability services. This includes all staff working across council departments – for example in some councils, employability may not be delivered by staff assigned specifically to the 'economic development service'. To allow meaningful comparisons to be made, in-house Business Gateway staff are not included in the measure, as this function is delivered externally in some council areas.

The total number of economic development staff across Scotland has fluctuated over the last 4 years between 1,343 and 1,428. Although the number has increased from 1,343 in 2023-24 to 1,402 in 2024-25, this remains lower than in 2021-22 when there were 1,428 FTEs.



In addition to these staff numbers, there were a further 105 FTE in-house Business Gateway staff across councils, which is a decrease from the 2023/24 figure of 133.

In terms of geographic spread, Glasgow City Council accounted for the largest proportion of economic development staff with 11.9% of the total for Scotland, followed by South Lanarkshire (7.2%), Fife (5.1%) and Renfrewshire (5.1%). Between 2023/24 and 2024/25, economic development staff numbers increased in 16 councils, decreased in 12 councils, and stayed the same in four councils.

The table below provides a breakdown of economic development staffing categories (for those councils that were able to provide this) for Scotland overall and shows how the staffing profile has changed over the last 4 years:

Staff Type	Number of Staff (FTE) 2024/25	Percentage of Total Economic Development Workforce	Number of Staff (FTE) 2021/22	Percentage Change Since 2021/22
Business Support / Sector Development	153	11%	236	-35%
Employability / Skills	800	58%	696	15%
Town / City Centre Management	27	2%	31	-15%
Policy and Performance	61	4%	59	2%
External Funding	73	5%	63	16%
Area Promotion / Marketing	27	2%	45	-40%
Regeneration / Community Wealth Building	117	8%	112	5%
Rural Development	14	1%	31	-55%
Tourism	39	3%	34	15%
Other	72	5%	120	-40%
TOTAL	1,383	100%	1,428	-3%

The table above shows that the majority of staff (58%) work in employability and this area has increased from 696 FTE in 2021/22, to 800 FTE in 2024/25. Areas such as Business Support/ Sector Development, Town/ City Centre Management, Rural Development and Area Promotion/ Marketing, have all reduced significantly, with a total loss of around 123 FTE across the country.

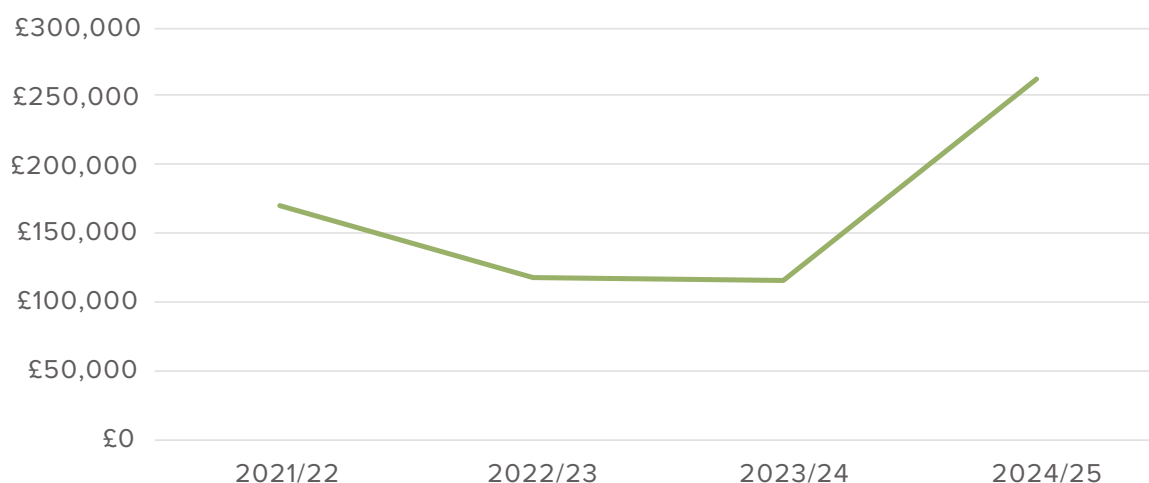
OC10 – Amount of External Funding Secured (2024/25)

