



Globally competitive and locally responsive?

How can the UK's technical skills help win
international investment to create jobs?

A Call for Evidence



Aim:

“To help make the UK a global leader in using high-quality technical skills to secure long-term international investment that will create jobs and growth in key sectors across our nations and regions.”



Recognising the importance of inward investment to the UK's global and local ambitions



WorldSkills UK is an independent charity and a partnership between employers, education and governments. Together, we are using international best practice to raise standards in apprenticeships and technical education so more young people and employers succeed. Our membership of WorldSkills allows us to benchmark the UK's technical skills capabilities across a wide range of sectors with over 80 other countries and gives us a unique insight into what world-class skills look like and how to train to the highest standards. We are passionate about the potential for world-class skills to help rebuild our economy, giving employers the high-quality skills they need to innovate and grow and giving young people the skills they need to build fulfilling and successful careers.

A key part of our economic success as a nation is our ability to attract investment from overseas. Attracting global firms to bring their operations to the UK, and then stay and expand in the UK, creates valuable jobs and helps local communities thrive. In other words, inward investment is critical both to the perception of the UK as a global economic power at the cutting-edge of technological developments and ready to face the challenges of climate change. And the urgent need to level up our regional economies and bring greater prosperity to all parts of the UK, raising living standards for individuals up and down the country.



Making skills a part of the inward investment conversation



Evidence as well as logic shows that talent and skills are important factors for international firms to consider when choosing where in the world to base their operations. The professional services firm EY's annual Attractiveness Survey has shown over successive years that access to skills is a key concern for international firms when choosing whether to locate or expand in the UK. In the most recent publication skills is a particular concern for local economies with investors reporting that the availability and skills of the local workforce was their top criteria when considering whether to invest in regional locations outside London¹.

Given WorldSkills UK's ability to benchmark skills internationally we also know that the UK could be performing better in technical education, particularly against some of our biggest competitors for inward investment such as Singapore, France, Australia and Ireland and particularly in skills that are critical for

¹ www.ey.com/en_uk/attractiveness



internationally-traded firms such as those needed in engineering, advanced manufacturing, clean tech, digital and life sciences. We know that these countries are prioritising skills development to become more competitive in the race for foreign direct investment.

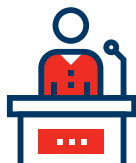
So, in May this year we launched our Skills Taskforce for Global Britain, bringing together 12 leading individuals from the worlds of industry, education and training to make sure that skills are part of the inward investment conversation in the UK. The Taskforce agreed to steer and inform a new piece of work with the objective:

To help make the UK a global leader in using high-quality technical skills to secure long-term international investment that will create jobs and growth in key sectors across our nations and regions.

WorldSkills UK is supporting the Taskforce by commissioning research in line with its agreed lines of inquiry and will publish the Taskforce's final report in Spring 2022. This report will set out the steps that could be taken to improve how skills can help attract inward investment to all parts of the UK, helping to create jobs and growth.



Leading industry and education experts



The Skills Taskforce for Global Britain is chaired by, John Cridland CBE, former Director General of the CBI and Chairman of the Home Group. Together the 12 members give us a wealth of experience in attracting foreign investment in industry, within Local Enterprise Partnerships, delivering skills in practice, and policy delivery at the highest levels across the nations and regions of the UK.

Current members



John Cridland CBE – Pro Chancellor of Brunel University, and Chairman of the Home Group

Former CBI Director General John Cridland will Chair the Skills Taskforce for Global Britain. John has a wealth of experience in high-level policy analysis and delivery across the economy, education, business, and international trade and investment.

John is passionate about improving skills outcomes for young people and employers. He is a member of the board at Ofsted, and previously served as Vice Chair of the National Learning and Skills Council, and as a UK Commissioner for Employment and Skills.

He was awarded a CBE for services to business in 2006, and will help steer the delivery of the Taskforce's final report, and act as a key spokesperson for the Taskforce to the media, politicians and other senior officials.



