



● VocTech Directory

11th Edition

ufi.co.uk



The VocTech Directory provides an overview of the recent grant-funded projects, venture investments and strategic partnerships that form the foundation of Ufi's work to improve vocational skills and get adults learning.



*Vocational technology
delivering learning on the
factory floor.*

To access a digital version of this document, and to find out more about the 350+ projects and organisations we have supported, please visit ufi.co.uk/voctech-directory.



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VocTech Activate

VocTech Activate is our test bed where the first spark of an idea can be scoped and tested in the supportive environment that Ufi funding provides.

The grant provides support of between £30,000 and £60,000 for projects lasting up to 12 months.

The VocTech Activate grant fund supports organisations to explore early-stage ideas through small scale testing, proof of concept work and the planning for how projects can grow beyond Ufi's support. We encourage ideas which have the potential to transform how vocational learning happens, rooted in a real-world understanding of the problems, issues and opportunities in the vocational sector.

We can support ideas for new tech, new markets, new communities of learners and we are happy to welcome new project teams. The emphasis here is on the 'new'. VocTech Activate has been designed to support innovation and we are OK with risk. Our aim is to share that risk so organisations can trial creative digital approaches to vocational learning, understand what works, and map out the steps needed for future development and long-term impact.

ufi.co.uk/activate

VocTech Activate 2024



Ambios using AI to assist observed assessments for nature conservation trainees.

AI Buddy – Using AI to assist observed assessments


Ambios Ltd



Ambios provides training in employer-identified practical skills required to gain jobs in nature conservation. They currently have their own informal certificate of attendance but 95% of their trainees would welcome more formal recognition as evidence for future employers. Assessment of vocational skills to determine if a learner is competent typically involves an assessor examining multiple forms of evidence presented by the candidate and mapping it to a list of required competencies. In the nature conservation sector, evidence takes considerable time for candidates to produce and assessors to consider.

This project aims to use a combination of artificial intelligence (AI) and audio recording to ease the assessment process for both trainer and trainee. It will replace existing evidence types with assessor observations of a candidate's practice, analysed for competence by AI. Assessor observations are regarded by Awarding Bodies as exemplary evidence of a candidate's competency – using AI will make this process more robust and quicker to deliver.

Issues around collecting evidence for assessment are common and shared among many training providers. Ambios' project could be an excellent demonstrator of how AI can be used to map assessor observations. The project will produce a framework of vocational qualification Level 2/3 performance criteria with knowledge and understanding from Ambios' existing curriculum that will enable formal assessment by observation. These will be audio recorded and an AI system will map voice output conversations to the learning framework, indicating which performance criteria have been covered and where further skills learning is required.

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AI learning support assistant (AILSA) to help develop AI skills

MyPocketSkill



Artificial intelligence (AI) skills shortages are a serious problem in the UK. AI and related technologies are transforming the economy and creating new opportunities, however many employers struggle to find workers with the right skills. 93% of UK businesses report a gap in IT skills, and 40% say AI and machine learning are the most sought-after skills. Government research estimates AI could leave 10.5 million workers facing a high or medium risk of automation by 2030. But AI could also create new jobs and tasks that need human skills, such as creativity, problem-solving, and communication. The UK needs to invest in developing and retaining talent and reskilling and upskilling the workforce to meet current and future demand for AI skills.

This project will produce an AI Learning Support Assistant (AILSA) – a copilot to help young people on MyPocketSkill to acquire and use AI skills. It will provide guidance and feedback to learners as they work on small AI projects for real customers. The tool will use large language models to understand project requirements and learner progress, offering suggestions, explanations, and evaluations to improve AI skills and deliver results. It will generate and adapt relevant AI content and code to assist learners with projects and modify generated content and code according to learner feedback and customer needs.

Using an AI copilot built into a task platform, students and young people will learn AI skills in an engaging, interactive, and personalised way, whilst gaining valuable experience and exposure to real-world AI applications and challenges.

