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VocTech Trust

Delivery Plan 2021

This Delivery Plan sets out what we will do in 2021

This Delivery Plan sits alongside our 5 year strategy Learning Without Walls: Beyond 2020 and Theory of Change publications. We encourage you to read those first to see the context of our programme of actions. 2020 was not a typical year for anyone, but we think that our overall approach has stood the test of the crisis and is even more important than before, given the rapid changes happening in attitudes to and deployment of digital learning.

Our 2020 plan was significantly impacted by the need for a rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We set aside our planned programme to launch VocTech Now, to be able immediately to support FE Colleges and Training Providers who were working hard to keep learners engaged. We reached out to partners and membership organisations to spread the expertise and support that we could jointly provide to the widest possible audience. We rallied our network of experts to develop the **HowTo** series of webinars, using our relentlessly practical approach to get all the ideas we could out into the sector. And we have received excellent feedback from everyone that took part – whether funded projects or webinar participants. 2020 was an opportunity for Ufi to step up when digital-first became the only option. And we hope we made a difference.

During 2020 we also launched our programme to support vocational education and training professionals - VocTeach and Communities of Practice - and are helping those of you on the ground, delivering excellent learning using VocTech, to improve skills for work.
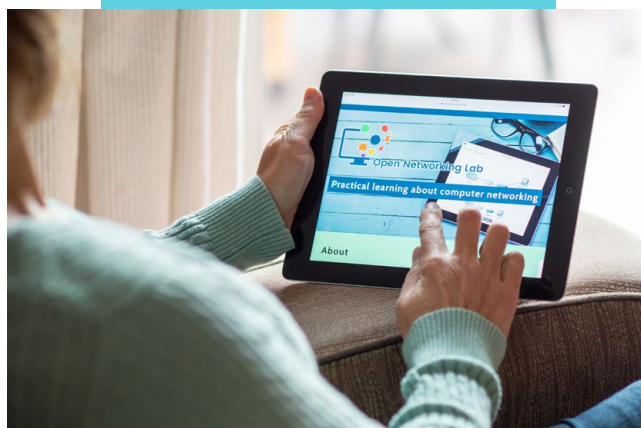
We have looked at all the tools in our Strategy and have selected those that we think will best allow us to respond to the opportunity that we see to build on the momentum of change across the sector. We will also look at new initiatives that respond to current challenges. We want to help build best practice into new opportunities and make sure they are available to all, using approaches and tech that we know works. And we will support ways to consolidate the VocTech that has been deployed this year to make it a sustainable part of provision.

2021 will be the third year of operation for our VocTech Ventures programme, and we will make several new investments in early stage ideas in addition to further supporting our existing portfolio of companies. We will continue our market intelligence research, reports and events and further develop our networks with other investors and customers of VocTech. There are more details about what we look for in venture investments and our current portfolio on the website.

Our comms team are busy making new links and finding new places for us to share our message. The lessons learned from our 2020 VocTech Now actions have given us new understandings of the 'state of the nation' in relation to vocational learning and we will use that insight to be a strong voice for the sector. If you can work with us to make our joint voices louder we'd love to hear from you.

We have a dynamic set of case studies on our website that you can read to see what kinds of things we have funded and why they have been successful. We hope they will inspire you to adopt and deploy tech that we have demonstrated as effective and come up with your own new ideas and to bring those to us for grant funding.

2021 Challenge Call

When we launched our Challenge process in 2017, with a focus on manufacturing, and developed it in 2019 using design thinking to bring new organisations into the VocTech community, we could not have predicted that our focus on 'Changes in the 21st Century Workplace' could have accelerated to such a degree in 2020.

The issues we face are that the 'unloved' communities who are not well served by mainstream provision – the focus of Ufi's core strategy – are now probably more at risk than ever from being excluded from education and training and being able to access employment. And employers in all sectors are struggling to find a 'new normal' in the face of current restrictions.

We have started our own Discovery phase to best serve the needs of learners and employers. We want our support to help them respond, using VocTech, to the challenges of rapidly changing business models, greater remote working and training, restricted travel and social distancing.

We have a clear opportunity to influence how that happens. We have begun to develop a hypothesis for how we could intervene, using the full range of the Ufi strategy toolkit.

But this needs to be an exercise of co-creation across the VocTech community. Over the next few months, and starting with our Week of VocTech, we will open up opportunities for discussion and debate to allow a deep-dive into the issues and see where Ufi can best use its resources to make change happen. We hope to bring all our thinking together by April 2021.

We anticipate that there will be a funding call as part of our support, but that will only be one way in which we collectively tackle the Challenge. We have the chance to use our combined knowledge and reach to communicate the benefits of VocTech and be advocates for change. We can work in partnership together to mobilise wider resources and have a more significant impact at scale.

