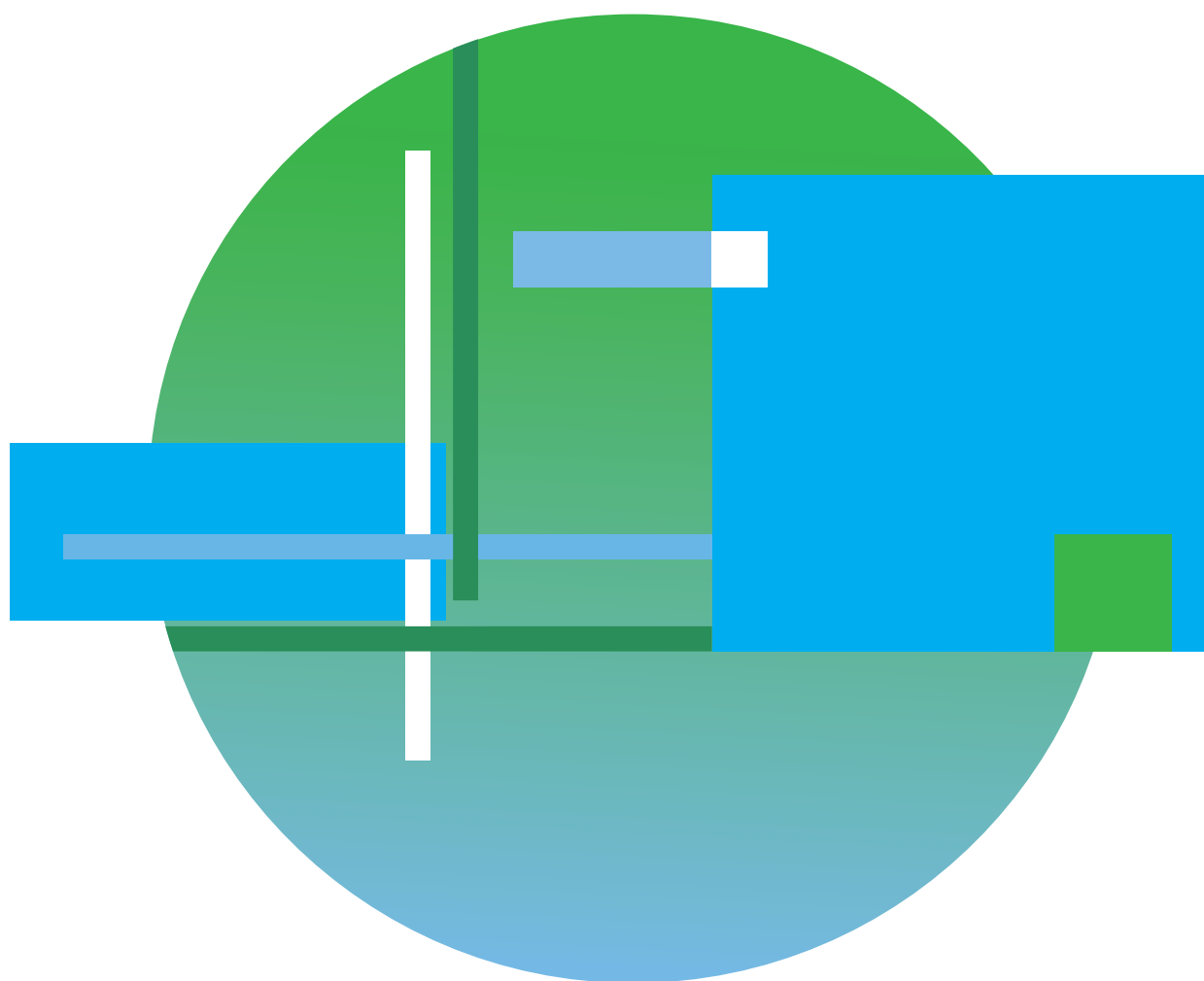
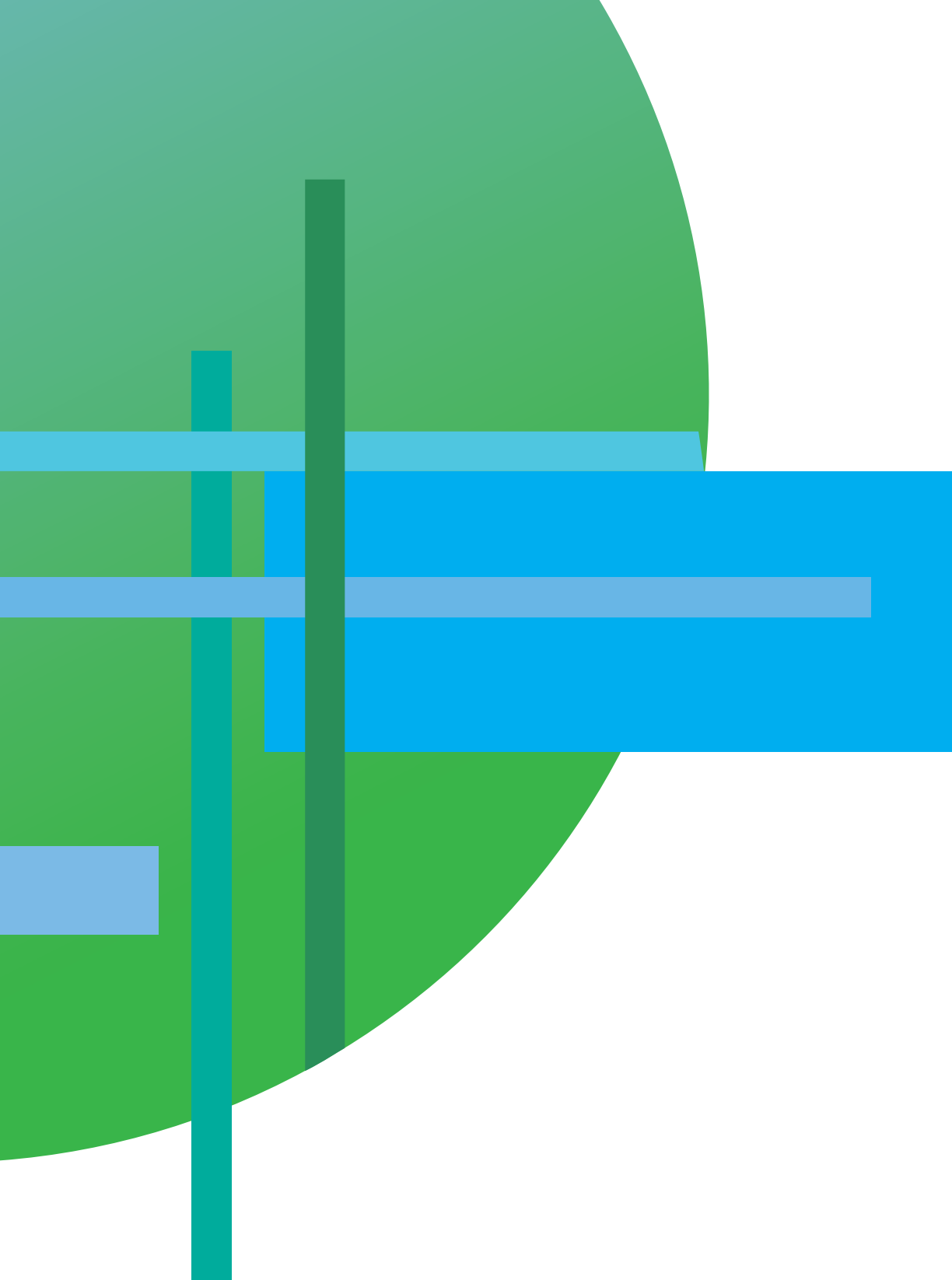


