

Board Meeting

Date of Meeting	Monday 25 April 2022
Paper Title	Colleges Scotland Draft Strategy Framework Consultation
Agenda Item	14
Paper Number	BM5-I
Responsible Officer	Janie McCusker, Chair
Status	Disclosable
Action	For comment

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1** Over the past year the Colleges Scotland Board has been reviewing and renewing a new draft Strategic Framework for the organisation of Colleges Scotland as the membership organisation of the sector. They are now sharing this draft, and inviting comments from all 26 colleges, including their Boards as well as the Regional Strategic Bodies.
- 1.2** This draft framework is shared with the GCRB board today, for consideration and comment. In addition, a data gathering sheet is shared to provide focus to consideration.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that the GCRB board **note** the provided update on the progress of the Colleges Scotland strategic framework.
- 2.2** It is recommended that GCRB board provide **comment** on the update with specific reference to the prompts in the data gathering sheet provided.

3. Risk and Compliance Analysis

3.1 Effective working with College Scotland is seen as an important element of mitigating the following GCRB risks:

Risk 1: GCRB is unable to respond proactively to internal and external change including regional and national reviews and systemic change

Risk 2: GCRB does not develop/maintain effective working relationships with key external stakeholders

4. Financial and Resource Analysis

4.1 Membership of Colleges Scotland requires allocation of a regional investment on an annual basis, and it will be important that the Glasgow region, and GCRB, continue to be assured of value for money and appropriate membership status and benefits.

5. Equalities Implications

5.1 No additional equalities implications at this time.

6. Learner Implications

6.1 No additional learner implications at this time.

Colleges Scotland Strategic Framework – Consultation

Consultation with the College Sector

Over the past year the Colleges Scotland Board has been reviewing and renewing a new draft Strategic Framework for the organisation of Colleges Scotland as the membership organisation of the sector. We are now pleased to share this and invite comments from all 26 colleges, including their Boards and in addition the Regional Strategic Bodies, and this document will also be shared with a number of external stakeholders.

The Colleges Scotland Board has sought that this consultation should include the ‘how’, e.g. how best to progress/deliver the Strategic Framework collectively, how best to maximise expertise and experience within the Membership, and how best to avoid/minimise potential duplications and conflicts.

The consultation period is between **Monday 4 April and Friday 6 May 2022**.

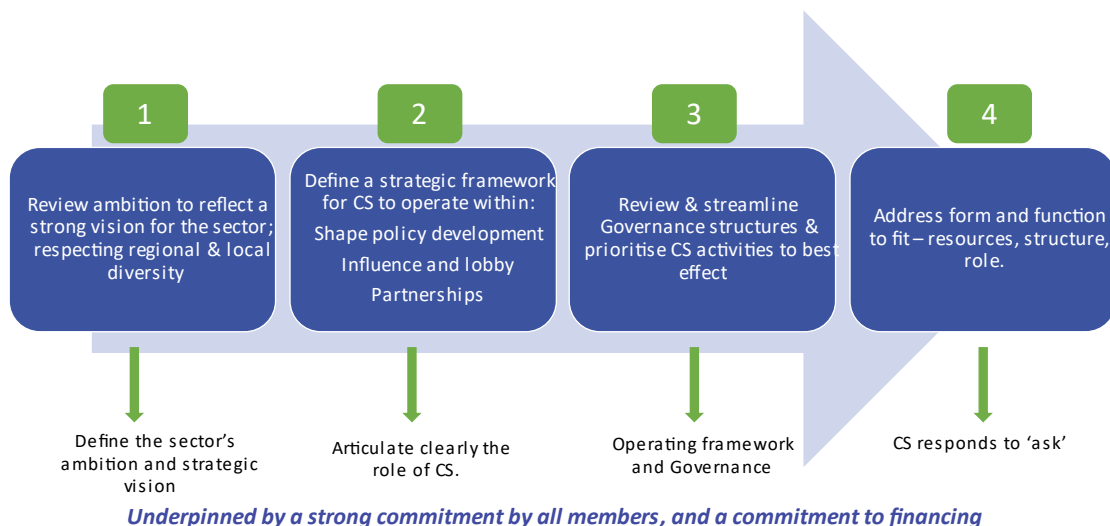
Feedback should be sent to Kirstie.Laird@collegesscotland.ac.uk

Work to Date

In January 2022 the Colleges Scotland Board agreed the Vision and three Strategic Aims for the Strategic Framework for Colleges Scotland. Significant work has been undertaken since the January Board meeting to develop the process to this stage. Three Sub-Groups and a Strategy Completion Group have been meeting on a regular basis to ensure a robust set of strategies underpin the agreed Aims.