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Badge Nation – BadgeUP

Social Impact Software (SIS)



Vocational learners often struggle to communicate the value of their training to potential employers. Digital badges help overcome this challenge by providing verifiable, shareable evidence of achievements beyond formal qualifications. However, less than 1% of teachers and trainers issue their learners with digital badges because traditional approaches to badge writing are cumbersome, time consuming and slow. VET professionals find it harder than expected to write good badges and explain their value to students, and they don't have time to do it well.

This project will create a fully automated badge writing tool, helping VET professionals write high quality badges easily and efficiently. The tool will quality assure badges that can then be published on any digital badge platform, reducing the time to create them by 90%. By combining technology and innovation, if successful, this project will solve a core problem at the heart of developing quality badges.

The tool will utilise database technology, grammar check software and existing expert system software to provide a smart, pre-populated, customisable template bank for badges and communication materials to use with learners. It will support users to write badges aligned to specific standards, provide quality assurance against standards, and allow badges to be published to a badge issuing platform of their choice. The tool will have an auto prompt feature which will 'learn' how to provide suggested additions to badges and provide faster, easier to implement feedback to users writing to specific quality standards.

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Campus chatbots

Bolton College



The cost of providing a generative artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot to everyone in a Further Education (FE) college can be prohibitive. Monthly fees exclude all but the most affluent communities from accessing generative AI chatbot services, thereby exacerbating the digital divide. Many FE colleges are financially constrained, and students and teachers are missing out on services that could be incredibly useful to them.

This project will develop a campus chatbot platform that can be accessed online by any college. A user-friendly interface will allow students and teachers to create and train their own chatbots using documents relevant to their learning or teaching needs, without any coding skills or prior AI knowledge. Individuals will be able to share their chatbots with others and discover and use chatbots created by their peers or teachers within a safe and secure online platform. Chatbots will facilitate self-directed learning, as users will be able to create and use chatbots on any topic and update them as they learn new information. The project will give access to personalised and interactive learning support without financial barriers. Learners will be able to use chatbots to ask questions, clarify concepts, receive feedback, test their understanding, and access additional resources on any topic they are studying.

The project will leverage an open-source large language model to generate natural and coherent responses to user queries, based on the documents used to train the chatbot. There will be no charges as the chatbot will not use external application programming interfaces or services to generate responses.

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Green Skills Coach




GetZero



The UK Climate Change Committee forecasts up to 725,000 net new jobs could be created by 2030 in low carbon industries. However, PwC has highlighted skills shortages as the biggest barrier to green jobs growth. Education and training providers are not equipped to provide the training learners need to address the green skills gap, particularly in green collar vocational roles in construction, energy, and transport. 73% of UK young people feel uninformed about green job opportunities and 1 in 8 people in the UK currently have a job specific green skill according to LinkedIn's Green Skills report.

This project will create a Green Skills Coach – a careers and vocational training guidance chat-based service using artificial intelligence (AI). The tool will offer personalised coaching support and information on training paths and apprenticeships for young people in secondary education, Further Education or through Job Centres, helping them get job-ready for the Net Zero workforce. The Coach is designed to work as a standalone chatbot for use in education, job centres and employer career sites as part of the wider GetZero platform for Green Skills. The web-based product will combine bite-sized e-learning with game-based learning.

This solution will broaden access to the emerging green skills vocational training market while providing a deeper, more personalised training journey with career guidance. If successful, this project will showcase a new way of using AI in vocational learning by using a large language model combined with local knowledge, helping to train the AI more accurately and with the most relevant knowledge.

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Improving apprentice outcomes



Association of Apprentices (AoA)

With around 800,000 apprentices in the UK, apprenticeships are a cornerstone of vocational learning. However, in England, almost half of apprentices leave early. One of the challenges for apprentices is lack of support. More training time, study opportunities, and support networks could improve retention. Completers are more likely to achieve positive outcomes with their employers, such as a promotion. However, even when apprentices complete, the benefits they experience can vary. Younger apprentices, those with a disability or health condition, and those in more deprived areas secure less favourable outcomes. To ensure apprenticeships remain a robust and viable pathway, on-programme support needs focus and investment.