The FET Professional Learning & Development:
Statement of Strategy
2020-2024





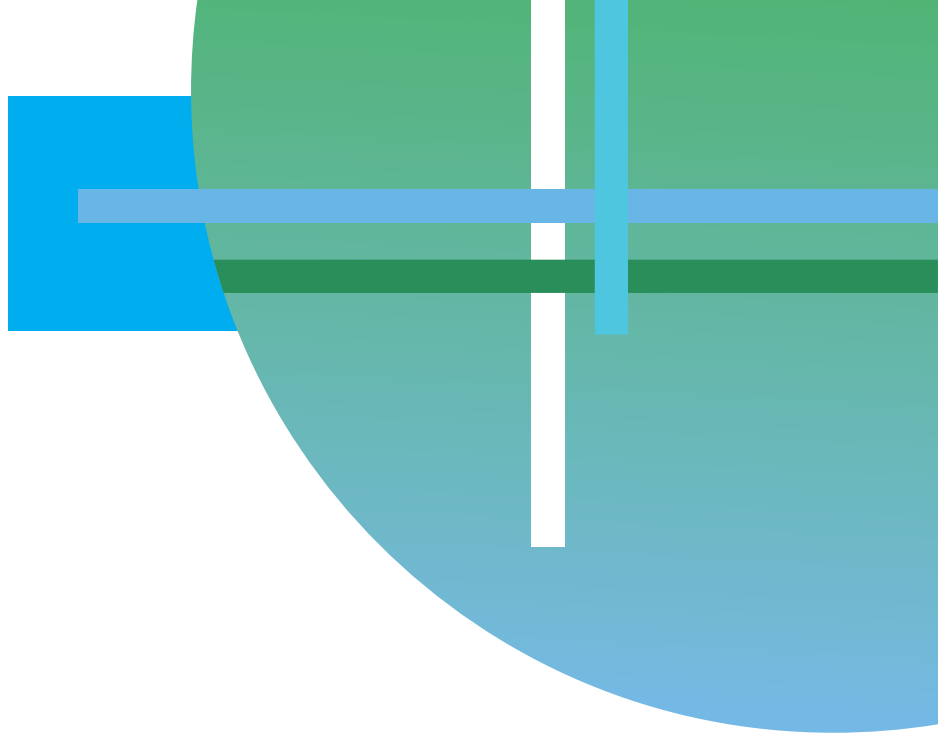



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An abstract graphic design featuring a large green shape on the right side, a blue horizontal band across the middle, and a teal vertical line on the right. There are also smaller teal and light blue shapes. A quote is written in white italicized text at the bottom right.

"FET offers everyone a chance to learn, regardless of their previous education, and inspires them to seek new opportunities."

Foreword

The effectiveness and quality of the Further Education and Training (FET) sector depends ultimately on the excellence of its workforce. Supporting ongoing professional learning and development for those working as learning practitioners, managers, and in support and administration, is vital to ensure they are equipped to offer a world class FET service to their learners.

The FET Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) Statement of Strategy 2020-2024 will shape the evolution of professional learning and development to deliver on the future FET goals as set out in the Further Education and Training Strategy 2020-2024. It sets new directions for investment in the professional learning and development of all those who work in the sector. FET learners will be the ultimate beneficiaries.

Access to FET improves the lives of learners and creates benefits that permeate communities and businesses, driving growth and prosperity for all. FET offers everyone a chance to learn, regardless of their previous education, and inspires them to seek new opportunities. FET learning complements existing experience and builds foundations of support for learners as they forge new paths to successful careers and engagement in lifelong learning.

The PL&D Statement of Strategy 2020-2024 builds on the achievements of the previous FET Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019. It creates a compelling vision of how professional learning and development empowers those working in the sector to transform the experience of learners. It empowers FET staff to anticipate, respond to and meet the evolving needs of learners in a constantly changing environment. It promotes imaginative and innovative ways for FET practitioners to learn and develop together.

The core mission of FET is to have a positive impact on learners, their communities and society. The new PL&D Statement of Strategy 2020-2024 plots a course of action to make this happen. The inspiration and innovation of FET practitioners are central to the transformation agenda. There will be challenges ahead, but we are inspired by the talent and commitment of all those in FET to their ongoing professional learning and development.



Andrew Brownlee

Andrew Brownlee
CEO, SOLAS



Paddy Lavelle

Paddy Lavelle
General Secretary ETBI

Achievements of the FET Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019

The PL&D Statement of Strategy 2020-2024 will continue to develop the record of success accomplished by the FET Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019. These achievements include:

- Clear strategic priorities agreed and actioned
- Nationally consistent approach to planning professional learning and development in ETBs progressed
- Awareness and recognition of the importance of targeted, relevant and strategic professional learning and development increased
- Range of delivery methods expanded to include online and blended learning
- Capability and confidence in critical areas such as technology-enhanced-learning, management and enterprise engagement increased
- New approach to the funding model and structures established to facilitate ongoing development and delivery of high quality, relevant professional development for the FET sector
- Investment in the development of FET practitioners increased through targeted funding
- Strategic professional development supported and implemented at a local level through the creation of professional development coordinator posts.