This paper focuses on the second of the agreed four stage process that was laid out and agreed by the Board in February 2021 (see diagram below).

Overview— your responses suggested a clear pathway for reviewing purpose and remit...



Work is at Stage 2 of the pathway, including this consultation exercise and culminating in the approval of a Strategic Framework 2022-26.

The following stages will see further work around governance and resource planning, then communication and migration plan for implementation will be developed. The Colleges Scotland Board also agreed to review the Vision and Mission for Colleges Scotland when the four stages of the pathway have been completed.

Background

It was clear as work developed that the new Strategic Framework would have to deliver on a number of fronts. Input from Members showed they were keen that Colleges Scotland should be working, among other things, to:

- Ensure that colleges are seen to be influencing policy, rather than constantly reacting
- Take control of the policy agenda
- Align with Scottish Government priorities and showcase centres of good practice
- Be able to influence the top echelons of Scottish Government and SFC to create maximum impact for the sector
- Be “at the right tables”, with the right people to promote the sector
- Develop opportunities for further funding
- Carve out better relations with the business sector
- Have effective relationships with partner organisations such as CDN and SDS
- Put the college sector on the radar with high profile and influential organisations, and improve how the sector is viewed at a civic level
- Increase the proactive and involved role for College Chairs and Principals nationally so that they are able to optimise their vital role in driving forward the key priorities of the organisation and the sector
- Utilise the collective resources of the whole college sector, to pull in expertise when relevant and to empower people to speak on behalf of the college sector nationally

It was felt that Colleges Scotland as an organisation needed to redefine agreed priorities going forward, as it currently operates on many fronts, and that these priorities and workplan should be directed and communicated by the Colleges Scotland Board. This would also mean that Colleges Scotland would by necessity stop doing some of the things it currently does.

Vision

In creating the new Strategic Framework, the following Vision statements were agreed by the Board in January 2022:

2026 Vision for Colleges Scotland (the organisation)

Colleges Scotland to be at the heart of a world class college sector that is recognised, valued, and available to all.

Facilitating sustainable funding to the sector (and developing opportunities for further funding)

Delivering on the Scottish Government objectives

Colleges Scotland to be the glue that holds the sector together, harnessing the capacity of wider sector resource to produce greater impact and have more influence with key stakeholders

Members have clarity about the role of Colleges Scotland and the work we carry out on behalf of the sector within our resources. As an organisation Colleges Scotland providing good value for money for our Members.

Our outputs are accountable, transparent and accessible. We have made positive changes in the policy landscape, and we have demonstrated our impact effectively to our Members, decision makers, the media, students and the general public, and with regular communication with Members to ensure their needs are met.

Our Vision for 2026 will be achieved by delivering the following **three Strategic Aims** for Colleges Scotland (as previously agreed), each of which is supported by a comprehensive and detailed action plan:

1. Lead and Influence Policy
2. Raise the profile and enhance the reputation of Scotland's Colleges Sector
3. Be an enabler, supporter and connector of the sector membership, both internally and externally

A New Approach

Our new strategy requires a new approach which goes beyond 'business as usual' in order to achieve this ambitious Vision. This will be driven by of a number of features:

- The Colleges Scotland Board will articulate clearly strategic priorities for Colleges Scotland the organisation. This will give Colleges Scotland staff a clear and agreed direction and focus on which to deliver, optimise resources and be measured.
- The priority policy areas of focus for Colleges Scotland are now clearly articulated in the strategy, and the Board will take responsibility for directing the organisation to new policy work that might be required, and for what it should stop doing.
- Colleagues, college Principals and Chairs from the wider 'Colleges Family' with experience, expertise and existing relationships will play a leading role in implementing this strategy, as ambassadors telling the college story, and in having the right conversations with the right people on behalf of the sector. Building on the good work already happening across the

sector, in this enhanced role the Colleges Family will take increased responsibility for this proactive work, which will be coordinated, supported and facilitated by Colleges Scotland.