AoA's vision is to ensure every apprentice has access to the necessary support for a successful apprenticeship journey, ultimately leading to the best possible outcome. To meet this ambition, they need innovative technology to efficiently reach more apprentices, more quickly and deliver value. This project will develop an application programming interface that allows training providers and apprenticeship platform providers to seamlessly integrate AoA's products into their offer thereby reaching more apprentices. It will also build on AoA's technology to incorporate the new Post Apprenticeship Recognition Scheme, which will see completed apprentices recognised for the skills they have gained during their programme, and in partnership with the Chartered Institution for Further Education, be awarded post-nominals. This project will enhance the societal and industrial prestige of apprenticeships and vocational pathways, raising parity of esteem with other educational routes.

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Central London transferable skills app

Haringey Council



The 2023 Local Skills Improvement Plans highlighted the need for specific transferable skills including creativity, critical thinking, communication, organisation, and time-management as a priority across all sectors. These skills are difficult to measure, requiring better tracking and evidence for learners to demonstrate their progress. If learners furthest from the labour market can develop and evidence these skills, they will be more competitive at interview and employable.

This project, supported by 12 central London council adult learning services, will create a user-friendly app for the development of transferable skills to ensure learners can measure and capture their progression. This app will be the next stage in a partnership helping learners into work. It will show evidence of learner achievement against each transferable skill and examples they can give to employers. The app will summarise specific examples of the application of these skills, in a format that can be dropped into application forms or CVs, or into words that can be spoken at interview.

The aim of the project is not just to encourage learners, but also to help them build a portfolio that will enhance their employment prospects. For example, the app will allow learners to identify key terms in job searches and map those against the skills they are working towards. Linking potential new careers to the skills being acquired makes this a powerful tool for those furthest from the labour market.

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Dynamic AI sims for customer service training in rail


Totem Learning Ltd



There is a growing demand in asset intensive industries for staff to provide excellent customer experience, especially in difficult situations including disability awareness, security, and conflict management. Train travel has become more discretionary than ever, and customer experience is critical to success. 240,000 people work in the UK rail industry, a significant proportion in customer facing roles.

This project will evaluate, select, and integrate emerging artificial intelligence (AI) tools into existing operational training simulations including security and accessibility, to create realistic characters in challenging scenarios that will respond naturally to player choices. Learners will be able to speak to characters verbally and get a realistic generative response, for example, a person behaving antisocially or a customer with disabilities who needs support. Player choices will be recorded and analysed, with feedback generated from the character on how they feel about the experience.

This project will use AI to create learning scenarios, exploring the cutting edge of what dynamic responsive training could look like. If successful, this technology will deliver enhanced serious games that have significant emotional and behavioural impact, replacing multiple choice based and lower impact alternatives. The AI characters will be modelled to a range of industry informed personas that respond dynamically to approaches made by learners. The product will respond in less predictable ways to spoken or written learner inputs, forcing them to think on the spot and experience more realistic consequences.

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In the moment and point of care dementia training

Science & Engineering Applications Ltd (Scienap)



Nurses face extreme pressure from shortages and high demand, leaving no time for non-mandatory training like dementia care. Yet, 1 in 3 hospital patients have dementia, often experiencing distress that requires skilled, personalised care. Appropriate management improves outcomes for patients, family, and staff, and reduces hospital stays. Despite past initiatives, few of the NHS's 700,000 nurses have the skills to support dementia patients. For employers, rising dementia cases and associated nurse training requirements are a national emergency.

This project will develop a new training app for nurses, driven by contextual patient information. Nurses will enter situational information relating to a patient with dementia and be guided with bite-sized information and suggestions. 'In the moment' contextualised training for dementia at the point of care will bring learning into the daily nursing routine, enabling personalised care. Nurses will be able to train when and where they want and will have a personal digital record of their training as part of their career development.

The app will ultimately be driven by artificial intelligence to give continuously improving training and use contextual information to enable data driven patient-centric recommendations. Scienap have strong links to the NHS enabling them to co-design and test their app with both educators and learners in the sector. Scienap has wider ambitions to make dementia care training accessible for all, including social services and other paid and unpaid carers in the community.