**A 1% increase in
training days leads
to a 3% increase in
productivity**

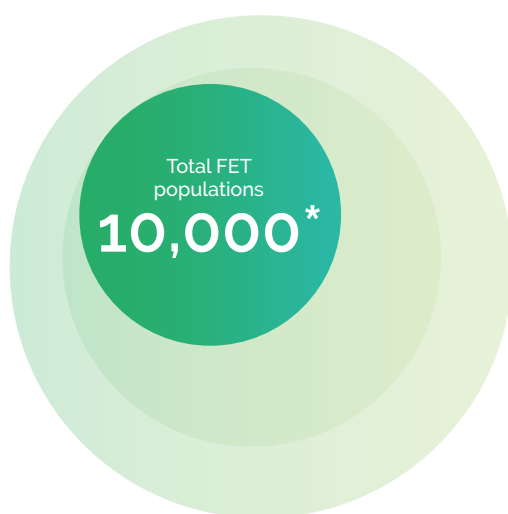
Source: CEDEFOP, 2007

Profile of the Further Education and Training Sector

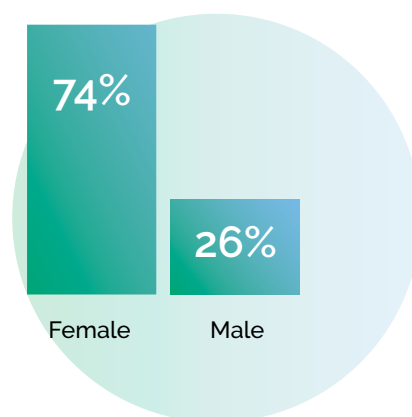
FET serves over 200,000 unique learners each year and offers a continuum of learning opportunities from Level 1 to Level 6 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), focused on both core and specific skills development, accompanied by a range of learner supports.

Almost €800 million of funding is invested by SOLAS annually in FET, the majority of which is channelled through ETBs delivering FET provision, either directly or via a network of contracted training and community education training providers. Additionally, there are approximately 25 community and voluntary sector schools funded to deliver FET courses, while a range of other organisations are also funded to deliver specific services across the FET system.

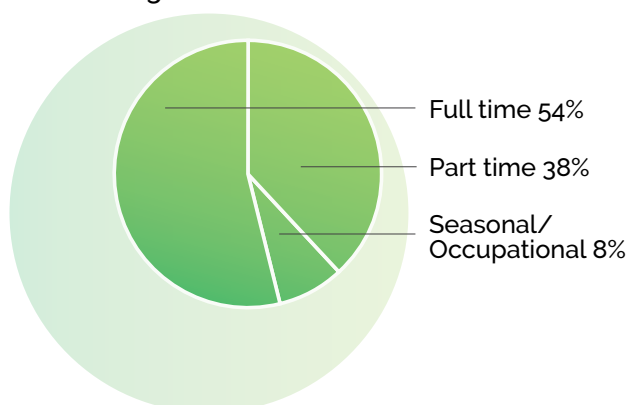
Based on the skills profile of the sector carried out in 2016, there are approximately 10,000 people working in FET in a multiplicity of roles, categorised into three main groups – learning practitioners, managers and support/administration staff. Almost half of FET practitioners work on a part time or sessional/occasional basis.



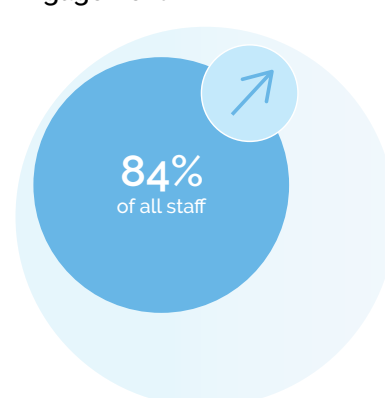
Overall Gender Breakdown



Staff Working Patterns



High Level of Engagement in PD

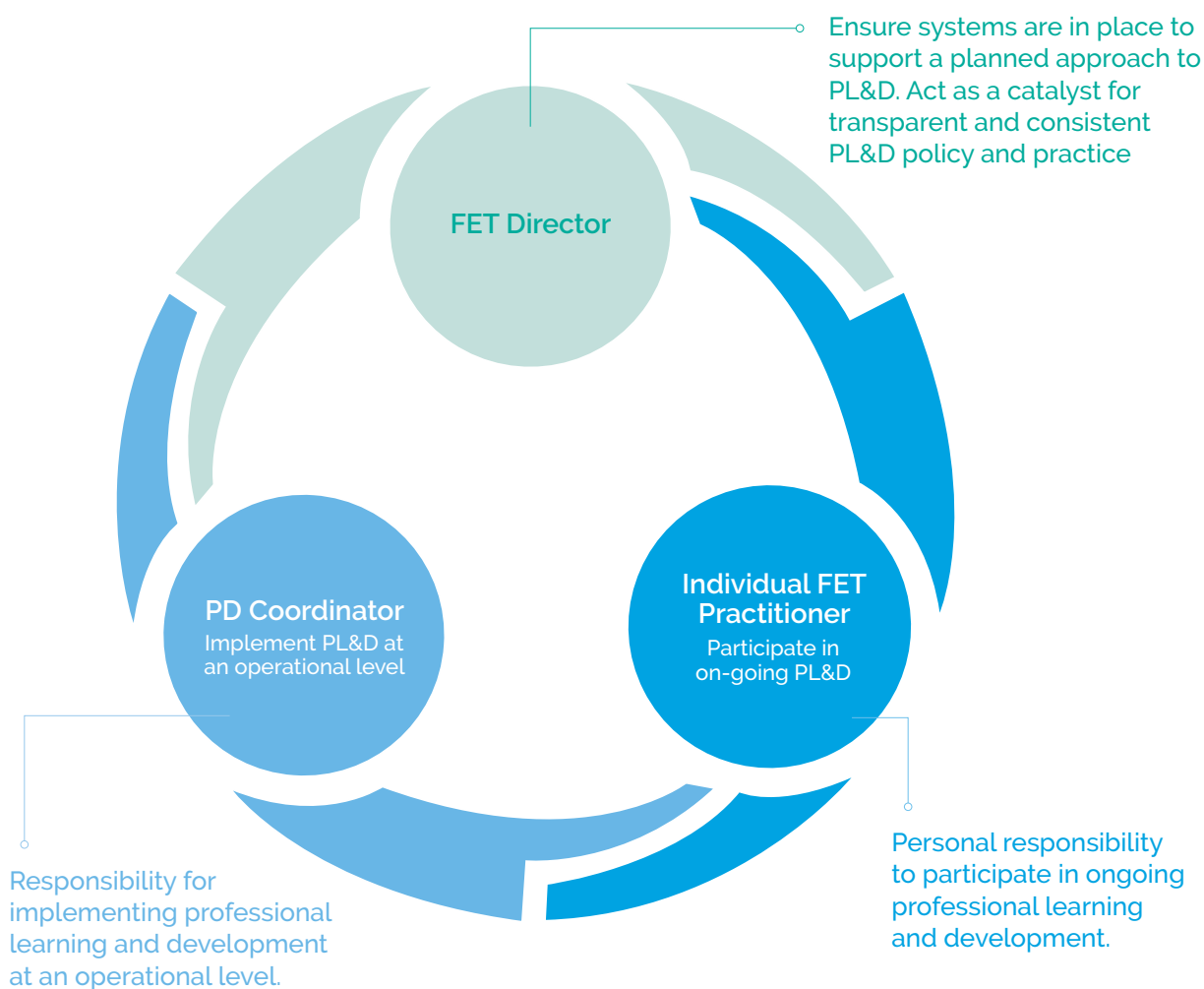


**Based on ETB reported populations*

Collaborative Approach to PL&D in the Sector

The Further Education and Training Act 2013 states that one of the functions of SOLAS is *'to provide or assist in the provision of training to persons charged with the delivery of further education and training programmes.'* This function is realised through collaboration with key stakeholders such as ETBI and the ETBs.