- It is clear that a much stronger, more structured and coordinated approach to identifying the stakeholders that the sector wishes to engage with, and influence is required to raise the profile of the sector and to allow colleges to lead and advocate the policy agenda. This new strategy is driven by ongoing work to identify and engage these key stakeholders using the Colleges Family model to optimal effect.
- A much greater and more effective use by Colleges Scotland and the Colleges Family of data analytics, intelligence, quality research and horizon scanning are seen as key to being able to successfully lead, influence and take control of the policy agenda as the strategy demands. We will therefore establish a Think Tank, the purpose of which is specifically to conduct horizon scanning and analysis to support Colleges Scotland in this primary function of leading and influencing policy.

This new approach therefore identifies **four Core Strategies** which underpin and drive the achievement of each of the three Strategic Aims.

1. An enhanced and performing 'Colleges Family' model
2. Stakeholder engagement and influencing
3. Clear Policy priorities for Colleges Scotland
4. Establishment of a Think Tank

Each of these Core Strategies has interdependencies to the others, and all are required to support each of the three Strategic Aims. The Strategy Framework is represented clearly in the diagram below, supported by an effective, efficient, focussed and impactful Colleges Scotland organisation.

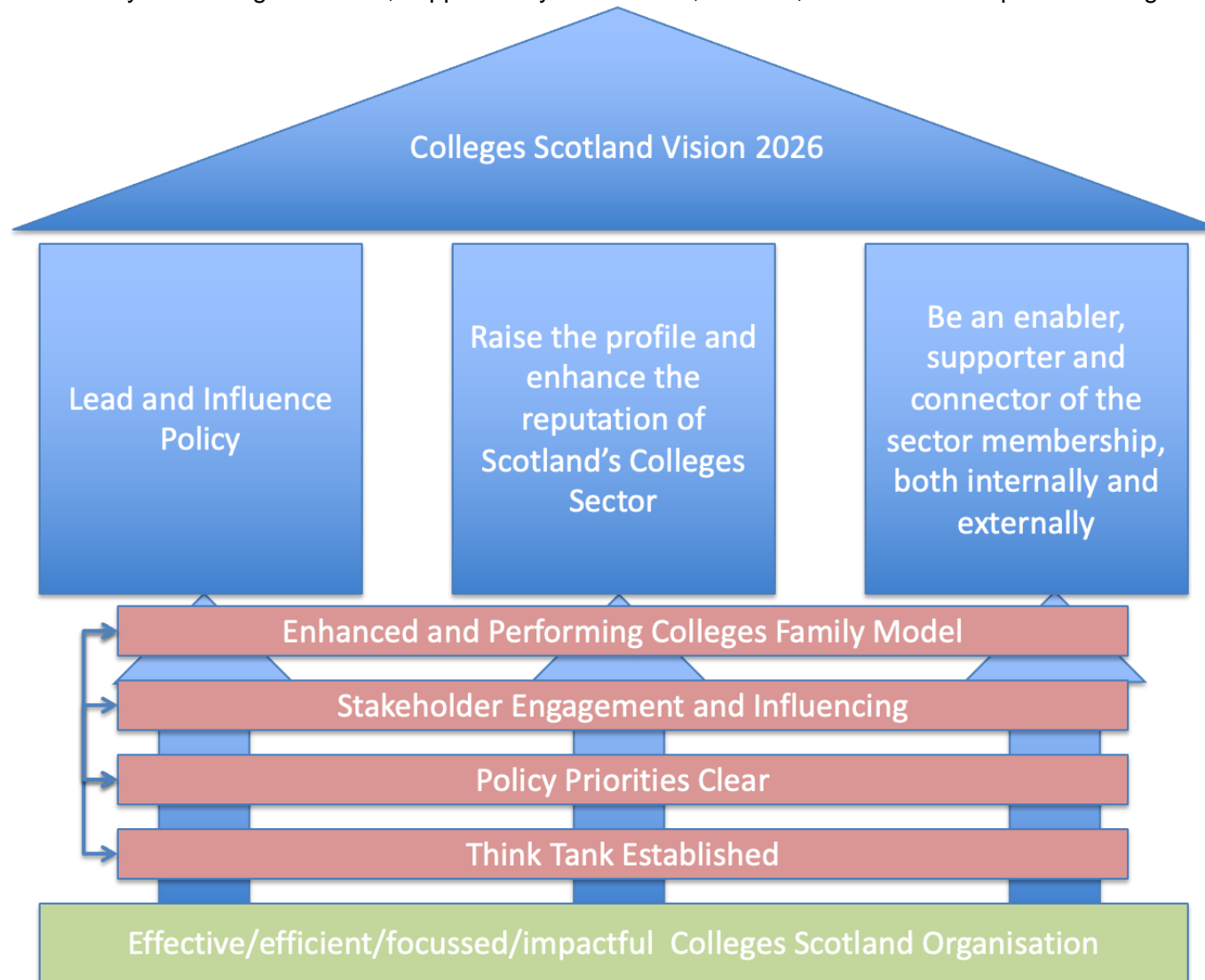


Fig 1: Our Vision is supported by three clear Strategic Aims. All three Strategic Aims will be achieved through the four, interdependent, Core Strategies

Detailed processes, action plans and roles and responsibilities will need to sit behind each element of this strategy to ensure that it has realistic and practical ways of being implemented, and the approach outlined above is described in more detail below. These include, but are not limited to, Resource Plan, Governance Map, Migration and Implementation Plans.

Our 3 Strategic Aims

Understanding that each of these Aims is underpinned principally by the 4 Core Strategies, they contain in addition the following key actions:

Lead and Influence Policy

- Focus on three key policy areas
- Demonstrate clear focus on, alignment with and shaping of Scottish Government priorities, as well as with areas beyond Scotland such as global citizenship
- Utilise the collective capacity of the sector to ensure that we are engaged at the appropriate levels of Government by deploying specific groups and tasking individuals to communicate our key priorities, asks and offers
- Influence opportunities to achieve sustainable funding for the sector

Raise the profile and enhance the reputation of Scotland's Colleges Sector

- Achieve greater visibility and understanding of the value and impact the sector has on social and economic prosperity
- Tell the college sector's story, nationally, informed by individual colleges and the wider College Family
- Develop and coordinate marketing and communications plans

Be an enabler, supporter and connector of the sector membership, both internally and externally

- A clear strategic purpose and focus for Colleges Scotland to deliver on