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Off Grid: Red Team Semaepus



The UK cyber security skills gap is widening as the sector grows. The Department for Science, Innovation, and Technology reported that 83% of UK businesses have basic or advanced cyber security skills gaps. Additionally, there were 160,035 cyber security job postings in the last year – an increase of 30% on the previous year, with 37% of vacancies reported as hard-to-fill. Diversity in the sector is also narrowing as only 17% of the workforce is female and only 14% of senior roles are filled by women. Most existing training solutions target school age learners or adults with programming and tech skills. There is nothing making the subject more relatable or accessible for adult learners.

This project will take an existing video game and make a spinoff environment with a companion 'hackable' online platform. It will use game narrative to lead players into real world learning resources to upskill in cyber security, red team, and penetration testing skills. It will set a gaming audience with interest in the subject on a path of discovery. Through narrative and gameplay, learners will explore the wider world of security and penetration testing. They will discover learning resources, participate in capture the flag contests, pursue bug bounties, and eventually explore the UK cyber security industry at large.

Cyber security is often seen as unapproachable, abstract, too hard, or boring, and current provisions for vocational learning do not overcome this. This solution will take an entertainment first approach – a fully commercial game with compelling characters and role models that lead the player into the world of cyber security.

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On the job training for eco-retrofit

Collaboration Tools Ltd



Whole House Eco-Retrofit (WHER) can cut heating demand by 50% and reduce problems like damp, but currently only eight UK organisations offer WHER surveys and plans. Increasing availability of local WHER services is critical to the UK's climate adaptation. To meet net zero by 2030, sector employment needs to more than double and the skills deficit is a significant barrier. The knowledge and skills required are numerous, diverse, and highly specialised. There is currently no clear entry route and most new entrants have generic skillsets that are developed by their employer through informal and often intermittent guidance from colleagues.

This project will create a training and support system for WHER competence, available on a range of devices, primarily mobile. It will be based around an interactive Q&A service, powered by a generative artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot, to extend and enhance current informal development of WHER skills in the workplace. Tradespeople will be involved in development from the start to ensure it is user friendly.

This project will take an innovative and experimental approach to training the chatbot by combining web search with the use of generative AI and using extensive learning material provided by the Centre for Alternative Technology. This will ensure the chatbot provides comprehensive information and draws on the latest best practices. The chatbot will support structured training and be used from mobile devices to assist in completing work, giving learners real-time guidance at the point of use, and tailored to the situation.

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Rainmake

The Integrate Agency CIC

integrate

There is a shortage of charity fundraisers both in terms of numbers and diversity. The sector is struggling to find fundraisers to support their organisations' income generation in a challenging labour market. Research shows there is a significant need to diversify the fundraising workforce so that fundraisers are more reflective of the community and the organisations and beneficiaries they serve, and to provide an easy entry point for young people to join the sector.

This project will develop a grant writing training platform to provide flexible entry points and easy access for learners entering or progressing in grant writing careers. It will offer a supportive peer community to build learners' confidence and networks for success. The platform will address key needs and pain points that have been evidenced through research. The platform will have modular learning and upskilling tools to create grant writing resources for the sector.

Training in the UK is generally one-off, expensive, and inflexible. This proposed approach provides flexible entry, community and peer-to-peer support, mentoring, and accreditation through a badge to enable learner focused career development. The Integrate Agency CIC has a well-established relationship with south London's charity sector and is well placed to deliver their project to learners in this sector.

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SCOOTER: Closing the social care workforce knowledge and skills gap




Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)



Social care is a vital UK sector employing 1.6 million people, with 1.2 million front line carers lacking access to necessary training. On- the-job learning often utilises lengthy policy documents or journal articles which are time consuming and difficult to digest. Poor support adversely affects job satisfaction and contributes to high staff turnover.

This project will develop a mobile app providing digital information and support for front line care staff. It will deliver bitesize, trusted information in real time and in convenient and digestible formats. Engaging formats such as curated content, infographics, and videos will help address users' needs including language or cultural barriers. It will be portable and accessible to enable learning during the day, helping carers feel more supported by delivering trusted, practical information in response to real time learning needs.