Amount of External Funding Secured (OC10)	Total Funding
	£263,430,561
<i>In 2024/25, councils successfully applied for and brought in £263,430,561 of external funding for economic development projects.</i>	

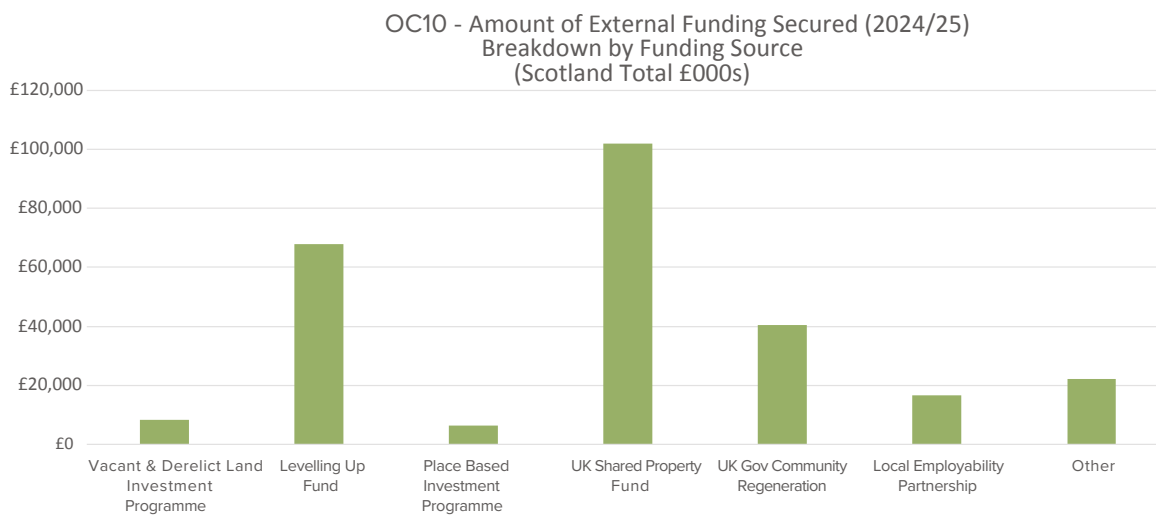
This indicator is used to assess the value of external funding that a council has successfully secured, either through competitive bidding or direct allocation, for projects primarily focused on economic development and employability. Creating successful applications and bids for funding requires considerable resource and expertise from councils. To reflect these efforts from Economic Development staff, councils have been asked to provide additional data on successful and unsuccessful bids. It is also recognised that some councils have access to funding opportunities that others do not based on their individual demographics and economic circumstances.

In 2024/25, councils brought in an estimated £263,430,561 of additional funding for economic development projects, which is a significant increase on the 2023/24 figure of £117,177,662. The main sources of funding in 2024/25 included the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (39% of additional funding), the Levelling Up Fund (26%) and UK Government Community Regeneration funding (15%). The highest amount of additional funding was reported by Moray Council (16.3% of the Scottish total), followed by Scottish Borders Council (9.2%) and Inverclyde Council (8.7%).

OC10--Amount of External Funding Secured
(Scotland Total £000s)



This indicator covers funding specifically for projects that contribute directly to economic development but does not include total budgets invested in delivery of economic development (e.g. staffing, other revenue or capital). It reflects amounts awarded in that year, rather than those allocated or spent.



The interpretation of trends from this indicator are subject to the numerous conditions, including:

- Monitoring of external fundings methods from local authorities may be more accurately embedded following a review of this indicator from the last SLAED report
- Sources of external funding vary from year to year, so trends may reflect the availability of funding rather than a direct reflection of the resources used by councils to draw in external funding.