- Make Colleges Scotland an impactful, efficient and effective organisation with its performance in delivering on these agreed priorities being measured against clear and relevant KPIs.

Our 4 Core Strategies

An enhanced and performing 'Colleges Family' model

Chairs, Principals, and Board Members – are our greatest asset, with a huge amount of inherent experience and expertise. The College Family will be enhanced to include distinct roles for college Chairs as ambassadors, and college Board Members where appropriate. This will complement the Lead Principal system, in which named individual principals lead on specific work areas and/or engagement with particular stakeholders.

The experience and expertise of our Members will be used effectively, and to the benefit of all Members and the sector. For example, Colleges Scotland will garner the collective capacity of the sector to ensure that we are engaged at the appropriate levels of Government by tasking College Family experts to communicate our key priorities, asks and offers, and to help build the partnerships we all need.

We will achieve greater visibility and understanding of the value and impact the sector has on social and economic prosperity by utilising the experience and expertise of the College Family – Chairs, Principals and College Board Members.

The Colleges Family is about influencing. It is about building relationships and long-term influence which will pay off in the longer term. All should be clear on the difference between 'the sector' and

the organisation of Colleges Scotland, and the respective roles of each. This is particularly relevant for resource implications.

Chairs and Principals will need to identify who from the sector from their region will commit to the College Family. Board Members should be encouraged to use their own networks to spread key messages and raise the profile of the sector. A system needs to be developed to capture feedback into Colleges Scotland. Colleges Scotland will, subsequent to this consultation, be in touch with the sector to gain an understanding of which individuals wish to contribute and in what areas.

It is proposed that an annual event for all (or a representation of) board members across the sector should be convened. The size and scale of the event would demonstrate in and of itself, the depth and breadth of the College Family and range of skills, networks and opportunity. The event would link with stakeholder engagement plans and explore opportunities to harness talent, demonstrate how to increase the profile of the sector and utilise the college family effectively.

Colleges Scotland will supply timely and impactful information, advice, opportunities and expertise to our Members. The role of Colleges Scotland will be to coordinate and make best use of skills, knowledge and experience across relevant meetings. Feedback from the College Family to Colleges Scotland shall be provided.

Stakeholder engagement and influencing

To deliver our Vision we must achieve greater visibility and understanding of the value and impact the sector has on social and economic prosperity, and also to tackle critical issues facing Members nationally. Stakeholder engagement and profile across Scottish civic society must be significantly improved in order to achieve this.