At ETB level, the Director of FET has overall responsibility for ensuring that systems are in place to support a planned approach to professional learning and development, and to act as a catalyst for transparent and consistent professional learning and development policy and practice within the organisation. The professional development coordinators have responsibility for implementing professional learning and development at an operational level. Each individual practitioner has a personal responsibility to participate in ongoing professional learning and development.



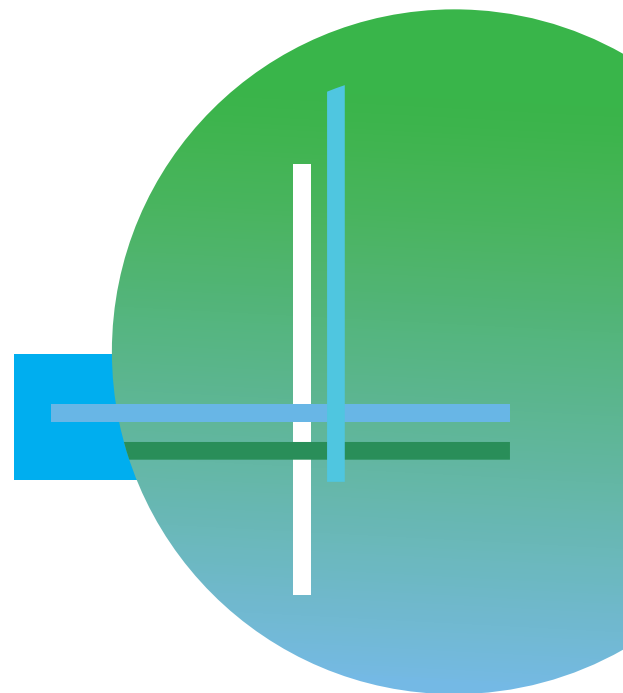
Aligning PL&D to the Further Education and Training Strategy

To support transformation in the FET sector, SOLAS, ETBI and ETBs have collaboratively created this Strategy to:

- Create a more powerful culture of learning among FET practitioners
- Facilitate easier access to professional learning and development
- Build confidence and capability of FET practitioners to assure a quality learner experience.

This is part of a far-reaching process of transformation within the sector to deliver on future FET goals. The Strategy will bolster FET by:

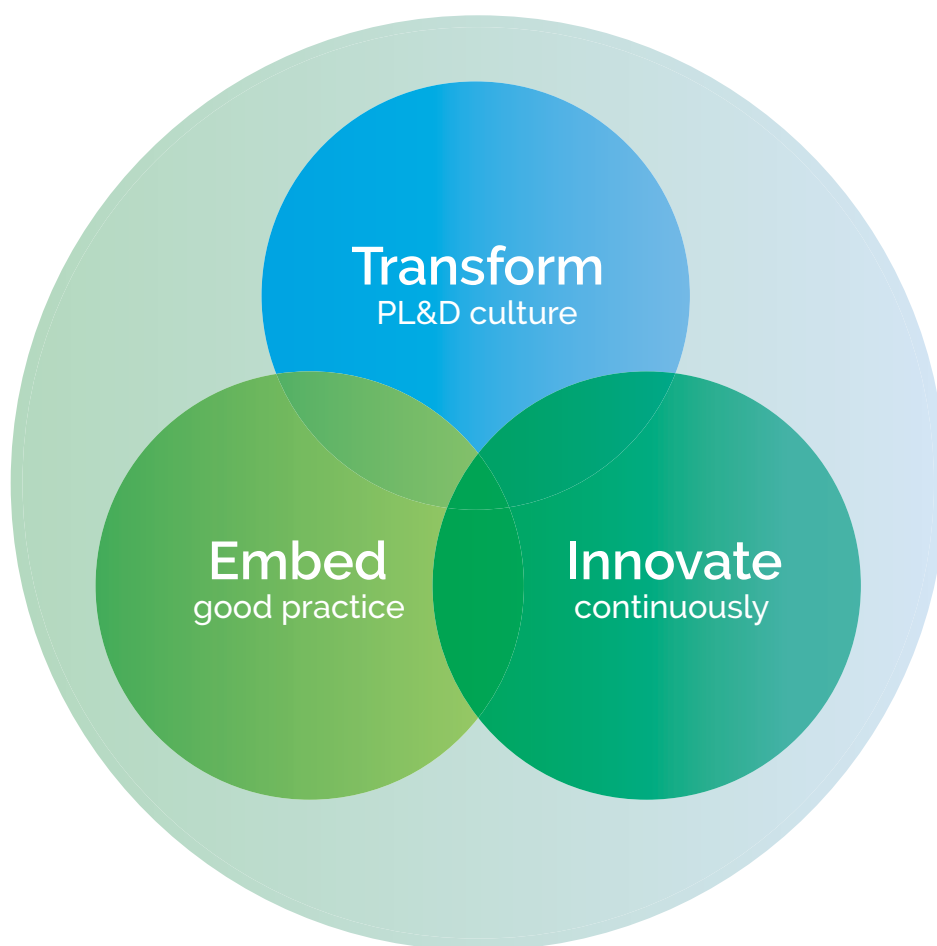
- Placing an ongoing focus on professional learning and development to anticipate, respond to, and meet the needs of FET learners
- Building the capacity of FET practitioners to meet day-to-day challenges within their roles
- Prioritising critical professional and learning development areas including teaching and learning, literacy, numeracy and digital skills, learner supports, management and leadership, enterprise engagement, ICT, technology enhanced learning, quality assurance, vocational upskilling and reskilling,