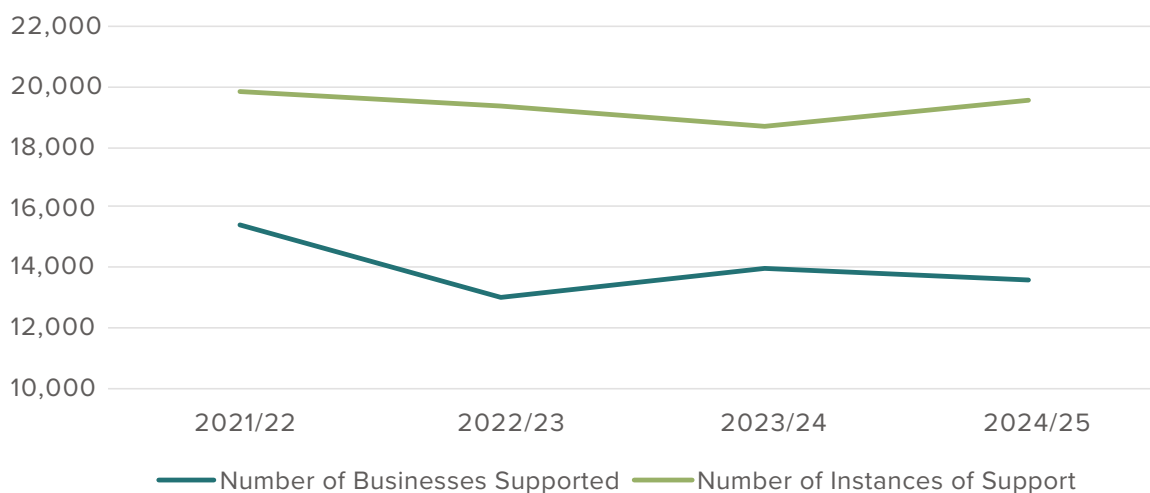
OP1 – Number of Businesses Supported by Council Economic Development Activity (2024/25)

Number of Businesses Supported by Council Economic Development Activity (OP1)	Businesses Supported
	13,559
<i>In 2024/25 councils provided 19,537 instances of support to 13,559 businesses.</i>	

This is an indicator of the total number of unique businesses that have been supported by councils' Economic Development services (excluding Business Gateway services) during 2024/25. It also seeks to count the number of support interventions provided to businesses within each council area, and the sectors in which the businesses receiving support are operating. This indicator measures business support provided by councils over and above that provided through Business Gateway (this support is recorded in other indicators).

In 2024/25, 13,559 businesses were supported by economic development services across Scotland, a decrease from the 14,020 businesses supported in 2023/24. However, the total number of instances of support was 19,537, an increase from 18,669 in 2023/24.

OP1 - Number of Businesses Supported by Council Economic Development Activity (Scotland Total)



The table below sets out the sectors in which businesses were supported across Scotland.

Business Support Sectors

Sector	No of Businesses Supported	% of Total Businesses Supported
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	145	1.1%
Animal Services	157	1.2%
Chemical & Life Sciences	74	0.5%
Child & Adult Care	225	1.7%
Clothing, Fashion & Textiles	129	1.0%
Construction, Trades & Engineering	1,204	8.9%
Creative Industries	651	4.8%
Domestic Services	140	1.0%
Education, HR & Training	310	2.3%
Energy & Environment	175	1.3%
Financial & Business Services	509	3.8%
Food & Drink	769	5.7%
Hair & Beauty Services	319	2.4%
Horticultural Services	93	0.7%
Hospitality, Catering & Event Management	381	2.7%
Health & Wellbeing	571	4.2%
Industrial & Manufacturing	444	3.3%
Leisure & Sport	356	2.6%
Real Estate & Property Services	159	1.3%
Retail & Wholesale	711	5.2%
Technology & Web Services	286	2.1%
Tourism	617	4.6%
Transport & Storage	128	0.9%
Vehicle & Motor Trade	139	1.0%
Other	4,867	35.9%

An ongoing challenge with this indicator is the high proportion of businesses councils classify as falling under the 'other' sector category. This demonstrates a real need to review the sector categories and to explore how councils classify business support internally to ensure the framework is as aligned as possible. After the 'other' category, the highest percentage of businesses supported were in the 'Construction, Trades & Engineering' sector at 8.9%, followed by the 'Food & Drink' sector at 5.7%.