Colleges Scotland will therefore design and deploy a refreshed stakeholder engagement and influencing strategy which prioritises:

- Impactful Government relations.
- Effective relationships with business and industry based on two-way relationships.
- Reliably placing our Members into key networks.

Building on the Colleges Family model, the stakeholder strategy will be based on the principles of long-term relationship building, comprehensive engagement, and will cover local, national and international partners. The strategy will identify key success markers which can be reported on.

This stakeholder engagement and influencing Core Strategy will allow us to:

- Increase the extent to which other people advocate on our behalf
- Improve links to the business community at a national level and invite key business agencies to events
- Build long term relationships with key individuals e.g. MSPs, opposition parties,
- Ensure comprehensive briefings
- Drive better coordination across the sector
- Encourage appropriate people to get out there and be advocates for the college sector
- Create 'generic strap lines' coordinated locally and nationally
- Illustrate the college sector's story, nationally (informed by individual colleges, long term stories and a long-term communications plan)
- Position the college sector with influencing organisations, sow the seeds in media and develop a consistent and coordinated programme of stories throughout the year

To do this, we will

- Develop and utilise a clear Stakeholder Map which is fit for purpose
- Build and strengthen key relationships with stakeholder organisations and individuals
- Keep information and intelligence on key relationships up-to-date and available to Members
- Refresh and operationalise the Colleges Scotland Communications and Public Affairs Plan
- Draw on sector communications and marketing expertise where appropriate and to deliver best value

College Boards will be encouraged to use Colleges Scotland messaging in their own work to ensure a consistent narrative about the sector. We will ensure Chairs and Principals have regular, impactful and engaging key messages to use when influencing others, delivering a strong, consistent and positive narrative about colleges.

An annual survey of stakeholders on perceptions of Colleges Scotland will be commissioned and shared with the Board to establish a benchmark and demonstrate perception improvement. An annual survey of College Chairs, Principals and Board Members will be undertaken to establish and improve Member communications. Colleges Scotland will internally support our Members achieve their policy goals, and externally enable and connect colleges form strong relationships using the new Stakeholder Strategy described above.

Clear policy priorities for Colleges Scotland

Colleges Scotland staff are currently spread too thinly over 38 different policy areas.

To achieve our Vision, Colleges Scotland will prioritise opportunities for influencing policy which impacts our Members. Our work will be aligned to the Scottish Government's Programme for Government and Colleges Scotland will support Scottish Government to know and understand what the priorities for the sector are as policies are developed. Colleges Scotland will be involved in key policy areas before they are finalised, engaging early in the process. The Policy Team within Colleges Scotland will articulate clearly and demonstrate our impact on policy, showing successful interventions and influence.

The policy priorities for Colleges Scotland through to 2026 are currently identified as the following, which will be reviewed annually and reported to the Board:

Economic transformation – economic and social inclusive prosperity.

- Critical role for the college sector to drive/contribute to a skills led economic recovery and transformation – including upskilling, re skilling
- Intended for Scotland to be economic leaders in delivering net zero/renewable energy and the transformational role the sector has in supporting this. There is a key role for colleges in this respect.
- People, skills and future skills to be key feature of the Innovation Strategy and greater visibility and involvement of the sector by Govt and other agencies with regards to inward investment opportunities.
- Key role to support businesses – local, regional and national (e.g. inward investment, people and skills, applied innovation, knowledge exchange, workforce training)
- The sector should be/is critical to ensuring people are equipped with the necessary skills (including future skills) that Scotland needs. This is fundamental to economic growth and recovery and benefits individuals and employers

Equality of opportunity – addressing inequalities and equity of people’s ability to be economically active.

- Alleviating poverty – the contributions of the sector should be clearly understood. (*treating poverty as the same type of crisis as Covid*)
- Government has specifically identified child poverty as a key priority. The College sector has also responded to digital specific poverty (connectivity, access to technology, skills) amongst the student population which became a critical issue made more visible by the pandemic and move to remote teaching, working and operations.
- The importance of ‘place’ re colleges as anchors in local communities, providing opportunity to people living in deprivation.