Developing the PL&D Statement of Strategy 2020-2024

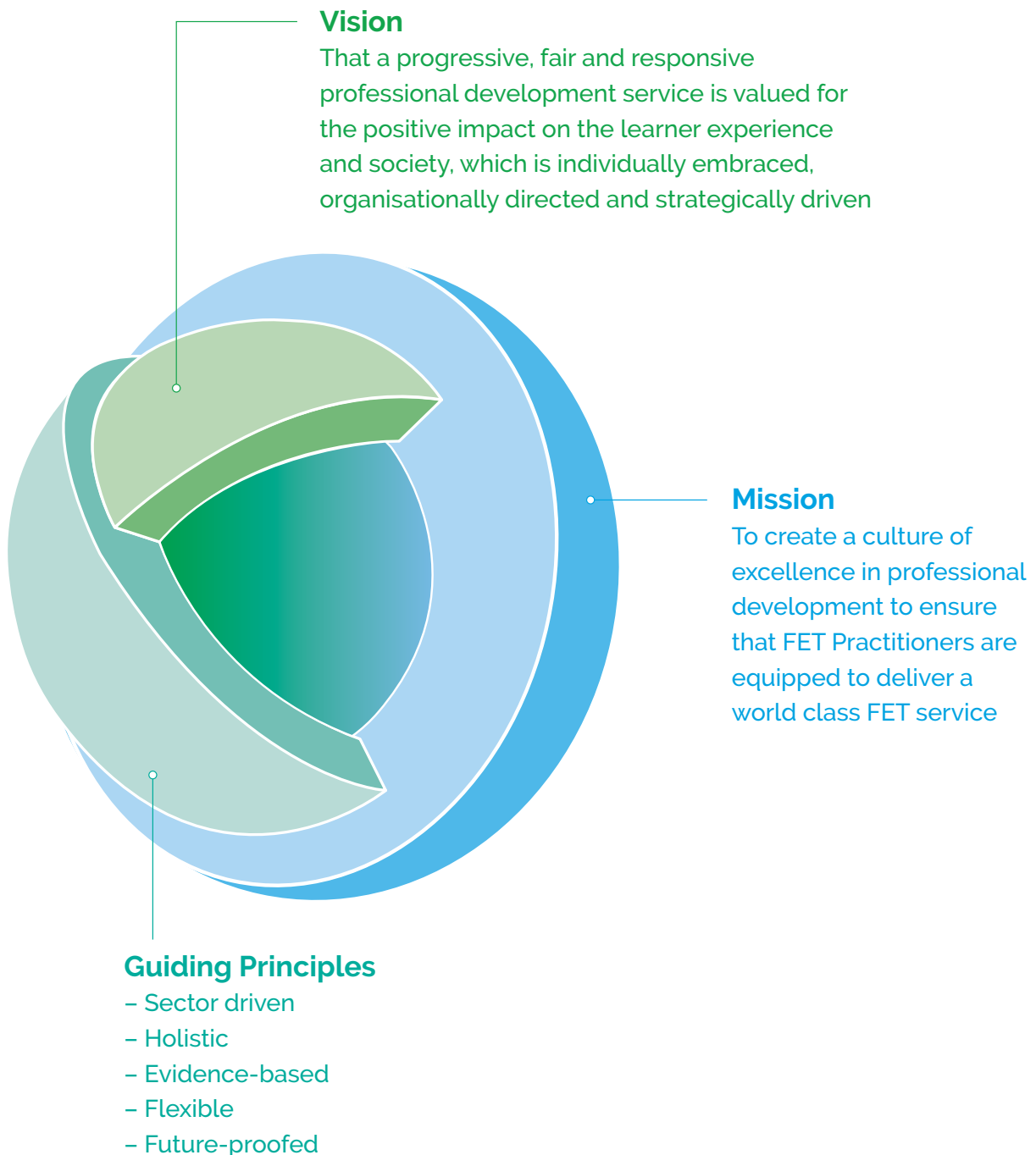
The Strategy provides a strategic direction and a plan of action for the sector for the next four years. Its development has been underpinned by a process of analysis, consultation and planning with the sector. To realise its vision, there will be a need for strong committed leadership and effective collaboration by key partners, the ETBs, ETBI and SOLAS.

The consultation process identified that the sector aspires to collectively transform the professional learning and development culture for its workforce. This will be achieved by embedding existing good practice and pursuing continuous innovation for the benefit of all FET learners, enterprise and communities.



PL&D Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles 2020-2024

Key to mapping a strategic direction for professional learning and development are our vision, mission and guiding principles.



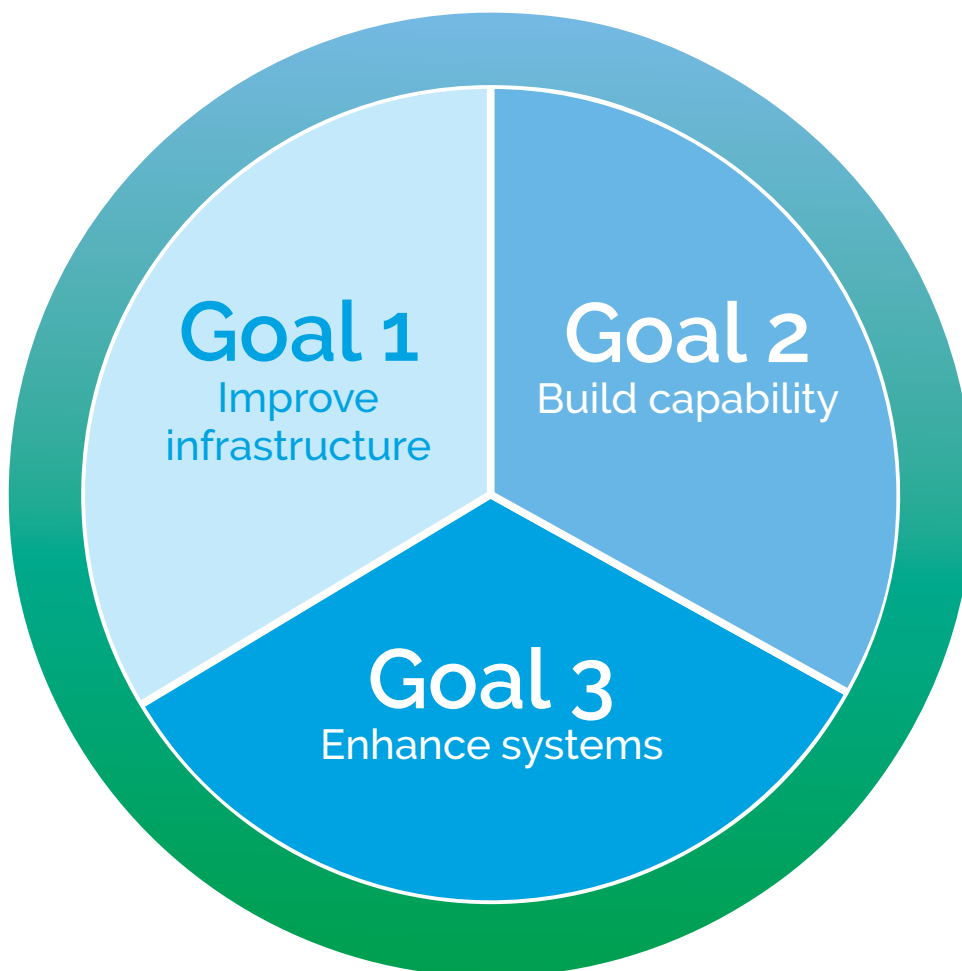
PL&D Strategic Goals 2020-2024

The three goals guiding professional learning and development in the sector for the past three years will continue to drive the implementation of the Strategy 2020-2024. These are: improving infrastructure, building capability and enhancing professional learning and development systems.