The table below sets out the number of instances of each type of support provided by councils, of which there were 19,537 in 2024/25. It should be noted that the

types of support provided to businesses can vary significantly between councils based on their individual priorities, business needs and the functions provided by the Business Gateway Service.

Types of Business Support

Type of Support	No of Instances	% of Total Support
Grant	5,240	26.8%
Loan	106	0.5%
Referral to Other Agency	1,307	6.7%
Skills Advice	1,245	6.4%
Land & Property	706	3.6%
Export Assistance	33	0.2%
Marketing Support	2,611	13.4%
Recruitment & Skills	1,353	6.9%
Support to Social Enterprises	362	1.9%
Procurement	356	1.8%
Net-Zero	1,036	5.3%
Work Placements	352	1.8%
Other Business Support	1,913	9.8%
Tourism	1,064	5.4%
Other	1,853	9.5%

The most common form of support provided by councils to local businesses was grants and this is also reflective of previous years. This was followed by marketing support and support around recruitment and skills. Councils reported a wide range of 'other' types of support which further demonstrates the diversity of interventions provided by councils to local businesses, and the challenges around fully capturing this within the framework.

CASE STUDY

Renico Nameplate Ltd



Tell us about your business and the services you offer?

Renico Nameplates is a one-stop solution for industrial engraving, signage and specialist manufacturing services including fibre, plasma & CO2 laser cutting, UV & flatbed printing and braille engraving. All work is conducted in-house ensuring full control over quality, precision, and turnaround times.

We produce bespoke nameplates, control panels, safety signage and customised industrial signage and components supporting sectors including marine, housing, oil & gas, chemical and pharmaceutical, construction, food & drink, and asset management.

What made you start up your own business?

The business was established in 1996, following the closure of my previous workplace. Taking

that opportunity, I built something from scratch. 30 years on, I am proud of what we have achieved and confident about the future as we continue to invest in the business and our people.

How have Renfrewshire Council / Business Gateway supported the growth of the business?

Support from Renfrewshire Council and Business Gateway has been key to our growth. From expanding in Paisley to developing our Blythswood Drive premises, funding and guidance have helped us grow with confidence.

Ongoing support through workshops, expert advice and 1-1 engagement has helped inform key decisions. We've also accessed capital funding to strengthen the business during critical periods.

More recently we undertook a fully funded carbon baseline assessment, giving us clear understanding of our emissions. This led to Net Zero Grant support enabling installation of Solar PV and battery storage as phase one of our journey. We have also been supported in investing in a new nitrogen generator to improve efficiency and reduce reliance on external supply.

What RC & BG services do you use to this day?

Access to advice, funding, and practical support has played a key role in how we've developed as a business. From attending workshops, specialist surgeries and having Expert Help in Marketing to securing capital funding support for growth projects, we've been able to grow at a pace that is both steady and sustainable.

The business support we have received has allowed us to invest in the right areas and adapt to new challenges.

What advice would you give to anyone running their own business?

Don't be afraid to ask for help. There is a wealth of support available and learning from others is invaluable.

Hopes / plans for the future?

Our priority is to continue securing jobs for our current team and creating future opportunities. We will continue to invest, grow sustainably, and build a resilient, forward-looking business.

OP4 - Number of People who have Participated in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities (2024/25)

