

Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum Final Evaluation Report

March 2008

**Bellevue Consultancy
Brodies LLP
Critical Thinking**



Ann Hughes
Director

Bellevue Consultancy

24 Bellevue Crescent
Edinburgh
EH3 6NF

tel. 0131 556 0727
fax. 0131 556 0727
e-mail. ann.hughes@bellevueconsultancy.co.uk

Derek Stewart
Director – Management Consultancy

Brodies LLP

2 Blythswood Square
Glasgow
G2 4AD

tel. 0141 248 4672
fax. 0141 221 9270
e-mail. derek.stewart@brodies.co.uk

www.brodies.co.uk

Jane W Denholm
Director

Critical Thinking

18 Frederick Street
Edinburgh
EH2 2HB

tel: 0131 220 4520
fax: 0131 226 1306
e-mail: j.denholm@criticalthinking.co.uk

www.criticalthinking.co.uk

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Contents	page
1 Introduction	
The Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum	4
Evaluation	5
Background	5
2 Final Evaluation	
Policy context	7
Progress and performance	8
Group 1: Internal management	8
Group 2: Partnership effectiveness	17
Group 3: Learning and capacity building	18
Group 4: Impact and customer service	20
3 Conclusions	23
4 Next Steps	24
Annex A: The Evaluation Framework	

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1. Introduction

The Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum

The Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum (FATWAF), a partnership of three universities, five¹ local colleges and the Open University in Scotland, has been in existence in its present form since 2003. For the three preceding years, the Forum operated as a partnership of the three universities and the Open University in Scotland. It is one of four regional wider access forums funded by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) with the objective of promoting wider participation in higher education to traditionally under-represented groups.

The Forum partners are committed to working with each other and also more broadly with local councils, community groups - including those in the voluntary sector - Careers Scotland and others, towards meeting a strategic aim which, at the outset of the period of the current strategy, 2004 – 2008, they identified as *improving participation rates in HE and FE level programmes and other education and training among target groups², thereby contributing to the Scottish Executive's aim of widening participation in HE level programmes.*

The Forum's work is overseen by a Senior Managers' Strategy Group with membership from the organisations in the region that have a particular interest in widening participation: the partner universities and colleges, local authorities, Careers Scotland and Learndirect Scotland. This Group approves the Forum's strategy and elects the Forum's Executive Group, the body responsible for implementing that strategy. The Executive Group comprises two members from each of the college and university sectors and the Chairs of the Forum's two thematic programmes, LIFT OFF for schools, and Transitions for post-compulsory education. Each of these programmes has its own Management Group which is responsible for a suite of projects through which the theme is progressed. The Theme Management Groups report to the Executive Group which, in turn, reports to the Senior Managers' Strategy Group.

From the point of view of day to day management and administration, the Forum has a Manager (who attends Executive and Senior Managers' Strategy Group meetings as well as theme Management Groups); an Administrator; and two small support teams, one for each theme. Each theme was co-ordinated by a Development Officer until the spring of 2007 when the Pre-Access Development Officer, who co-ordinated the Transitions theme, resigned. At this point, the Pre-Access Steering Group assumed responsibility for that particular area of work and the Forum Manager responsibility for co-ordination. The Forum is hosted by the University of Abertay in Dundee where the Manager and Administrator are based. Other staff are based in various locations throughout the region.

In 2007 the Forum added arrangements to involve and consult more fully and formally with a group of its primary stakeholders by establishing a Pupil Forum comprising S4 and S5 pupils from its 13 target schools in the Fife and Tayside area.

¹ Following the merger of Fife and Glenrothes Colleges in August 2005 to form Adam Smith College

² Target school pupils, target pupil groups, and adult learners

The Pupil Forum, one branch in Dundee and the other in Fife, meets approximately every six months and, as well as providing feedback on events and initiatives, also advises more generally on issues such as the types of support that pupils need at key stages in their school lives.

Evaluation

In June 2005, the Forum Executive appointed Critical Thinking and Bishops Consulting, (now part of Brodies LLP), to supply an evaluation service for the Forum until 2008. The service is to provide an ongoing critical and formative review of the Forum's performance and progress and overall effectiveness in meeting its strategic aim up to that date.

By the end of our engagement with the Forum, we will have provided three reports in total: initial, interim and final. We provided the initial report in December 2005. That report established the policy context in which the Forum was operating at that time, mapped the Forum's strategy for the period 2004 to 2008, and established a balanced scorecard of measures against which the Forum's progress and performance could be gauged. The report also provided a set of baseline statistics relating to student enrolment, progression and attainment. It covered the period September 2004 to December 2005, so spanning two academic years: all of 2004/05 and a third of 2005/06.

The interim report, again spanning two academic years, all of 2005/06 and almost half of 2006/07, was provided in March 2007. In it, we revisited the policy context and reviewed the Forum's progress and performance during the period. We should note, however, that the project reviews we considered covered 2005/06 only.

This is our final report. It reviews the policy context; provides an assessment of the Forum's progress and performance and overall effectiveness across the full period of the evaluation; and comments on particular strengths and areas for further development. As the Forum's work proceeds beyond the period of our engagement as evaluators, it will provide a basis upon which the Forum can continue to evaluate its effectiveness for itself.

Background

There are two main elements in our approach to the evaluation overall: monitoring the policy context in which the Forum is operating, and applying our agreed evaluation framework, this latter including evaluation of progress against a set of key baseline statistics relating to student enrolment, progression and attainment.

Our review of the policy context in late 2005, together with a suite of key baseline statistics (substantially relating to 2003/04), were set out in our initial report. This report formed part of the Forum's 2004/05 Annual Report.

The evaluation framework is set out in detail at Annex A. Briefly, it comprises a Forum specific strategy map, derived from the Forum's strategic plan 2004-2008, to chart what the Forum needs to do to deliver its overall objective, and a 'balanced scorecard' of performance measures, related to the strategy map, to gauge the Forum's effectiveness. Both map and scorecard measures were developed in collaboration with Forum members through an intensive series of meetings and correspondence in the period September to November 2005.

The measures are grouped according to the four types that will be considered for purposes of the evaluation: internal management; partnership effectiveness; learning and capacity building; and impact and customer service. The list of measures under each type is comprehensive, with the measures at a level of fine detail, and we anticipate that these will come increasingly to apply as the work of the Forum progresses. At this stage, it has proved appropriate to take an overall sense from them rather than to consider each one individually. There are particular considerations relating to quantitative data at this stage that we note in the relevant sections.

2. Final evaluation

This is our final evaluation for the Forum. While we aim to provide an overview of the Forum's progress and performance from the start of its current strategy in 2004, we focus in particular on the last year, the period since our interim evaluation report in March 2007. In this context, we have determined that positive developments apparent at that time have been consolidated and/or built on.

For purposes of this final evaluation, we have revisited the policy context to review developments, and we have surveyed stakeholder perceptions of progress and performance. In this latter connection, we ran two focus groups during the theme workshops on 27 November 2007, and, in the period December 2007 to February 2008, conducted 15 interviews with a sample of individuals drawn from a range of stakeholder organisations. We attended the Forum's Annual Conference in June 2007 and also reviewed documentation supplied by the Forum Manager. This included statements of action taken on recommendations made in our interim evaluation report; the Forum's Annual Report 2006/07; self-evaluations by each of the Forum themes – LIFT OFF and Transitions – together with supporting documentation; and the Forum's Strategy 2008 -13.

In addition, as was the case in the period between initial and interim report, we met regularly with the Forum Manager to discuss progress and advise on policy, methods and approaches.