Josie Cluer – Founding Member (EY)

Josie Cluer, representing the professional services firm EY, is the founding member of our Taskforce. EY is also supporting the Taskforce by sharing its research expertise, access to its regional network and insights and vast experience of working with international firms.



Andrew Hodgson OBE

Andrew has over 30 years' experience in delivering major projects in the North East of England, within both the energy and technology sectors. Andrew was awarded an OBE in 2015 for his work in manufacturing and the North East economy and has extensive experience in strategic-level positions for leading companies such as Airbus and BAE Systems as well as smaller firms like Tyneside-based manufacturer, Soil Machine Dynamics. He served as Chair of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) where he made skills development a leading priority until August 2020.



Anthony Impey MBE

Anthony is the Chief Executive of Be the Business, the not-for-profit organisation, boosting the productivity of small businesses.

He has started and operated private sector and not-for-profit organisations in the tech and education sectors including Touchbase Network and Technology House. He was founder and Chief Executive of Optimity, one of the UK's leading providers of wireless internet services with an award-winning apprenticeship programme. He also founded TechCity Stars and Tech Up Nation, helping disadvantaged young Londoners kickstart their careers.

He Chairs the City & Guilds Industry Skills Board and is an advisory Board Member of the Institute of Coding. He was awarded an MBE in the Queen's 2018 New Year's Honours for Services to apprenticeships and small business.



Dr Ann Limb CBE

Ann is the independent business Chair of the UK Innovation Corridor one of the country's leading regions for science and technology stretching from London to Cambridge and has a long track record of senior roles in the further education sector, including Principal roles at Milton Keynes and Cambridge colleges. Ann remains heavily involved in technical education delivery now as incoming Chair of the City & Guilds Group. Up until 2019, Ann was chair of the country's top performing Local Enterprise Partnership the South East Midlands LEP and has continued as an Ambassador for the national LEP network.

In the 2011 Birthday Honours, she was awarded the OBE for work in education and in 2015 'upgraded' to CBE for public and political services.



Dr Adam Marshall

Adam is a Senior Adviser to the Chartered Management Institute, and to business advisory firm, Flint Global. He also serves as a Non-executive Director with the UK Trade Remedies Authority. Prior to his tenure ending this year, Adam served as Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce since March 2016, where he focused on the global trade agenda and campaigned for the interests of over 75,000 businesses through the Brexit process and Covid-19 pandemic.

Prior to joining BCC, Adam helped to start up the Centre for Cities, built commercial links between universities and industry, and worked in local politics. Adam has also worked for the Institute for Public Policy Research, the Cambridge-MIT Institute, and on local economic issues in his native Washington DC.



Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE

Ruby is a member of the House of Lords, having been granted a Life Peerage in 2015.



Dame Julie Mellor

Julie is Chair of the Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards, which represents and supports eighteen employer-led sector skills organisations across the UK, covering over 170,000 employers.

She is also Chair of Demos, a leading cross-party think tank, and the Young Foundation, which puts people at the heart of social change. Her background includes a career at Shell, TSB, British Gas, and PwC, and she has served as a board member at Nesta and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.



Neil Rami

Neil is Chief Executive of the West Midlands Growth Company. Supported by local authorities, universities and regional businesses, the Growth Company was established in 2017 to create jobs and attract inward investment to the region. Under Neil's leadership, the region secured the highest number of foreign direct investment projects on record, attracting investments from HSBC, Deutsche Bank, Jaguar Land Rover and ASOS. Neil held similar economic development roles in Liverpool and Newcastle upon Tyne, and he is currently Chairman of the Midlands Trade and Investment Group.



Chris Sutton

Chris is a member of the Welsh Government's Ministerial Advisory Board for the Economy and is a former Chair of both CBI Wales and Central Cardiff Enterprise Zone. Chris is a Governor of the University of South Wales and Chair of USW subsidiary Merthyr Tydfil FE College. A chartered surveyor, he has advised the Welsh Government on the utilisation of public sector assets, the devolution of business rates and planning reform.