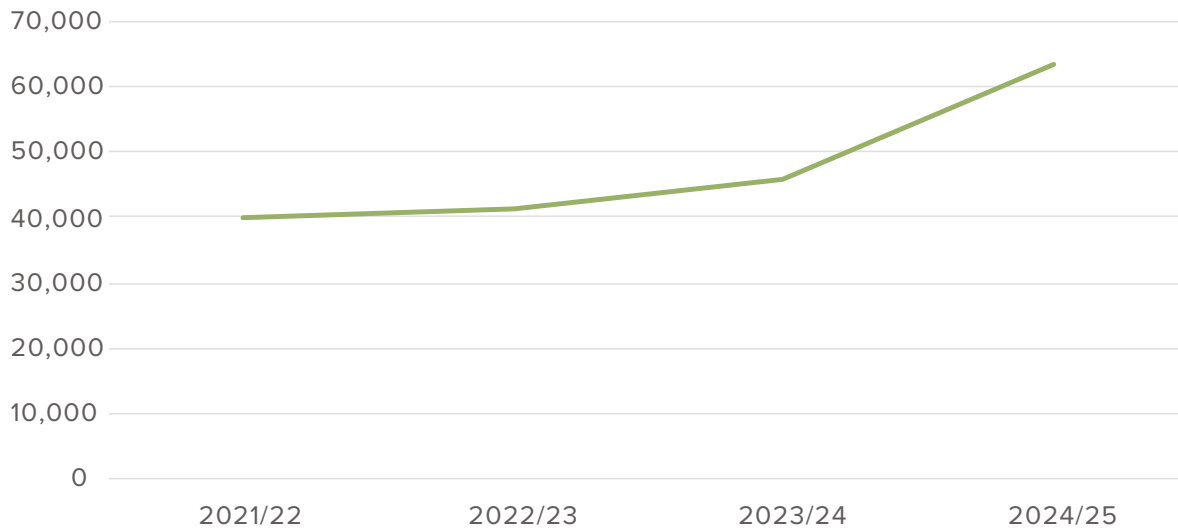
Number of People who have Participated in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities (OP4)	No of Unique Participants
	63,190
<i>In 2024/25, 63,190 unique people participated in Council funded or operated employability activities.</i>	

This is a measure of the total number of individuals who participated in employability activities that were funded and/or operated by councils in 2024/25. The purpose of this indicator is to assist in understanding the response to unemployment and economic inactivity in each council area through the delivery of interventions to help people access training, work experience and sustainable employment. Councils might make a financial contribution to the delivery of employability programmes through mainstream providers such as Skills Development Scotland (SDS). Alternatively, councils might deliver these programmes directly, and this indicator is designed to capture both types of support.

The total number of unique participants in council funded and/or operated employability activities across Scotland in 2024/25 was 63,190. This is a significant increase on the 2023/24 figure of 45,868 and continues an ongoing upward trend in this indicator.

The number of people supported by the following Employability Programmes/ Funding has increased significantly since 2023/24: Council Employability Funds (over 1,000% increase from 73 to 9,000), UKSPF (71% increase) and No One Left Behind (51% increase). The greatest increases in the number of people supported were reported by West Lothian Council, Falkirk Council and Aberdeenshire Council, all with more than double the number of participants from 2023/24.

OP4- Number of People who have Participated in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities (Scotland Total)



Of the total number of participants across Scotland, 55% were male and 44% were female, which is similar to previous years. In terms of the age of participants, 43% were aged 15-24 and 57% were aged 25-64. From 2024/25 further details about participants were collected including disability, employment and parental status. In 2024/25 32% of participants were recorded to be parents, 35% had a disability and 60% were unemployed.

Councils are requested to provide data on the number of unique people participating in their employability programmes, however we recognise that this is challenging for some authorities due to the systems used. Work will continue to develop this measure to ensure the data is as accurate as possible to improve our understanding of who is accessing employability services and enable more effective targeting of support.

OC12b Number of People who have Progressed to a Positive Destination as a Result of their Participation in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities (2024/25)