Policy context

In our interim report in March 2007, we recalled the firm line of commitment on the part of government to widening participation in learning in general and for under-represented groups in particular that we recorded in our initial report in December 2005; and we went on to note that developments in the intervening period had served to reinforce that position. The developments concerned were the government's NEET strategy of June 2006, *More Choices, More Chances*; the continuing implementation by the SFC of the *Learning for All* action plan, which included placing the Wider Access Forums on a much more secure financial footing with funding on a two year rolling basis; and the publication of the SFC's Corporate Plan 2006-09 which identified fair access as its first aim. We concluded that the policy environment confirmed the centrality of the Wider Access Forums to the widening participation agenda, and that the particular partnership approach at the core of the Fife and Tayside Forum's delivery strategy was entirely in sympathy with the prevailing mood.

There has been a change of government since March 2007 but no change in commitment to learning or in the partnership approach to delivery of strategy. Arguably, however, the new government's *Skills for Scotland, A Lifelong Skills Strategy*, published in September 2007, has served to sharpen and refresh it. The strategy places particular emphasis on the individual learner, on skills development and on the creation and promotion of a wider range of progression pathways for individuals. It sets objectives for the development of a cohesive lifelong learning system and identifies the partners in the endeavour, together with their roles and responsibilities. The achievement of the objectives requires partnership working with and between all key players – employers, Local Authorities, learning and training providers, and agencies and bodies such as the SQA, SCQF and SFC. And, critically, in addition to provision of high quality, relevant and accessible learning opportunities, it requires robust arrangements for delivery of information, advice and guidance to help raise individuals' awareness of opportunities and negotiate a path through them. The latter is mainstream to the Fife and Tayside Forum's work.

In November 2007 the SFC published *Articulation for All*, a report stimulated by *Learning for All*, and which examined current patterns of articulation from higher education courses at colleges to first degree courses at higher education institutions. *Articulation for All* found that “significant volumes of articulation are limited to a small number of HEIs. Two universities account for about half of articulation; six (five since Bell College and the University of Paisley merged) account for nearly 90 per cent of articulation”.³ The SFC has initiated a consultation on these findings which is still underway at time of writing. The consultation covers fundamental questions such as the volume of articulation, the quality and effectiveness of articulation for learners, and the kind of collaborations that would best support articulation. Articulation issues have impacted on the work of the Forum to date and they can be expected to do so in the future, albeit the extent and nature of the impact following the outcomes of the current consultation is, as yet, unclear.

Once again our conclusion is that, overall, the policy environment is both supportive and demanding of the Wider Access Forums.

Progress and performance

We noted in our interim evaluation in March 2007 that it was still early days in the implementation of the Forum’s strategy. One year on, and relatively speaking, that remains the case. However, progress is now more clearly discernable at the strategy map’s lower reaches, at the enabler and activity levels, and, on the basis of this, it is possible to make some assessments at the mid and higher reaches of outcomes and impact.

Below, we recall our observations in 2007 under each of the main headings in the Forum’s scorecard - internal management; partnership effectiveness; learning and capacity building; and impact and customer service. We then go on to consider progress in the intervening period and identify key messages to inform our overall conclusions and suggested next steps in Sections 3 and 4 respectively.

Internal management

This set of measures is critical to managing activities and processes. Measures here fall into three categories, all concerned with how the Forum organises and manages itself to deliver its outcomes: enabler development and implementation (subsuming resource management, comprising finance, people, and information and communication technology); activity development and implementation; and strategy. By the time of this report we expected these to be substantively embedded.

³ SFC 2007 Circular SFC/05/2007 *Articulation for All*

Relevant boxes on strategy map		
Level	Box ref. no.	
Strategy	10	
Activities	11	Raising awareness of learning opportunities
Activities	12	Identify and promote pre-access activities
Activities	13	Provide a continuum of activities in primary and secondary schools
Activities	14	Review and promote part-time work-based learning routes
Activities	15	Develop a 'transitions' project eg a residential experience
Activities	16	Raise mutual understanding of teachers and college and university staff
Activities	17	Build college and university partnerships in access programmes
Activities	18	Improve HN to degree programme articulation
Activities	19	Develop support for potential HE level students "at risk"
Enablers	20	Deploy budgets effectively
Enablers	21	Use people effectively
Enablers	22	Harness technology appropriately
Enablers	25	Develop the Forum website
Enablers	26	Mainstream projects over time as appropriate
Enablers	27	Develop and share information
Enablers	30	Identify datasets and develop and set targets
Enablers	31	Develop appropriate documentation
Enablers	32	Develop a branded common approach

Enabler development and implementation

Review

At interim evaluation stage, we indicated that we expected progress with the enabler-level activities on the strategy map to be more advanced than that with those at the other levels. We found that most of the enablers had been addressed although some (eg the website and technology) required a little more work, and others (eg documentation) would require constant attention to ensure they remained current.

Our key messages at that stage were:

- Some key enablers – specifically datasets and targets - were not yet properly in place and needed immediate attention. While it was too early in the lifetime of the Forum's strategy and projects to expect to see much, if any, evidence of progress, especially in quantitative terms, it was imperative that the capacity to consider such evidence existed and was maintained.
- There should be investment further to develop skills in target setting at project level.
- The Forum should begin to exploit its organisational structure more fully for purposes of reviewing, reporting and reflecting on activity. Thus, Theme Management Groups should consider and report on their projects individually and collectively in the context of their Theme, and the Executive Group consider Theme reports in the context of the Forum's overall aims and objectives. In this way, the Group would be in a more secure position to take a strategic view.
- There was a high degree of confidence in the Forum secretariat, and in the Forum Manager especially. However, the pressure and dependence on the Forum Manager was acknowledged. Consideration might usefully be given to the opportunities offered by the new organisational structure for further alleviating pressures on the Manager and, coincidentally, moving to a more sustainable model of operation managerially.

- There was a need to be realistic about the extent to which mainstreaming projects is likely to be feasible, given pressure on partner budgets.
- There might be a similar need to be realistic about the degree to which the engagement of senior staff in partner organisations is necessary or achievable.

Final evaluation

The Forum developed an action plan to address the overarching observations we made in the final section of our report at interim evaluation stage and, in the process of putting that into effect, has effectively responded to the most substantive of the issues we identified in relation to infrastructure management at the enabler level. Specifically, the Forum has begun to exploit its new organisational structure for purposes of reviewing, reporting and reflecting on activity, and it has paid serious attention to quantitative data.

As far as quantitative data are concerned, we noted two positive developments. The first is the updating of the key baseline statistics on student enrolment, progression and attainment set out on our initial report in December 2005. These related substantially to 2003/04 and have now been updated with the most recently available data, those for 2005/06. The Forum has undertaken an analysis of the data, which forms part of its 2006/07 Annual Report, and has committed to annual updates and expansion as appropriate to create a significant measure of progress over time. Second, data are being collected against measures established at project level. We refer to these later, and are confident they will prove to be of considerable value.

We heard favourable comment on the regional database developing within the Forum as a result of the update of the baseline statistics. Partners see it as a resource which will not only inform the Forum's strategy and planning but, through the detailed picture of the region it provides, also enhance their individual information bases, thereby serving to support their own forward thinking and planning. Partners commented to us that although they each know their own area/constituency, the regional picture which the Forum brings together for them is very helpful in pursuit of both Forum and non-Forum related activities.

As far as exploitation of organisational structure is concerned, the Forum has defined the roles and responsibilities of, and the relationships between, its various groups; set up an associated annual calendar of meetings; and scheduled training for staff supporting Management Groups. We were advised that formal training is pending, awaiting decisions by the SFC on the Forum's budget which are due to be taken shortly. Meanwhile, informal training is taking place.