Goal 1: Expand access to learning resources and strengthen the delivery infrastructure for effective professional learning and development, including learning networks for sharing good practice nationally.

Goal 2: Build the capability of those who work in the FET sector through the identification and deployment of strategic professional learning and development initiatives in priority areas.

Goal 3: Develop sustainable systems to meet the planning, funding, resourcing and evaluation requirements of professional learning and development in the FET sector.



PL&D High-Level Actions 2020-2024

In consultation with the sector, a set of high-level actions has been identified to achieve the three strategic goals.

Goal 1: Improve Infrastructure

Expand access to learning and strengthen the delivery infrastructure for effective professional learning and development, including learning networks for sharing good practice nationally.

High Level Actions

- Design and implement flexible delivery methods.
- Create learning networks to leverage professional learning and development impacts.
- Develop and implement policies and procedures at ETB level to support professional learning and development.
- Provide a central professional learning and development delivery facility.

Goal 2: Build Capability

Build the capability of those who work in the FET sector through the identification and deployment of strategic professional learning and development initiatives in priority areas.

High Level Actions

- Support the implementation of the FET Practice Framework to consistently identify and address development needs.
- Identify ongoing needs to develop the confidence and capability of FET practitioners.
- Develop and roll out strategic initiatives in priority areas.
- Identify, share and cascade best practice in professional learning and development across ETBs.

Goal 3: Enhance Systems

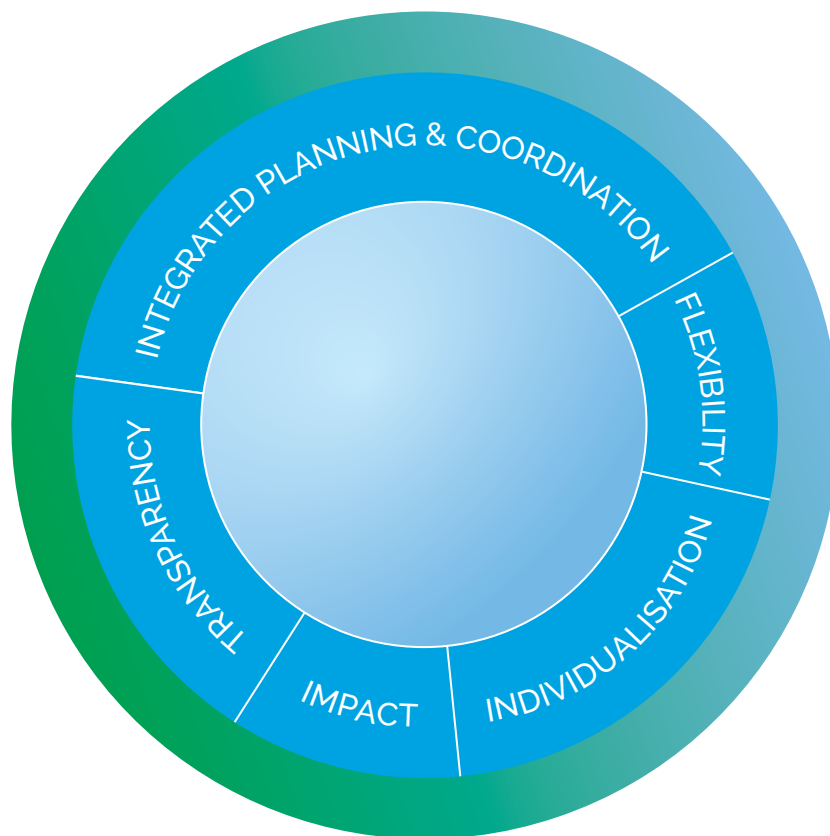
Develop sustainable systems to meet the planning, funding, resourcing and evaluation requirements of professional learning and development in the FET sector.

High Level Actions

- Optimise an integrated approach to planning at local and national levels.
- Utilise a tracking and recording system to support planning and benchmarking.
- Target investment to ensure relevant professional learning and development across the sector.
- Develop an effective communication systems to promote the value of professional learning and development.
- Implement consistent review and evaluation across the sector to support continuous improvement in practice.
- Develop a professional learning and development portal facility to create shared access to learning resources.

Enabling Themes for the Strategy

At the heart of the Strategy is the ambition to foster a culture of excellence in professional learning and development. Five enabling themes will propel the actions identified as necessary to achieve the strategic goals.



Integrated Planning and Coordination

The implementation of an effective infrastructure for professional learning and development has been progressed over the past few years and will continue as an integral part of the new Strategy.

Integrated planning and coordination will assist in the execution of the three strategic goals through infrastructure mapping and implementing a series of well thought out and planned operational tasks. It will focus on the implementation of a strategic approach to the allocation of the professional learning and development budget in line with service priorities. While each ETB is an independent entity, a joined-up and collaborative approach in integrating planning and coordination will greatly enhance and support the overall success of the Strategy in driving transformational learning.

Individualised Learning

Enthusiasm and motivation to learn at an individual level are central in creating and nurturing the new transformational learning culture that is envisaged. Informal learning

networks are a means to support individualised and peer learning across professional areas and ETBs. Increased participation in learning networks will encourage practitioners to reflect, share and sustain the original learning experience and apply it in their practice. It will also stimulate them to avail of new development opportunities.

Flexible Delivery Systems

Learning opportunities need to be consistently offered in a more flexible way to enable greater access. Constraints to access highlighted during the consultation process for this Strategy relate to geographical location, preferred learning methods, work schedules, local professional learning and development arrangements and personal commitments. Both the research and the consultative process for this Strategy reinforced the need to expand access by offering a wider range of learning delivery methods. Learning delivery methods include formal and informal, face to face, online, blended, peer and incremental learning, coaching and mentoring, cascading and recognition of prior learning.

Transparency

The new Strategy has been developed to benefit everyone in the FET sector. To this end, transparency is a key enabler in providing professional learning and development that is visible to everyone, clear and comprehensible. Associated action plans and communications will be a key mechanism to promote transparency, foster real and meaningful exchanges between practitioners and promote peer learning.

Access to professional learning and development must be fair and transparent and is dependent on a strong governance structure. It also needs to be targeted towards the needs of the organisation at a point in time. At the same time, practitioners engaging in professional learning and development have a responsibility to transfer their learning back into the organisation through mentoring other staff and building enhanced capability.