Without being prescriptive on the outcome, we will take our 'relentlessly practical' values and make sure that we learn from what works. Whatever we fund, it has to be capable of making change quickly.
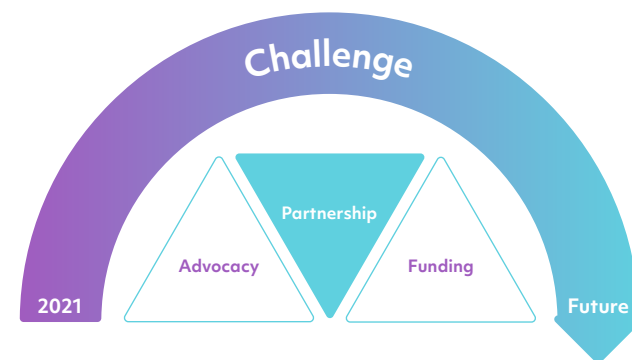
What we need above all are your ideas for reaching those at most risk of being excluded by a widening economic and social divide and ensuring that the UK economy has the skills it needs to recover.

So, we encourage you to take part in discussions with us, share your ideas, make new connections and partnerships with like-minded VocTech pioneers. And we hope to create the conditions in which those ideas can be developed.

Making Change Now

In 2021 we will run a VocTech Seed call from January, a VocTech Challenge programme from April and continue with our support for VocTech Ignite projects.

Our website will have more detail on how to apply and any particular topics we need you to focus on for each of the competitions. Dates for opening and closing of calls are announced on the website.

Look out for workshops too, where you can talk to us directly about what we are looking for. For more information on what our different funding calls are all about please visit our Strategy document.
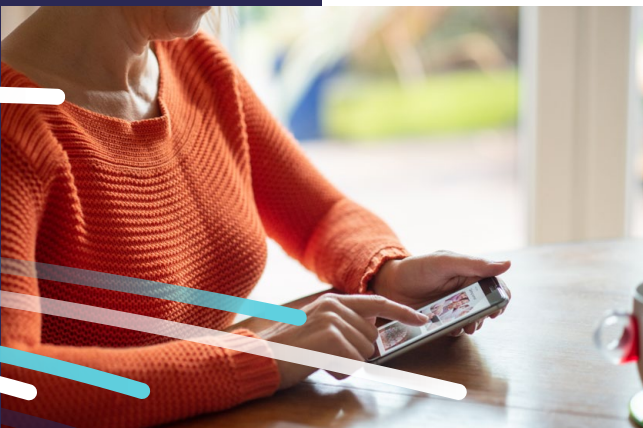
New for 2021

We have an exciting opportunity that we will develop during 2021.

VocTech Advocacy

We will develop a programme of relationship building with the VocTech community to help understand the significant challenges faced by many in the sector and give wider reach for Ufi's messaging. It will be also be invaluable making sure we have our ears to the ground within the Ufi team, keeping us at the forefront of current thinking, in order to support future grant and programme development.

We will build on the positive relationships developed through the partnership working in 2020 to scope this new opportunity. Your engagement in the process is very important to us.

Change for a Better Future

Ufi Ventures was established as a new programme in 2019, encompassing two funding instruments (VocTech Investments and VocTech Amplify), market intelligence analysis and reporting on the VocTech investment market, as well as engagement with the wide network of investors and customers in VocTech.

VocTech Investments made its first investment in 2019 and we've continued to make new venture investments in 2020 with the portfolio now holding 5 exciting companies. We intend to invest in 20 VocTech ventures over 4 years.

Our VocTech Amplify funding bridges the gap between projects and venture investing, to enable high potential ventures which have received project funding to access investment from Ufi and others in our network.

Our market intelligence programme continues to inform our venture investment strategy and provide valuable insights for the wider VocTech investment network, where we regularly engage with over 40 organisations and individuals.

Supporting the Marketplace

Details of the VocTeach and Communities of Practice projects launched in 2020 are now on our website. Communities of Practice helps teachers and trainers to acquire, develop and share the digital learning skills they need to thrive in vocational education. VocTeach will enable practitioners to access and share information about digital resources to enhance their teaching. Take a look at what we are doing with our partners and see what you can do to help us build the network.

Building the VocTech Community

We will be increasingly active in 2021 across all kinds of media, traditional and social, to get our messages out. We learned a lot in 2021 and we think we have some excellent stories to tell of successes for learners and trainers in the sector in very difficult times. We'd love for you to join us and make some noise about VocTech in the UK. We think that showing rather than telling is the best way to demonstrate our thinking. We also champion the innovators in our network doing great work. Join us at our events. Listen to the podcasts. Give us feedback. Together we can create a better public understanding around digital vocational learning and #VocTech.