From the documentation supplied to us, it is clear that reporting, review and reflection on activities within each theme is being undertaken. The Forum is able to show an understanding of progress and performance in each. What is not immediately apparent, however, is the extent to which the Forum is considering its activities as a whole – across the two themes - rather than in the context of each individually. This bears on questions of how the Forum takes a view on the allocation of resources between the two themes. With both the information and the discretion to do so, we would expect the Forum to take conscious and informed decisions about the balance of investment between the two Themes in the light of identified considerations and evidence of effectiveness.

Overall, partners voiced satisfaction with the way in which the Forum was managing itself, but, within this, we noted specific concerns on two fronts - budgets and staff; and we also noted a particular development on mainstreaming activity.

On budgets, we noted a wish on the part of partner organisations for funding announcements to be made as early as possible to assist them in their forward planning. They are aware of the new funding regime – the Forum budget operating on a two year rolling basis – and believe that this may allow scope for address of issues here. We consider this to be a reasonable view. It should be possible to fine tune existing arrangements to provide at least early indicative budgets for projects already approved, subject to confirmation on evidence of satisfactory progress provided to the appropriate group meetings.

On the staffing front, once again partners voiced appreciation of the calibre of the Forum staff and their input to activities. This is especially the case as far as the Forum Manager is concerned, and all partners acknowledge the consequent risk from the degree of dependency on one individual. We understand that training for staff supporting the Management Groups has been scheduled. This is encouraging. Moves to develop other Forum staff to strengthen the degree of administrative and management support available to the Forum are desirable. A high level of risk is inherent in the Forum structure, but steps could and should be taken to mitigate it.

Partners commented too on the fundamental part played by development workers in building partnerships and maintaining momentum in activities. Any diminution of resource is keenly felt, they said, and, in this connection, we were made aware of the need to keep current arrangements, specifically those for Pre-Access activity, under review. While the Forum's response to the resignation that led to the observation on Pre-Access activity was pragmatic in the circumstances, it also appears to have been considered. Nevertheless, an early review of the position, which we understand is being monitored, would seem advisable.

Finally, on mainstreaming, we noted at interim stage that widespread mainstreaming of activity seemed to be an unlikely eventuality given the pressure on individual stakeholder budgets. Our work at this final stage has confirmed this; moreover, externally, it has revealed high level awareness and acceptance of the position. The establishment of all the Wider Access Forums on a rolling basis appears also to have established them as infrastructure in their own right.

Conclusions.

- Overall, enablers have been put on a sound footing. They will need ongoing review and periodic adjustment but, essentially, the Forum is now operating on a solid base organisationally and managerially and looks well placed to move forward into its next funding period.
- The quantitative database the Forum is developing stands to be of benefit to the Forum as a collective and the partners as individual entities.
- Staffing matters – specifically, staff training and deployment - will benefit from ongoing attention to secure effective support for the Forum into the future and place it on a more sustainable footing.

Activity development and implementation (11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19)

Review

At interim evaluation stage we said that, next to enablers, activities was the other area of the strategy map where we would expect to begin to see some progress. There had been positive movement – an extensive programme of activities was in

place – but it was not possible to be clear about the nature and extent of progress that had been made. We expected a stronger evidence base to develop over time as activity monitoring arrangements were refined.

Our key messages at that stage were:

- An extensive programme of activities was in place, involving a wide range of partners.
- We did not envisage significant impact on desired outcomes at that stage. The structure behind our strategy mapping approach aims to map the logical links between enablers, activities and subsequent impact. Our largely positive findings about progress with enablers and activities provided some confidence that the desired impact would be achieved as the Forum's programme of work was progressed. This confidence was reaffirmed by the initial observations made regarding participation in, and enthusiasm for, individual programmes and projects.
- At that time, a full and robust information base had yet to be developed that allowed meaningful comment on outcomes and impact. We envisaged that progress would be made in this area over the next year, and would aim to draw associated conclusions in our final evaluation report.
- Looking ahead, overviews of progress and effectiveness on a theme basis linked to theme strategy would be helpful to the Forum, as would a corresponding overview of both themes linked to Forum strategy.

Final evaluation

The Forum's activities to date, with their current status (ongoing, complete), are listed below on pages 15 and 16. Overall, the listing indicates a substantial and varied range of activity that shows signs of beginning to consolidate around a programme of core activities in each Theme, substantially those that are 'ongoing'.

LIFT OFF

Responses are very positive in relation to Forum activities overall and, in so far as schools based activity in LIFT OFF is concerned, LIFT OFF to Success (LO2S), almost overwhelmingly so.

We were told that LO2S participants' response is '100% positive' and that their enthusiasm endures beyond the residential school, buoyed up by regular, programmed sessions with the Forum staff mentors. Increases in confidence and self esteem have been noticed amongst participants, as well as a disposition to engage more widely with school life and activities, for example, by taking part in school drama productions. The positive impact has extended beyond the pupil participants to others lower down in the school and also to parents, some of whose horizons have been perceived to have been widened through their children's involvement with LIFT OFF. This is viewed as enormously significant in localities that tend to be inward looking. Activities appear to be reaching quite far into target markets. One interviewee remarked that LIFT OFF was 'one of the most worthwhile activities I have been involved with'; another that the Great Big LIFT OFF Conference was 'fabulous'. The consensus was that current activity is hugely beneficial and deserves to be extended across and downwards in the target schools, and also to include more schools.

The establishment of the Pupil Forum was a bold and experimental step which appears to have paid off. Pupils have participated enthusiastically and vocally in the Pupil Forum, giving their views on how the residential programme might be made even better; their support for action to make it more widely available and to develop ancillary activities; and their ideas for smoothing their own and others' paths to continuing in education. The perspective of pupils themselves has been invaluable in allowing the Forum partners to refine projects, for example through drawing attention to the imperative of involving and informing parents who will usually lack the personal experience of further and higher education needed to provide help and guidance. The Pupil Forum is now a vital element in the Forum.

Quantitative data are now being collected and, in relation to projects that can now be regarded as established - volunteer training and LO2S and related activities - bear witness to consolidation and development. Places on the LO2S residential school are limited, but those available are being taken up at a consistent level, despite the timing in the summer holiday period which often clashes with family holiday arrangements. Attendance at S3/S4 workshops is rising, up from 47 pupils in 10 schools in 2005/06 to 200 in 13 in 2006/07; and the numbers of student volunteers trained rose from 21 to 30 in the same period.

The Forum has attracted significant funding from the HBOS Foundation - £150k over the three year period 2007/08 to 2009/10 - to build on LO2S activity. A plan for the use of the funding is in place and a Project Officer has been appointed to support its implementation. The funding has already supported a highly successful conference, The Great Big LIFT OFF, designed, with advice from the Pupil Forum, as a one-stop information shop on college and university entry. Open to all S5 pupils in the Forum's target 13 schools, around 170 pupils attended the conference in November 2007. This exceeded the initial target of 165 agreed with HBOS Foundation, albeit it was below the internal target of 240 set following detailed planning of the event. The event is to be repeated in 2008. The external funding is a notable indicator of confidence in, and regard for, in the Forum's work in this area.

The *Stepping Higher* brochure, produced regularly by the Forum, also attracted some favourable comment. Pupils, students, professional advisers and parents clearly make use of it, evidenced by the number of inquiries that are perceived to be made of colleges, higher education institutions and careers advisers on the basis of the information contained in the publication. Careers advisers see the information on articulation routes as particularly useful, their experience being that college is more often than not the first destination for those wishing to continue their education in the area.