Impact

It is vital for the success of the Strategy to achieve impact in professional learning and development at the level of the FET practitioner, the learner and the sector as a whole. While the FET Professional Development Strategy 2017-2019 achieved positive and meaningful results for the FET sector, the ambition now is to develop an improved and consistent approach to reviewing, measuring and assessing the impact of learning.

Measuring the impact of the Strategy will involve consideration of the effects on:

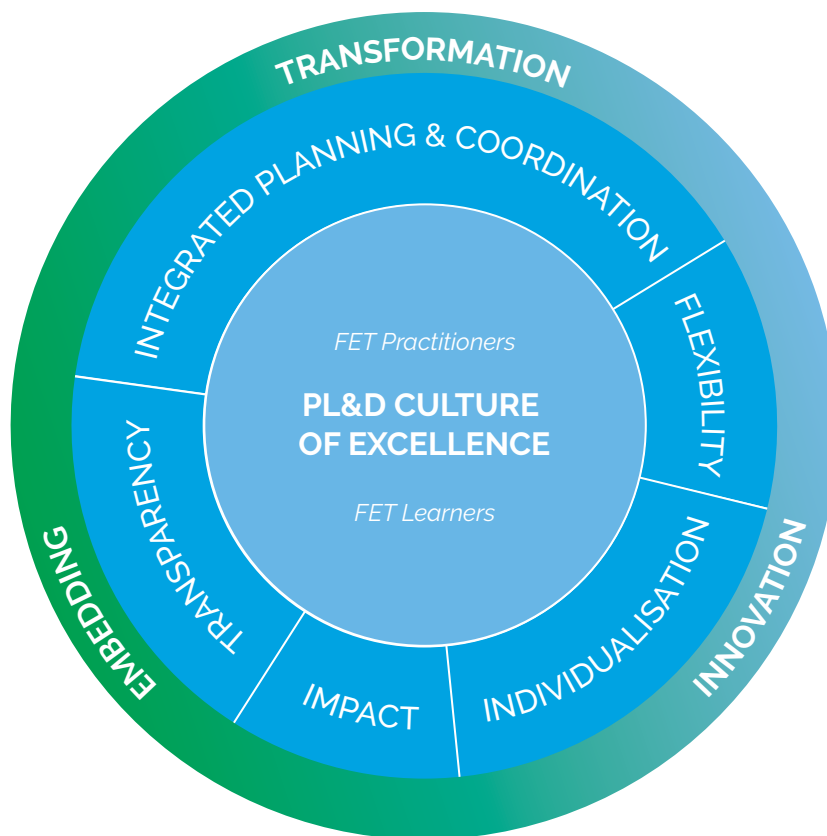
- Professional practice
- The FET learners' experience
- The enhancement of the FET service
- The culture of learning in the sector.

To assess the return on investment, there is a need to see the benefits of how practitioners are using their learning to provide better services for the learner and their respective organisations. It is envisaged that professional learning and development will be integrated within everyday practice, assisting staff to build their capacity, confidence and flexibility in providing responsive services.



A PL&D Model that Drives Transformation

There is a shared ambition and commitment from those who work in the sector to harness the power of teaching and learning, for the benefit of all practitioners and learners. Fully realising this ambition and supporting this commitment requires a new paradigm, one that is guided by a new FET professional learning and development model. The model below encapsulates the five enabling themes working to achieve embedding of good practice, innovation and transformation of the professional learning and development culture in the FET sector.

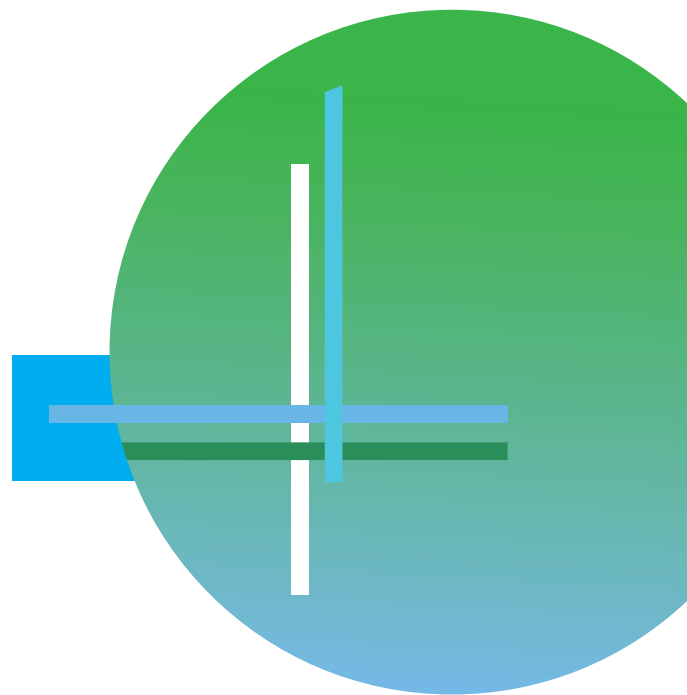


Conclusion

The passion and commitment displayed by all those working in FET is the reason why Ireland has a FET sector that is consistently growing and developing; capable of adapting to changing circumstances and, above all, committed to amplifying the FET learning experience in myriad ways, in every part of the country. The Strategy aims to provide a progressive, fair and responsive approach to professional learning and development; one that is individually embraced, organisationally directed and strategically driven.

This collaborative and aligned approach to professional learning and development will enable FET practitioners to lift their commitment and drive to the next level, and will lead to a culture of excellence focused on addressing current and future development needs and equipping practitioners to deliver a world class FET service.

The Strategy will enable FET practitioners to enhance their capability and confidence, facilitating both their own development and the development of the sector, and ultimately ensuring learners gain the maximum benefits from their FET learning experience.



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who contributed formally through the consultation process and informally through ongoing feedback on the direction of Professional Learning and Development in the Further Education & Training sector over the next phase.

We would like to acknowledge the support of the Directors of FET and the role of the FET Professional Development National Steering Group in guiding the development process.