Influencing and engaging with Scottish Government’s Strategic Intent piece

- The Government has explicitly stated it will develop a strategic intent for the college sector and tertiary sectors as a whole (as recommended in the SFC Review). There is a clear opportunity which is critical to influence Government as they develop their thinking and consult more widely – and to ensure that key work already undertaken which focuses on the future role of colleges, such as the Cumberland - Little Report and UK Independent Commission reports are used to inform and shape that narrative.
- The strategic intent/role/purpose of colleges must then be underpinned by appropriate funding allocations, models and performance outcomes to support the sector to deliver and achieve our role – as determined by Government.

The Policy Team at Colleges Scotland will regularly horizon scan for developing areas of policy importance and make the Board aware of any changing priority needs.

Demonstrate improvement in data gathering for the purpose of improving policy positioning and advocating for Members and achieve horizon scanning on emerging issues.

Lead principal(s) and lead Policy liaison are responsible for feeding back to the College Principals’ Group. Colleges Scotland, along with the four principals on the Colleges Scotland Board, will be responsible for feeding back to the Board on the ongoing Policy work.

Establishment of a Think Tank

The Think Tank’s purpose is to conduct horizon scanning and analysis to support Colleges Scotland in its primary function of leading and influencing policy. It will deliver short, sharp, and impactful policy research, including representation from partners including the College Development Network (Research and Enhancement Centre) and the College Family. The high-quality research output will be clearly aligned to the needs of our Members and focussed on ‘horizon-scanning’ issues which could support the success of the sector. The Think Tank will focus on where there are gaps in knowledge and research will bring impact in the policy sphere.

It has been suggested that the annual output of the Think Tank will be at least one key theme for in-depth research, with pre-engagement before the theme is chosen. Research recommendations will be taken to the Board for decision, considering the Scottish Government policy cycle, the Board’s stakeholder engagement strategy and the work of the Employers Association in making any recommendations.

We will achieve greater visibility and understand the impact of the sector by sharing and publicising the work of the Think Tank, its reports and findings.

It will operate as an advisory group to the Board, with six core members appointed (reviewed annually): Regional Chair / Principal / CS Executive member / CDN Executive member / Student representative / College Family member. The Chair of the Think Tank shall be the member appointed from the Regional Chairs.

Next Steps

Much work has been undertaken and this has been an inclusive and collaborative process of the Board to get to this stage. There is still a lot of work to be done. Some of this work is being undertaken in parallel and other areas will be further developed as we move forward in this process, concluding in a new Strategic Framework for Colleges Scotland.

Through this consultation process, Members are asked to share and discuss the draft Strategic Framework with their respective Board(s) and/or Regional Strategic Bodies, and feedback to Colleges Scotland by the end of the consultation period.

Governance

The third stage of the four-stage process agreed by the Board has started, but further work on reviewing and streamlining governance will happen once this Strategic Framework has been agreed.

Resource Planning

Upon completion of the Strategy Framework and once the governance is aligned, a full resource plan based on the Strategic Framework and in response to the ask of the sector will be developed and presented to the Board.

Other Documents

The final documents to be produced will then be the communication and migration plan for implementation and monitoring. Part of this monitoring will be to set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Colleges Scotland, which of course will be required to be set against outcomes which are within the gift of the organisation.

Colleges Scotland
April 2022

Colleges Scotland Strategic Framework - Consultation

Please return by **Friday 6 May 2022** directly to Kirstie.Laird@collegesscotland.ac.uk

College:	
Contact Name:	
Contact Details:	

Improvement of Strategic Framework	Comments
1. In order to improve the Strategic Framework, are there any elements not in the document that you would have expected to see? If yes, please provide further details.	
Strategic Aims	
2. Are there any other elements you would add to the 3 Strategic Aims set out in the Strategic Framework? If yes, please provide further details.	
Core Strategy	
3. Has the Strategic Framework identified the appropriate policy priorities? Please provide further details to support your answer.	
4. Has the Strategic framework identified the appropriate stakeholder model, including the concept of the College Family? Please provide further details to support your answer.	
5. Has the Strategic Framework set out the appropriate approach to the concept of a Think Tank? Please provide further details to support your answer.	
How Best Implemented	
6. How can the Strategic Framework be best progressed?	
7. How can the Strategic Framework be best delivered collectively?	
8. How can we best maximise the expertise and experience within the membership?	
9. How best to avoid and/or minimise potential duplications?	
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	
10. What KPIs for Colleges Scotland could be set against the Strategic Framework, bearing in mind that these must measure outcomes that are within the gift of the	

organisation.	
Any Other Comments	
11. Any other points you would like to raise?	