Some of the provider partners, however, believe that *Stepping Higher* offers too much choice. This was distracting and unrealistic. The brochure could be more usefully focused on the most likely and popular articulation routes, rather than trying to include all higher education institutions and programmes. They cited the *Articulation for All* findings that, for some institutions, articulation provides a substantial proportion of their entrants, whilst for others it is a very small proportion – as low as one in a thousand entrants.

Transitions

Transitions is a far more diverse Theme than LIFT OFF, encompassing, with the OU led Diversity project and SWAP East, national and inter-regional activities as well as those developed by the Forum itself. It also spans a wider constituency – from recent school leavers to adults at all ages and life stages. It is this diversity that no doubt contributed to the impression on the part of some that the Theme lacked coherence: the variety in activity, and hence opportunity, present in the theme was valuable, but this didn't need to be at the expense of coherence. Partners did,

however, recognise that the funding regime under which the Forum had been operating – funding for one year to be spent in year – also played a part. There had been little time to consider overall direction and the bigger picture or, indeed, pay as much attention as was desirable to how a resource, such as a database, was to be maintained when funding ended.

We said at interim stage that reports on projects gave confidence that there is learning from initial experience and we see that happening in Transitions overall and at the level of individual activity. The listing of activities suggests the portfolio of activities in the Theme is being refined and focused, and this impression is borne out by forward plans drawn up in the context of the Forum's strategy for its next funding period. The Theme's shape and direction are emerging more clearly. At project level, at interim stage we cited Pre-Access as an activity where action was to be taken to strengthen engagement in the light of experience. Data are informative here: 104 learners on eight courses in 2005/06 rose to 171 learners on 18 in 2006/07. The Forum is extending its reach in this area. Elsewhere, in SWAP, we see engagement in activity in Access courses, preparatory courses for HE and tutor support holding year on year, and a steady increase in the number of branded courses. We heard comment, too, that more attention is now being paid at the outset to clarifying responsibility for maintenance of a resource or facility at the end of a project's funding period. The overall impression given in Transitions is one of clearer direction and improving organisation.

Looking across both themes, the balance of activity between research and services attracted favourable comment from partners, with the Forum perceived as appreciating the value and importance of the latter. Specifically, services are not unduly curtailed by the cost of study into areas already well-researched.

Reviewing the general statement of activities in the Strategy Map, we noted views on two areas in particular: articulation and work based learning. In so far as articulation is concerned, the view was expressed that this should be deprioritised in light of the direction of the SFC's thinking on location of responsibility in this area. This seemed to be tending to colleges and universities, and a limited number of the latter. Work based learning was an area considered by the Forum at the outset, on balance, not to be of high priority. Opinions continue to be mixed, and taking a view would be helpful. We believe reference to the new Skills Strategy might help in this respect.

Overall, new activities, or full realisation of activities currently specified, for example, relating to schools activity, are generally recognised as being subject to the availability of resources. Resources are incontrovertibly an issue, but the Forum has discretion within the limits of the core resources available to it. We said at interim stage that an overview of both themes linked to Forum strategy would be helpful and we make the point here, in the Enablers section, that it is not immediately apparent how far the Forum is considering its activities as a whole, ie across both themes, rather than in the context of each one individually. This bears on questions of how the Forum takes a view on the allocation of resources between the two themes. We would expect the Forum to take conscious and informed decisions about the balance of investment between the two themes in the light of identified considerations and evidence of effectiveness.

Conclusions

- Activities in themes are well received by partners and are registering positively with target groups. Our initial confidence in progress, on the basis of findings at interim report stage, appears to have been well placed.

- The general portfolio of existing project activity is being managed within available resources but might be managed more strategically in terms of the balance of investment between Themes.
- Given the constraints on funding, the Forum might examine the scope of the statement of activity as it stands in the Strategy Map with a view to refinement in the interests of appropriate focus.

Table 1: FIFE AND TAYSIDE WIDER ACCESS FORUM ACTIVITIES BY THEME 2005 to date			
LIFT OFF (15 projects, 5 ongoing)		Transitions (11 projects, 7 ongoing)	
Activity and Status	Focus	Activity and status	Focus
LIFT OFF to Success Ongoing from 2006	S4 Residential Summer School for 13 target secondary schools across the four F&T LA areas. Includes pre- and post- School activities.	Pre-Access Communities Project Ongoing from 06/05	Non-traditional learners into FE and HE.
Student tutoring Mainstreamed university activity from 2007/08	Aiding pupil transition to college and university through student-pupil matching. (Dundee and St Andrews universities).	SWAP East Ongoing from 07/05 (though SWAP Core activity has been part of Forum since August 04)	Adult learner transitions to FE and HE (multi-strand project).
Fife Young Mothers under review	Transition to FE and HE. (Fife Council initiative).	Guidance Plus Completed 12/07	Non-advanced to HN courses (best practice model).
Travellers' children (C4 Yourself) Ongoing from 2006	Awareness raising through college taster days.	College student peer mentoring. Development of model by Dundee college. Ongoing from 04/06	College students vulnerable at transitions stage.
Careers in Creative Industries Cancelled 02/07. Funding transferred to Information Literacy project	S2 pupil awareness raising. (Dundee City Council initiative).	Diversity – OU cross-forum project Ongoing from 07/05	Black and ethnic groups, refugees, asylum seekers (info pack; website; staff development).
Information Literacy Ongoing from 02/06	FE and HE preparatory IT skills for pupils in schools with low progression rates. (Dundee and Abertay universities with school staff).	Progression routes in Fife Completed 02/07	Web based map related to growth occupational areas.
College student ambassadors Completed 07/07	Training for college students to act as ambassadors in schools with low progression rates etc. Model developed by Dundee College).	FE/HE research (Abertay University) Completed 04/06	Transitions from HN to degree to determine effective pre-entry activity, amount and timing

Stepping Higher Ongoing from pre-2004	Articulation routes between college and university (booklet).	Scoping for FE/HE research transition activities Completed 06/06	Establishing best practice in managing FE to HE transition
Your Future, Your Choice Terminated 02/07 after production of 8,000 leaflets	Routes to FE and HE (leaflet).	SCQF and PDP Both ongoing from 06/06	Awareness raising through credit-rating and levelling a number of locally devised community based learning programmes as aids to consideration of progression. Piloting of online PDP for groups of adult learners in a variety of settings.
Surviving Standard Grade – Parents' Guide Completed 12/07	Live drama, DVD and delivery notes for all schools in F & T.		
Am I bovvered? Completed 07.07	Drama and teachers' pack dealing with barriers to access and achievement. Piloted in Arbroath Academy.	Transitions Access Project Ongoing from 04/06	Information, guidance and support sessions at the three Forum partner Universities for F & T College access students.
Choosing Science Completed 07/07	STEM Group research into identifying drivers affecting choice.		
Role onto Success Completed 07	Film of local student successes.	Aftercare Project Ongoing from 08/06	Guidance and support to young people leaving residential and foster care.
WHAN Tayside and Fife Ongoing from 08/06	National project raising awareness of health as a career.	Inspired Complete 05/07	Stories of successful learners from a variety of backgrounds. (booklet).
Underachieving boys Completed 07/07	Research towards a model schools/parents programme to reduce NEET amongst young males.		
Great Big LIFT OFF Conference – Ongoing from Nov 07	Conference for S5/S6 pupils from target schools to raise awareness of next steps to college and university		

Strategy (10)

The Strategy provides the framework within which the Forum's activities are planned, supported and implemented. With this in mind, we have not set out a distinct set of findings about Strategy implementation. Rather, the evaluation of progress is informed by the progress described under the enablers and activities sections of this report.