Linda Urquhart OBE

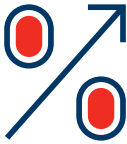
Linda is an experienced business leader and is currently a Non-executive Director at both Coutts and Edinburgh Airport, and a Trustee of Marie Curie. She has a wealth of experience including a key perspective on skills and inward investment in Scotland. She was the first female Managing Partner of major Scottish law firm, Morton Fraser, a Board Member of Scottish Enterprise, and served as Chair of both CBI Scotland and Re:markable (formerly Investors in People Scotland) and Co-Chair of the Fair Work Convention, an independent advisory body to Scottish Ministers. She was awarded an OBE for services to business in 2012.

Understanding international investors' skills needs



Following the first meeting of the Skills Taskforce for Global Britain, at which members reviewed EY's latest Attractiveness Survey data, explored WorldSkills UK's international benchmarking data on skills, and shared their own experiences of attracting investment and responding to investor needs, three key lines of inquiry emerged:

Is the quality and quantity of our technical skills base sufficient to attract foreign investors?

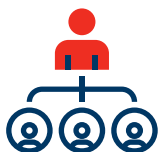


Members of the Taskforce were concerned that the UK's skills systems don't produce enough of the right quality of skills to be attractive to grow key parts of our economy. EY Attractiveness Survey data certainly shows that, within Europe, the UK was behind France for inward investment projects for the second year running. It also shows that London still gets by far the most inward investment although there are some signs that other regions and nations of the UK are improving their competitiveness².



WorldSkills UK is now exploring this in more detail through interviews and roundtables with international investors who can give us a first-hand account of what skills they need and the extent to which their skills needs are met in different parts of the UK.

² www.ey.com/en_uk/attractiveness



Can the UK's skills systems respond quickly enough to the needs of investors to help secure and retain their interest?

Taskforce members also discussed their concerns that the way our skills systems operate makes them slow to respond to investor demand. In other words, they are more confident talking about the skills they are geared to supply year after year than how that delivery can flex to offer something different. While this may not be a factor in whether a firm chooses the UK in the first place, it could be a big factor in whether they choose to stay in the UK or expand. There are some examples of good practice in this area, particularly in Northern Ireland where the Executive's Assured Skills Academy³ is designed specifically to deliver the skills that investors need with a tailored approach to skills development and a quick turnaround.

WorldSkills UK is interested in views on how those involved in the skills system can offer bespoke solutions for investors and to what extent the lack of tailored solutions is deterring investors in different parts of the UK.

³ www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/assured-skills-programme



Are we doing enough to market our technical skills to global investors?

Initial research into how the UK attracts international investors, for example through the GREAT campaign, suggests that technical education and apprenticeships are rarely mentioned. Marketing collateral focuses on the reputation of the UK's leading universities but doesn't feature the quality of our technical skills base. Yet there is some evidence of better practice within the UK, such as in Scotland and Northern Ireland, where marketing to investors on the basis of talent includes a focus on technical skills as well as university education.

WorldSkills UK is supporting the Taskforce to explore this further through a project with investment promotion experts OCO Global who will be reporting on what best practice in skills promotion looks like for investment promotion agencies (IPAs) around the world.

Through interviews, roundtables, polling and commissioned research WorldSkills UK will gather further evidence across these three areas to help the Taskforce members work out how the UK's skills systems can be improved to help attract investment.

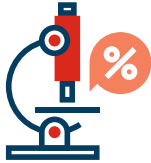




Skills Taskforce Call for Evidence

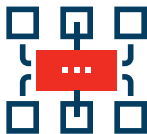
The Skills Taskforce members are keen to hear from any stakeholder with experience in an international firm, investing or expanding in the UK, or experience of responding to investors' skills needs from an education/training institution, investment promotion agency, local enterprise partnership or Local/Combined Authority.

Call for evidence themes:



- how important are skills to international investors?
- which skills do investors need?
- how quickly can we respond to investors' skills needs?
- which regions/nations are best at responding to investors' skills needs?
- how does the UK's skills pipeline compare to other countries in attracting investors?

Please [click here](#) to fill in the questionnaire





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Charity number 1001586,
Company number 02535199
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