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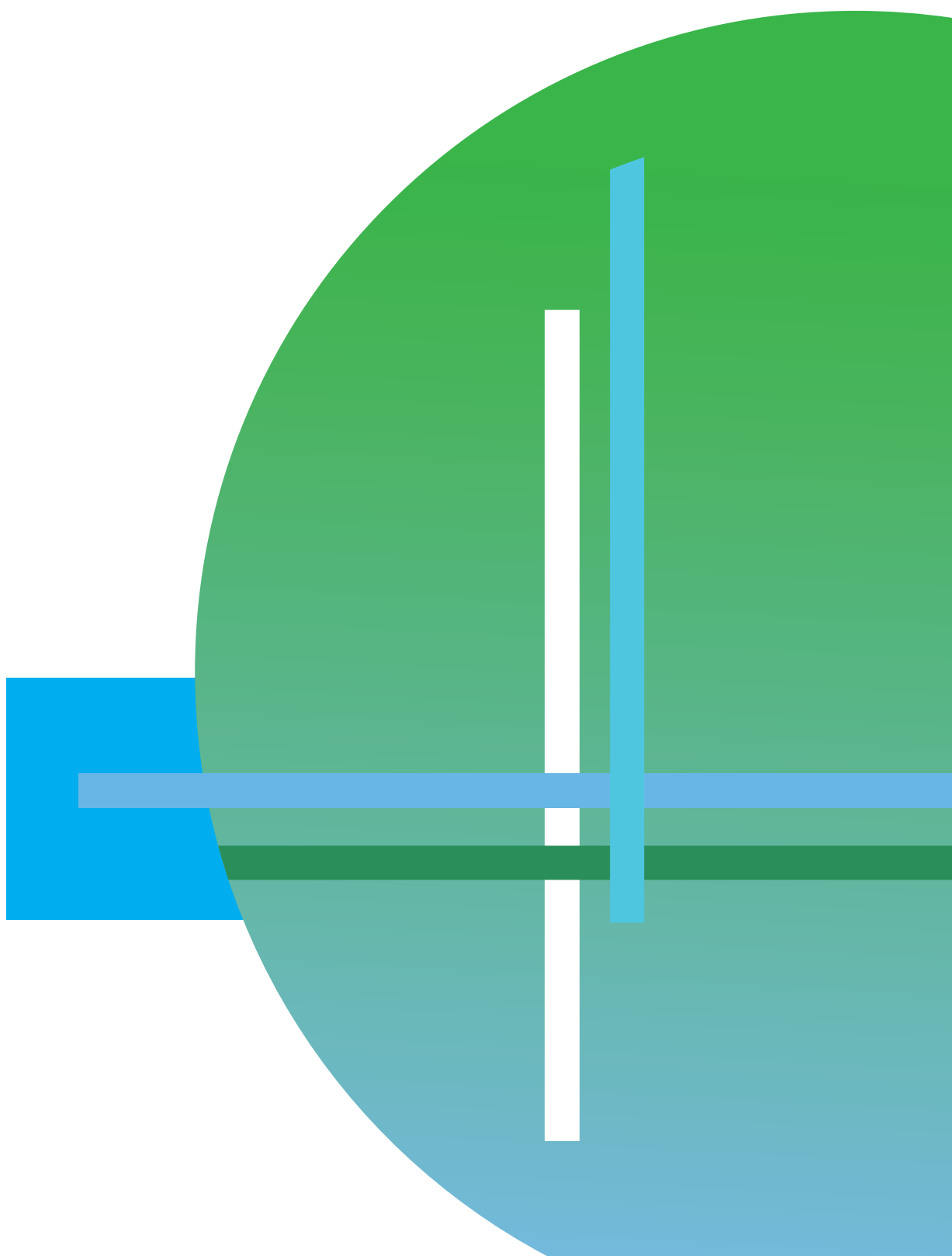
Project Consultants/Support

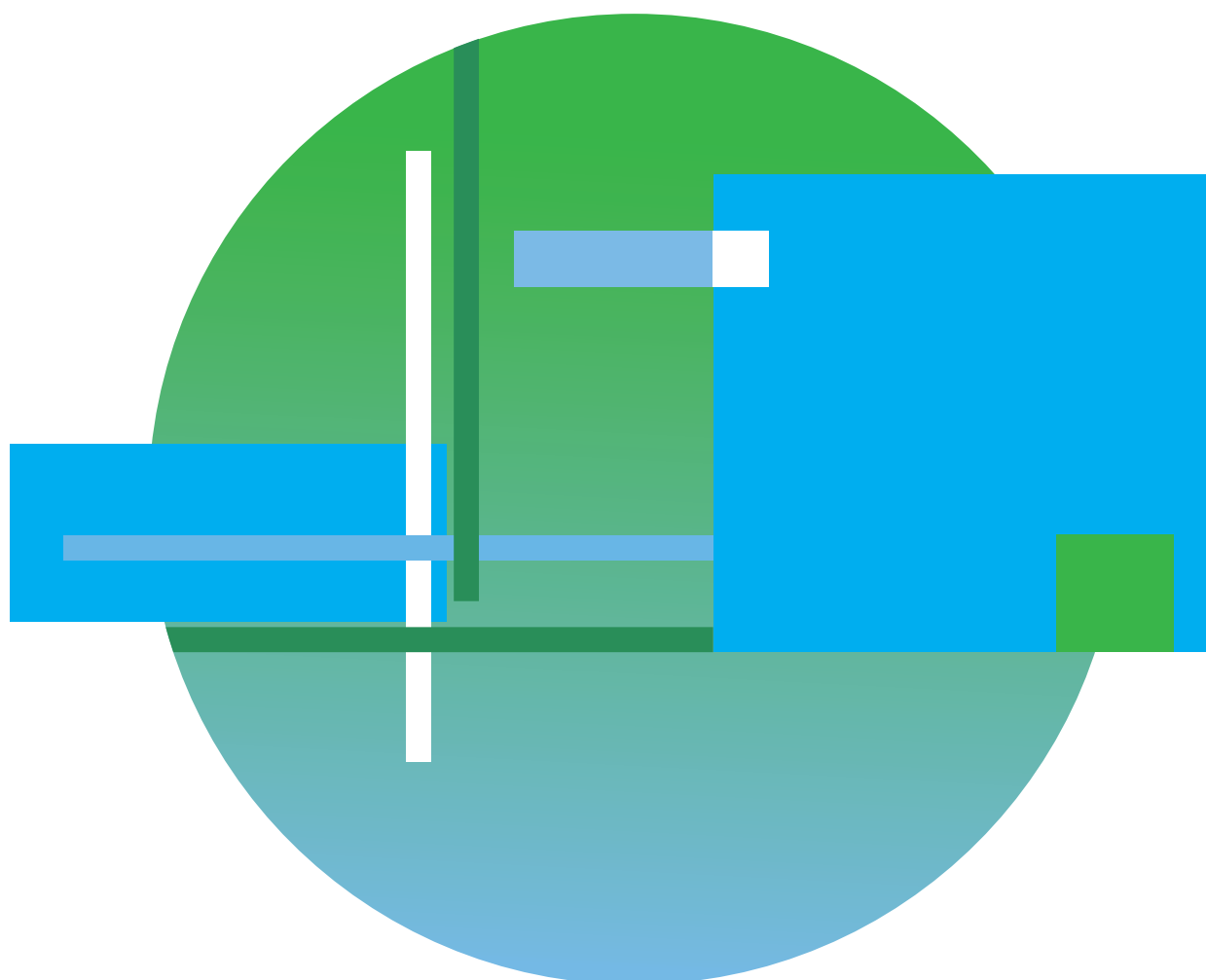
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