Partnership effectiveness

This set of measures is critical to building and capitalising on relationships between key partners. Measures here fall into two categories: partnership progress; and partnership perception. Progress measures seek to assess the extent to which partnership is real and embedded (through tangible action that has been taken to build and maintain joint working); perception measures to assess how partners view achievement in the range of delivery and management activity with which the Forum is engaged.

While the two *should* be highly interlinked, experience of other projects indicates that there can be a lag between the action being undertaken and the development of a shared perception of genuine progress in partnership working. Indeed, in some instances, the action fails to lead to any significant change in perceptions (either due to the scale or pace of action failing to meet expectations, or because disagreements about the nature of the action taken lead to further divisions).

Relevant box on Strategy Map		
Level	Box ref. no.	
Enablers	33	Effective partnership working

Review

In our interim report we noted that, for many stakeholders, Fife and Tayside is the least naturally coherent of the four Forum regions socially, economically and geographically. We noted the extra effort that partners and Forum staff had made, as a consequence, to establish it as an effective entity at both strategic and practitioner levels.

Our key messages at that stage were:

- The picture of partnership progress that emerged overall was positive. From arguably adverse circumstances, a firm and workable set of partnership arrangements had been forged, to which all partners contributed and from which all partners benefited, in their different ways.
- The approach of Forum staff, in particular, had been crucial to bringing this position about and was acknowledged and appreciated by all stakeholders.
- Work raising and maintaining levels of mutual awareness and understanding amongst partners would require ongoing attention and activity. Continued investment in staff development would support this, as should the planned implementation of a communications strategy in 2006/07.

Final evaluation

From our work this year, partnership has emerged as a Forum success story, with the foundations put down being built on very effectively. The Forum is seen as fitting in with university and college objectives and, at the very least, working in parallel with those of Local Authorities and materially helping to take them forward. Comment on the themes stress the added value of the Forum activities which continue to go with the grain of, and complement, local initiatives, at the same time as affording welcome scope to innovate and experiment.

Opinions expressed included the partnership that pre-dated the Forum 'probably has been improved by the existence of FATWAF'; partnership 'is at a good stage at the moment'; and the Forum is 'good at getting a joined up approach'.

The Forum makes an effort to be inclusive and encourage participation from its members. Partners appreciate that meetings and events are held in different venues and locations across the region. In return, partners are prepared to travel to come to meetings when necessary, and meetings of the Forum are generally agreed to be well-attended.

There is no doubt that the Forum's staff are key to developing and maintaining healthy partnerships. References were made variously to their commitment, energy, expertise, availability, receptivity, creativity, and capacity for self-critical reflection. The very significant contribution made by Forum development workers in facilitating, supporting and driving forward work at local level was widely appreciated.

However, Forum structures are also material considerations. The Forum has developed and put in place a clear organisational and management framework that allows for systematic formal engagement with partners at strategic and executive levels. The roles and responsibilities of the Senior Management Strategy Group, Executive and Theme Management Groups are clearly articulated and well understood. On the ground, at practitioner level, meeting structures, communications – telephone and e-mail – are working to the extent of passing without remark. The Forum's relatively recently (summer 2007) launched website is also serving as a gelling agent.

Conclusions

- Partnership is going extremely well.
- Staff aptitude and attitude are critical factors in developing and maintaining healthy partnerships, and those of Forum staff are widely respected and appreciated.
- Partnership allows no room for complacency so that efforts to raise mutual levels of awareness and understanding, (identified at interim evaluation stage), and in the light of comment under Learning and Capacity Building below, will continue to need to be made.

Learning and capacity building

This set of measures is critical to sustaining and improving the Forum's activity in the medium to long term and we would therefore expect early progress to have been built on substantially by this stage. Measures here fall into two categories: people development; and learning. The former is staff development, while the latter is concerned with identifying and sharing good practice and realising opportunities at the national and local levels.

Relevant box on Strategy Map		
Level	Box ref. no.	
Enabler	24	Programme of staff development
	28	Share best practice
	34	Respond to local and national policy initiatives

Review

In our interim report, we recorded a wide range of positive steps in terms of both people development and in exploiting learning opportunities.

Our key messages at that stage were:

- Useful activity was taking place in relation to staff development, but greater systematisation would be beneficial, building on the approaches that had proved most beneficial to date, notably linking to partner CPD programmes.
- Similarly, activity in relation to good practice was likely now to have reached the point where it would benefit from consideration in a strategic context in order to ensure that project outcomes were widely disseminated and embedded in practice.
- On the basis of stakeholder responses, the Forum appeared to be pursuing its strategy of working with partners to enhance and complement their programmes of activity with a laudable degree of success.

Final evaluation

We have noted continued progress and overall continuity in these areas. The components of the Forum infrastructure - Forum Team meetings, Theme meetings, the Forum Annual Conference, newsletters, and now the website - all continue to provide an environment which stimulates development and sharing.

Managers of partner institutions reported useful sharing of information and practice at both strategic and practitioner level. Specific staff development initiatives mentioned included continuing 'joined upness' in Transitions, with the Forum tapping into partner activities; the CPD unit at Dundee University commissioned on the basis of a Forum study to help staff across the sectors better support learners making the transition from HN to Degree; and the SCQF project which is expected to raise levels of mutual understanding between the sectors concerned.

Mutual understanding, however, is an area we recorded in our interim report as being recognised by the partners as needing work. This is still the case. In general there is a healthy awareness that the present situation 'isn't great' and is one where 'more work is required'.

Partners are very positive about the Forum as a resource for sharing experience and practice. Forum events and resources and the input of individual development workers were all cited as extremely helpful. Local authorities were especially welcoming and appreciative of the Forum staff's willingness to engage with them across the board, but particularly in community based adult learning, an area that emerged as perceived as not being given due recognition in the Forum's Strategy Map.

Again, as last time, the Forum is an important focus for identifying and responding to local and national policy initiatives. This success is attributed to the Forum's active and inclusive approach to partnership and its willingness to engage with a wide range of partners to explore possible opportunities to add value to their programmes. Local authorities, taking forward programmes under such initiatives as Determined to Succeed, Schools of Ambition and the NEET Strategy, appreciate this, as do the universities and colleges pursuing their individual initiatives to widen participation.

Whereas, in earlier years, we discerned the incentive of funding as a key motivator of participation in Forum activities, from our work at this stage, the Forum has emerged as valued by many as much for the access to professional practice and networks it affords as for the opportunities it offers for funding for innovative and experimental activities.

Conclusions

- Solid work is going on in respect of staff development and sharing practice, but there remains a particular need for greater and more systematic effort to raise the level of mutual understanding between the various sectors.
- The Forum partnership approach to activity is working to good effect.

Impact and customer service

This set of measures is critical to assessing progress in delivering desired outcomes and, as such, relates to the upper reaches of the Strategy Map. The measures fall into three categories: impact; customer service; and target group perception. The two first are linked by the extent of their dependence on quantitative data - notably relating to enrolment and progression - at project and overall national, regional and area level. Impact measures consider the extent of the Forum's effect through changes in target group behaviour and attitude, and customer service measures through target group engagement with the activities and resources made available. Perception measures view the Forum through target group responses to those activities and resources.