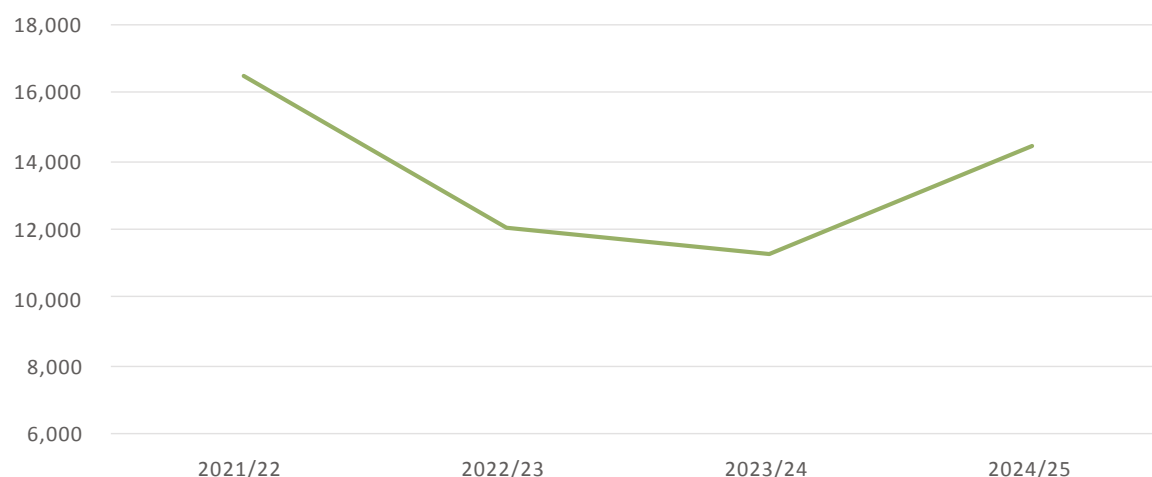
Number of People who have Progressed to a Positive Destination as a Result of their Participation in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities (OC12b)	No of Unique Participants
	20,444
In 2024/25, 20,444 unique participants progressed to a positive destination following participation in council funded or operated employability activities.	

This measure is used to track the progression of people who have participated in council funded and/or operated employability activities, as outlined in indicator OP4 above, into a positive outcome. The measure previously only recorded people who had progressed to employment, but this was changed in 2024/25 to positive destinations including: employment, volunteering, modern apprenticeships and further/ higher education. The previous measure will also continue to be reported on the Dashboard as OC12a.

In 2024/25, 20,444 unique participants across Scotland progressed to a positive destination from a council funded and/or operated employability programme. Of these, 14,399 moved into employment, a significant increase on the 2023/24 figure of 11,244.

As trend data is only available for OC12a, this has been shown in the graph below.

OC12a - Number of People who have Progressed to Employment as a Result of their Participation in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities (Scotland Total)



CASE STUDY

PAVE (Pathways for Adults Volunteering in Education)

South Ayrshire PAVE Programme

PAVE is an 8-week work experience programme, run by South Ayrshire's Thriving Communities Team, that gives participants an opportunity to volunteer within a school setting - either within the classroom or supporting with clerical tasks within the school office. Participants gain an employability related qualification at SCQF level 4 as well as work-based qualifications including Emergency First Aid at work.

Participants are supported by their Employability Officer throughout their time on placement to develop CVs, job applications and plan a structured pathway to future employment following the 8-week programme.

Connor Oates, Principal Teacher: "We had four participants from the PAVE program and all four of the participants made a massive impact to our school. All of the pupils and staff love having them as part of our school community. The PAVE participants were aiding the teaching staff in many different ways. They were taking groups out of the class or working one-to-one with the pupils while also completing admin tasks that allow teachers to free up their time which gave them more time to plan their lessons and support the pupils in their care."

Sharon McLeod, PAVE Participant: "I've got five children. The youngest one is eight and I don't have any childcare. So, taking part in PAVE has meant I can get out and do something worthwhile. I've been able to choose my own



hours to allow me the flexibility to work around my other responsibilities, my volunteering opportunities and things as well."

"I went for an interview last week to go on the supply bank list for classroom assistant and was successful. So that is my next step, to go and do a supply, which again, will fit around my children and my current life."

"It's really been it's made a massive difference to my life. It's given me a huge amount of confidence and made me much happier."

The table below sets out the total number of participants who have progressed to employment from each employability programme across Scotland (based on the councils that were able to provide this data), and the percentage that this represents of all participants. It should be noted that this is the data for all participants, rather than unique participants.

Programme Name	No of Participants	% of Participants
Employability Fund	1,883	8.1%
'No One Left Behind' Funding	13,654	58.9%
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	7,126	30.7%
Fair Start Scotland	116	0.5%
Other	399	1.7%

For further information:

The SLAED Dashboard and Indicator Framework Reports are available on the SLAED Website <https://www.slaed.org.uk/>

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