Relevant Box on Strategy Map		
Level	Box Ref. No.	
Impact	1	Improved participation rates in HE and FE level programmes and other education and training among Forum target groups, contributing to the SE aim of widening participation in HE level programmes
Outcomes	2	Improved progression rates to HE and FE level programmes among pupils from target schools and/or pupil groups
	3	Improved progression to and within HE level programmes wherever they are delivered
	4	Improved progression to HE and FE level programmes and other education and training among adult learners
	5	Improved opportunities to access HE level programmes
	6	Activity placed on a sustainable footing
	7	Better informed decision making among target groups
	8	Raised aspirations for under-represented groups
	9	Enhanced achievement of individuals
	Enabler	29

Review

In our interim evaluation in March 2007 we observed that, at that point, we would not expect there to be great deal, if any, measurable progress at Impact level: the timeline was too short for the underpinning quantitative data to show movement that might be considered significant. We made such comment as was possible, highlighting the particular need to pay attention to securing and maintaining the data that would support judgements about the Forum's Outcomes and Impact.

Our key messages at that stage were:

- It was still too early to make fully informed judgements about impact and customer service (as defined above). The logic behind the strategy mapping process is that an assumed link can be made between enablers, activities,

strategy, outcomes and impact. With this in mind, the evaluation findings in relation to enablers and activities provided a basis for initial confidence that progress was being made.

- In order for more fully informed judgements to be made in our final evaluation report, serious attention needed to be given to developing the appropriate information base required to support judgements about impact and customer service (in the form of robust quantitative data in an extended time series).

Final evaluation

It is still early days to make judgements about impact and this is more especially the case where such judgements rely on quantitative data: the timeline for measurement is far too short, particularly as far as activities with schoolchildren are concerned.

We have also noted three concerns of a different order relating to quantitative measures of impact. These are set out below. But while it will be reasonable to have regard to them, they do not, in our view, constitute sufficient reason to discount quantitative data as evidence:

- The scale of activity in terms of target group numbers, which is relatively small in relation to whole population sizes;
- Target group activity is likely to be affected by a wide range of environmental factors, many outside the scope of the Forum or its partners; and
- Even where progress is made by target groups, it is difficult to point to a specific causal link with Forum activities when these groups are also subject to interventions by other bodies.

Until quantitative data are available in a sufficiently extended time series, the most informative judgements about impact will derive from what people say – qualitative data – and, in so far as partner bodies are concerned, their willingness to work with the Forum. This said, we have noted positive signs from data collected at project level within Themes. We have already drawn attention to growing numbers attending S3/S4 workshops in LIFT OFF, increases in the numbers of student volunteers trained, and a conference that attracted a sizeable audience. In Transitions, we have noted growth in numbers attending Pre-Access provision and steady state in SWAP activities, except in the numbers of branded courses, which show a steady increase. The indications are that the Forum is engaging larger numbers.

Returning to qualitative evidence, all stakeholders – Local Authorities, Careers Service, schools, pupils – show substantial enthusiasm for LIFT OFF, and the external funding attracted also serves as a measure of impact through the confidence it implies. Transitions is bound to appear low key by comparison, but the comments made by partners working in the field of adult and community based learning in particular are hugely positive both in terms of the activities themselves and of the access they gain to professional practice and expertise. Qualitative evidence is unquestionably positive across the board.

There was one point made in the course of our interview work that registered as thought provoking and might be recorded here since it relates to the way in which the Forum defines its strategic aim or impact in its Strategy Map. Effectively, this is to improve participation rates in forms of education and training. For their part, some partner organisations are, in some instances, content with softer outcomes, related to say, improved self-esteem or confidence and wider horizons. There is therefore occasional tension between Forum and partner objectives - they are not quite congruent. This is simply an observation of fact and there is no suggestion that any

activity has been compromised by the situation, or that tensions cannot not be accommodated. However, it has led some partners to wonder whether, accepting the Forum's locus in access and participation, it might more helpfully and appropriately identify its strategic aim and outputs less specifically in terms of access to formal learning opportunities. A learner who gains in motivation and confidence to the extent of getting a job, for example, can be regarded as a success. There might be merit in defining the Forum's impact and outcomes more broadly in terms of raising awareness of, and aspiration to, education - effectively creating a climate for people to consider their wider opportunities in life. Related to this, several interviewees thought that there would be benefits in partners revisiting the language and terminology of the map and clarifying, and if necessary tightening up, definitions.

Conclusions

- While it is still early days to make judgements, the Forum appears to be on course to achieving its impact as currently expressed.
- There is a case for partners discussing how the Forum's impact and outcomes are specified as it moves into its next funding period with its revised strategy.

3. Conclusions

Our remit was to provide an ongoing critical and formative review of the Forum's performance and progress and overall effectiveness in meeting its strategic aim up to 2008. This aim, *improving participation rates in HE and FE level programmes and other education and training among target groups, thereby contributing to the Scottish Executive's aim of widening participation in HE level programmes*, is ambitious and, significantly, long term. Our method involved considering the Forum from four perspectives – internal management, partnership effectiveness, learning and capacity building, impact and customer services – each having an associated set of measures, both quantitative and qualitative. Our overall conclusion at this stage is that the Forum has made very substantial progress in organising and developing itself to devise and deliver a portfolio of activities supportive of its strategic aim, and there is cause for confidence that, as matters stand, it will continue to develop and deliver effectively into the future. Within this, our specific conclusions are as follows:

- The policy environment continues to be both supportive and demanding of the Wider Access Forums and this seems set for the foreseeable future. The new Government's Skills Strategy, by implication, provides particular endorsement for the Fife and Tayside Forum's work in providing information, advice and guidance; and the outcome of the SFC's *Articulation for All* consultation has the capacity to be highly significant for its work.
- Morale in the Forum continues to be high, with a general sense that real progress being made.
- The Forum has clarified and systematised its organisational infrastructure – its committees, their responsibilities and lines of report – and has simultaneously addressed data issues. In doing so, it has placed itself on a sound footing for taking informed decisions at both strategic and operational levels as it moves into its next funding period.
- Overall, the Forum is maintaining a substantial and varied programme of activities including a number that are acknowledged as innovative and extremely worthwhile. The balance between research and services is perceived as appropriate.
- At Theme level, very substantial headway has been made with LIFT OFF, to the extent of the Forum having created enthusiasm and demand for a great deal more of its activities with school pupils in particular, and also having attracted significant external funding; in Transitions, the post-compulsory education theme, where the programme of activities is more diverse, the Theme as a whole appears to be acquiring clearer direction and several components are gaining noticeably in strength.
- Partnership is working extremely well in general with the Forum now valued as much for the access to professional practice and networks it affords as for the opportunities it offers for funding innovative and experimental activities.
- There continues to be a high degree of confidence in the Forum secretariat from all stakeholders. The professional input of development workers on the ground and the Forum Manager at the higher strategic and operational levels is acknowledged and appreciated by all.
- While it is still early days to make judgements, the Forum appears to be on course to achieving its impact as currently expressed.

4. Next Steps

The Forum enters a new funding period in 2008 with its strategy to 2013 and business plan to 2010 agreed in principle by SFC. The strategy is based on a remit that applies to all Wider Access Forums: to widen participation to all types of post-compulsory education and not just HE. For the Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum, this represents continuity since it has interpreted its remit in this way since 2004, the start of its current funding period. Taking account of continuity of focus, and of our consideration of the evidence gathered in this final evaluation, we make the following observations on action the Forum might usefully consider as it moves forward:

- Revisiting the strategy map in the light of this evaluation, its latest approved strategy and business plan and the current policy environment, to determine whether any modifications would be appropriate and/or helpful.
- Building on this evaluation and the mechanisms it now has in place to keep its progress and performance under continuous review.
- Keeping its management and administrative structures under review from the perspectives of sustainability and effectiveness, bearing in mind both the continued heavy pressure on the Forum Manager and the value placed on the support provided by development workers in the field, particularly in maintaining forward momentum in partnership activities.
- Keeping the scope and balance of activity under review, bearing in mind the extent of the core resources available, the effectiveness of individual interventions and the substantial degree of operational latitude afforded by the SFC.
- Considering the strategic coherence and also the sustainability of the activities supported within each theme, bearing in mind the longer term view that new funding arrangements enable.

Annex A

Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework for the Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum was developed in consultation with senior managers and stakeholders within the Forum. As far as possible, the language used in the framework is from the documentation provided by the Forum: its strategic and operational plans 2004-2008.

The framework has been developed to allow both comprehensive and specific conclusions to be drawn. We worked with senior managers and stakeholders to identify:

- The key **Impact** that the Forum is expected to make;
- The desired **Outcomes** for the Forum;
- The **Strategies** which need to be in place to guide the Activities and deliver these Outcomes;
- The **Activities** (projects/services/initiatives) that the Forum must ensure are in place to deliver the Outcomes; and
- The **Enablers** – that is, the things which have to be correctly in place - to deliver the key activities (e.g. resources, improved partner communication, organisational development, IT systems etc)

There are two distinct parts to the framework: the **Strategy Map** (at A i below), and the **Balanced Scorecard** of measures (at A ii below).

The **Strategy Map** sets out the Impact, Outcomes, Strategy, Activities and Enablers that the Forum is intended to have. As evaluators we worked with partners and stakeholders first to identify the Impact that they were looking for the Forum to have. All agreed that it was:

‘Improved participation rates in HE and FE level programmes and other education and training among Forum target groups, contributing to the Scottish Executive aim of widening participation in HE level programmes’

That Impact therefore sits in Box 1 of the Strategy Map, at its apex. The next stage, once the Impact was agreed, was to look at the Outcomes that were critical to achieving that Impact. So, for example, ‘Better informed decision-making among target groups’ (Box 7) is deemed to be a crucial Outcome in order to deliver the Impact.

Next, we considered the Strategies that needed to be in place both to deliver the Outcomes and to guide the Activities, and then we looked at the Activities required to produce the Outcomes. The relationship between Outcomes and Activities is not necessarily a unique one and any given Activity may relate to more than one Outcome. So, for example, the Activity ‘raising awareness of learning opportunities’ can support all three Outcomes relating to improved progression (Boxes 2, 3 and 4) as well as ‘better informed decision making among target groups’ (Box 7).

Finally, for the Activities detailed in the Strategy Map to happen, appropriate Enablers need to be in place. The Enablers in the Map relate to all of the Activities detailed, and are the basic building blocks of the Forum. They are on the whole common sense or good practice, for instance 'deploy budgets effectively' (Box 20) or 'respond to local and national policy initiatives' (Box 34).

The second part of the framework is the **Balanced Scorecard** of measures. This acts as an organising framework to capture and cluster the Impact, Outcomes, Strategy, Activities and Enablers. In essence, it is an organising framework to help manage the evaluation in a cohesive and comprehensive manner.

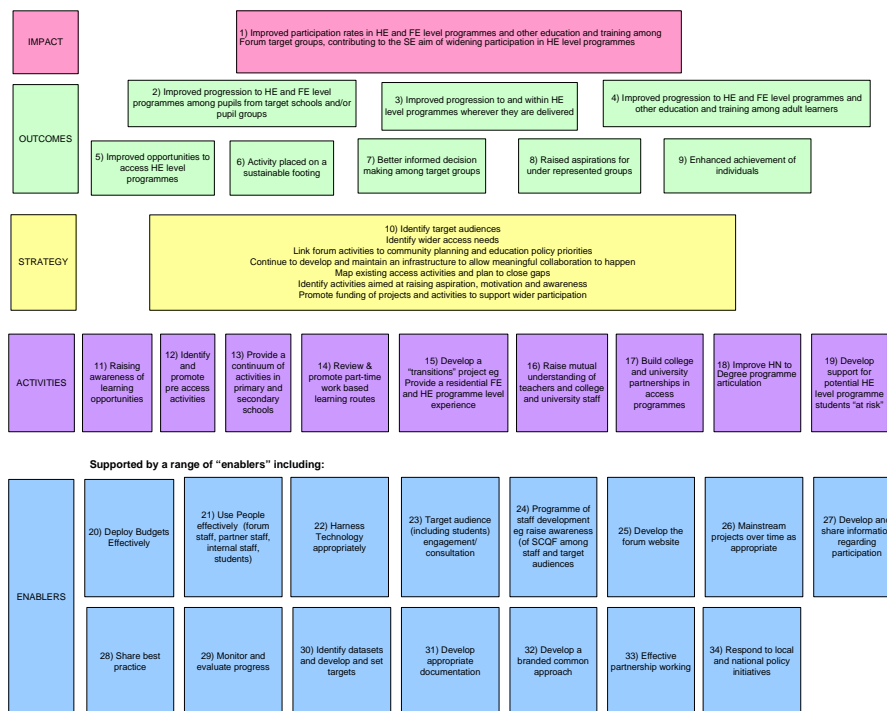
In the Balanced Scorecard, each one of the 34 agreed elements of the Strategy Map, categorised as relating either to Impact, or to Outcomes, or to Strategy, or to Activities or to Enablers, is allocated to the appropriate one of four groups of measures. The four groups of measures are as listed below; the allocation of the Map elements among the groups is shown in parenthesis.

- 1 **Internal management** - elements relating to managing the Forum's key processes: developing and implementing the activities and enablers and managing resources – finance, people and ICT.
(a – activity development and implementation: 10;11;12;13;14;15;16;17;18; 19;26;27
b – enabler development and implementation: 30;31;32
c – resources (i) Finance: 20; (ii) People: 21; (iii) ICT: 22;25)
- 2 **Partnership effectiveness** - elements critical to building and capitalising on relationships between key partners.
(33).
- 3 **Learning and capacity building** - elements central to sustaining and improving the Forum's effectiveness in the medium to long term.
(a – people development: 24
b - learning: 34;28)
- 4 **Impact and customer service** - elements critical to addressing the identified Outcomes and ensuring services to target audiences.
(a – impact, and b – customer service: 1;2;3;4;5;6;7;8;9; 29
c – target group perception: 23)

The Balanced Scorecard allows for a differing perspective in the evaluation. For example, the interim evaluation may look favourable because the majority of Activities are deemed to be making progress, or are close to being achieved. However that may mask the fact that, with regard to one particular facet - 'target audience awareness' perhaps - none of the activities grouped as relating to that area is making progress.

The combination of the two parts of the framework allows for a robust evaluation, which is fair and takes account of the complete picture of the ambitious programme the Forum has set for itself.

Annex A (A i): Fife & Tayside Wider Access Forum Strategy Map



Annex A (A ii) Balanced scorecard of measures

The scorecard headings and groupings of measures are set out below, with Strategy Map Box reference numbers in parenthesis. The detailed measures follow in appendix.

1. Internal management
 - a. Progress in 'activity development and implementation' measures (10;11;12;13;14;15;16;17;18;19;26;27)
 - b. Progress in 'enabler development and implementation' measures (30;31;32)
 - c. Resources management measures, including:
 - i. Finance measures (20)
 - ii. People measures (21)
 - iii. ICT measures (22;25)
2. Partnership effectiveness
 - a. Partnership progress measures (33)
 - b. Partnership perception measures (33)
3. Learning and capacity building
 - a. People development measures (24)
 - b. Learning measures (34;28)
4. Impact and customer service
 - a. Impact measures and (1;2;3;4;5;
 - b. Customer service measures 6;7;8;9;29)
 - c. Target group perception measures (23)

In each instance, the source of the information is given in brackets after the measure. There are three main sources, and the information will generally come from one of them:

1. Impact/progress information provided by institutions to, and published by, the Funding Council and HESA, and similar information published by the Scottish Executive.
2. Perception measures gathered through surveys by the evaluation team as part of the evaluation.
3. Action/progress measures co-ordinated by the Forum Manager as part of the strategy implementation.

Appendix – Detailed Measures

1. Internal management (critical to managing activities and processes)

Progress in 'activity development and implementation' measures (all from monitoring of progress by the Forum secretariat)

- Progress in identifying target schools/pupil groups
- Progress in mapping existing study options available to potential and current students from target groups
- Progress in developing a programme of prioritised activities to close identified gaps
- Progress against key Forum Strategy milestones (largely picked up through other indicators)
- Progress in mapping learning opportunities
- Progress in articulating learning opportunities to target groups
- Progress in mapping current pre access activities
- Progress in implementation of pre access activities to close identified gaps
- Progress in mapping the current range of appropriate activities in primary and secondary schools
- Progress in developing activities to close any identified gaps in primary and secondary schools
- Progress in mapping current part time work based learning routes
- Progress in reviewing and promoting part time work based learning routes
- Progress in developing part time work based learning routes activities to close any identified gaps
- Progress in developing the 'transitions project'
- Progress in mapping current HN to Degree articulated programmes
- Progress in developing activities to close any identified gaps in HN to Degree articulated programmes
- Progress in mapping current support mechanisms for potential HE students level programme 'at risk'
- Progress in developing activities to close any identified gaps in support for potential HE level programme students 'at risk'
- Progress in mapping current engagement/consultation mechanisms
- Progress in developing activities to close any identified gaps in engagement/consultation
- Development of mainstreaming criteria
- Application of mainstreaming criteria
- Number of mainstreamed projects

Progress in 'enabler development and implementation' measures

- Progress in mapping current information regarding participation
- Progress in developing activities to close any identified gaps in information regarding participation
- Progress with dataset identification
- Progress with target setting
- Progress in developing documentation
- Progress in developing a branded common approach

Resource management measures

Finance measures

- Levels of funding/financing availability (SFC, table 1 fact card)
- Levels of funding/financing uptake (SFC)
- Progress in mapping current Forum financial management arrangements (Forum secretariat)
- Progress in identifying and implementing comprehensive Forum financial management arrangements (Forum secretariat)
- Forum spend against budget (Forum secretariat)

People measures

- Levels of (relevant) people involvement (by categories of People) (Member organisations)
- People turnover and absence rates (by categories of People) (Member organisations)
- Levels of people satisfaction (by categories of People) (from partner survey work undertaken as part of the evaluation)

ICT measures

- Progress in developing the Forum web-site (Forum secretariat)

2. Partnership effectiveness (critical to building and capitalising on relationships between key partners)

Partnership progress measures

- Partner participation in Forum activities (including partner fulfilment of agreed contributions) (Forum secretariat)
- Progress in identifying and implementing mechanisms aimed at raising understanding of school, college, HEI and careers staff (Forum secretariat)
- Levels of understanding among school, college, HEI and careers staff (Forum secretariat)
- Progress in mapping current HN to Degree articulated programmes (Forum secretariat)
- Progress in developing activities to close any identified gaps in HN to Degree articulated programmes (Forum secretariat)
- Extent of information sharing between partners (Forum secretariat)

Partnership perception measures (all from partner survey work undertaken as part of the evaluation)

- Partner perceptions of change in levels of awareness of learning opportunities amongst target groups
- Partner satisfaction with the continuum of activities in primary and secondary schools
- Partner satisfaction with the part time work based learning routes
- Partner satisfaction with experimentation and innovation
- Partner satisfaction with the 'transitions project'
- Partner satisfaction with HN to Degree articulated programmes
- Partner perceptions of effective use of People (by categories of People)
- Partner satisfaction with support mechanisms for potential HE level programme students 'at risk'
- Partner perceptions of effective financial management and resource allocation
- Partner satisfaction with the level and nature of engagement/consultation
- Partner satisfaction with the staff development programme
- Partner perceptions of the web-site
- Partner perceptions of mainstreaming
- Partner satisfaction with information sharing
- Partner satisfaction with best practice information sharing
- Partner satisfaction with datasets and target setting
- Partner satisfaction with documentation
- Partner perceptions of a branded common approach
- Partner perceptions of effective partner participation
- Partner perceptions of the appropriateness and effectiveness of responses to local and national policy initiatives

3. Learning and capacity building (critical to sustaining and improving the Forum's activity in the medium to long term)

People development measures

- Progress in developing and implementing staff development programme (Forum secretariat)
- Staff development programme uptake (Member organisations)
- Participants satisfaction with the staff development programme (Member organisations)

Learning measures

- Progress in identifying best practice (Forum secretariat)
- Extent of best practice sharing (Forum secretariat)
- Identification of relevant local and national policy initiatives (Forum secretariat)
- Progress in implementing responses to local and national policy initiatives (Forum secretariat)

4. Impact and 'customer service' (critical to assessing progress in delivering desired outcomes)

Impact measures

- Levels of target group participation at each level (Parentzone, SFC)
(In addition to these sources, we are looking at how the Forum can measure this to give an indication of how successful we are in reaching target groups in DZ5 areas – We hope we will be able to do this in a fairly simplistic way – by matching postcodes).
- Levels of progression of target school students/pupil groups to HE and FE level programmes (Parentzone)
- Levels of progression from non-advanced programmes to advanced programmes (College and HEI members)
- Levels of progression within HE level programmes (HEI and College members)
- Change in levels of awareness of learning opportunities amongst target groups (Survey work as part of the evaluation)
- Growing awareness about the benefits of learning amongst communities (wider local authority survey work ... likely for the future)
- Changes in attitude amongst target groups in primary and secondary schools (Survey work as part of the evaluation)
- Number (and/or %) of target group adult learners progressing to HE level programmes, FE level programmes, and other education/training (member organisations)
- Levels of student participation and retention (SFC)
- Levels of expressed demand for HE level programmes (Survey work as part of the evaluation)
- Progression within/from FE and HE level programmes amongst target groups (Member organisations' projects funded by Forum)
- Attainment of qualifications by target groups (Parentzone for schools only – we will need to look at other ways to measure this for other groups).

Customer service measures

- Uptake of pre access activities (Member organisations)
- Uptake of activities in primary and secondary schools (Local authority member organisations)
- Uptake of part time work based learning routes (Member organisations)
- Uptake of the 'transitions project' (Member organisations)
- Target group uptake of support mechanisms for potential HE level programme students 'at risk' (HEI and College members)
The above should be measured by Forum funded projects. Each project will be provided with useful guidelines by the Forum against which they can set their evaluation strategies.
- Level and nature of engagement/consultation (Member organisations)
- Web-site 'hits' (Forum monitoring)

Target group perception measures (all from target group survey work undertaken as part of the evaluation)

- Target group perception/awareness of information made available to them
- Target group perception/awareness of current course/subject choice
- Target group perception/awareness of Education provider
- Changing perceptions of target groups towards higher education
- Target group satisfaction with individual activities and wider continuum in primary and secondary schools
- Target group satisfaction with pre access activities
- Target group satisfaction with part time work based learning routes
- Target group satisfaction with the 'transitions project'
- Target group participation in HN to Degree articulated programmes
- Target group satisfaction with articulation opportunities
- Target group satisfaction with support mechanisms for potential HE level programme students 'at risk'
- Target group (including student group) satisfaction with the level and nature of engagement/consultation
- Target groups perceptions of the web-site