SCIE's strong reach and reputation provides an opportunity to shape and influence training for frontline workers at scale. They are committed to innovation and ensuring everything they do is co-created by people with lived experience. SCIE's trusted best practice, evidence and guidance will form the foundation for the tool, with subject matter experts ensuring the synthesised and vetted content is reliable and safe. The tool will have a search function coded with rules and structured responses to mitigate against biases, with a longer-term ambition to develop an artificial intelligence data-driven system trained on SCIE's existing materials to deliver content.

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SkillTractix: The future of construction work-based learning logs

yfor (Skout Skills Hub)



The construction industry is grappling with outdated, paper-based learning methods making it challenging to engage learners, assess learning and track skills. These inefficiencies lead to poor analytics and training that fails to meet certification requirements or business needs, ultimately affecting learner engagement and retention. There's a clear need for a digital employer-led solution.

SkillTractix aims to digitise and streamline the process with a user-friendly digital platform, replacing traditional paper-based systems for logging, evidencing, and assessing skills. This will simplify tracking and managing learner progress, making the process more transparent and straightforward for learners, supervisors, and end-point assessors. Learners will benefit from an easy-to-use digital interface that allows them to update their progress and request assistance, enhancing their engagement and understanding of their learning journey. Supervisors will benefit from a simple framework to implement training and provide timely feedback, improving communication and ensuring training aligns with educational requirements and business operations.

yfor is uniquely positioned within Northern Ireland's construction industry to develop and test this innovative feature, potentially sparking significant change across the sector.

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The Swimming Teachers App

Triton Training Ltd



Anyone aged 16+ with no experience or prior qualifications can attend a swimming teacher course and after five days be qualified to teach swimming lessons. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is encouraged but is costly and not mandatory. YouTube showcases different practices, but teachers are unaware if they are safe, effective, or recommended in this country. Research from Swim England and the Swimming Teachers' Association found a national swimming teacher shortage, with 65% of employers restricted due to not having teachers. There are currently almost 12,000 vacant swimming teacher roles.

This project will create an app to support new and experienced swimming teachers to enter and stay in the industry. It will provide support and resources to aid CPD to reinforce best practice. The mobile app will support learners and teachers with accessing CPD content on-the-move (videos, podcasts, reading). This will include videos of safe and progressive practices, lesson plan and scheme of work development, profiles capturing completed CPD, a confidential mentoring Q&A feature, and the ability to find work with local employers. The project will be an innovative approach in this sector as technology in the leisure industry is limited, particularly for swimming teachers' own development and session development.

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Warmur Academy AI agent for upskilling heat pump installers

Warmur Technology Ltd



To hit Net Zero, the UK Government must install approximately 21 million domestic heat pumps by 2050. This will require the upskilling of 69,500 heating installers by 2035, but only 4,000 installers are currently trained and not all are active. The scale of the challenge is compounded by the skills gap and inadequacy of the current training provision. The sector faces the challenge of creating capacity to learn the new skills needed for the future, while struggling to meet current demands due to skills and labour shortages. In addition, there is insufficient training available on the new skills required for heating system design and installation. Where it does exist, dropout rates are high, learners struggle with the complex 'hydronics' calculations required for each heat pump fitting and as a result installer errors are contributing to a lack of confidence in heat pump technology.

This project will build and test an artificial intelligence (AI) agent for mobile phones, trained on known hydronics best practice, that installers will take into the field to cement their learning following their attendance of Warmur's new hybrid hydronics course. The AI agent supports a blended approach to learning, helping engineers embed what they have learnt in the classroom and by mentoring them to work through real on-the-job scenarios. The project is targeting a specific problem around confidence with calculations and the need for heating engineers to upskill in high level math. By demonstrating how a well-designed AI tool can act as a mentor, this project could be replicated across a wide range of learning areas and industries.

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VocTech Activate 2025



Blend are using short-form video to help train deskless workers.

Accelerating progression in live events

MUTI Immersive

MUTI
LIVE

The UK events industry is a major contributor to the national economy, employing over 700,000 people and generating £70 billion annually. Despite its scale, the sector faces a critical shortage of skilled staff, with 48% of agencies struggling to recruit experienced professionals. This reliance on undertrained junior staff leaves many ill-prepared for crisis management. The situation is worsened by the decline in educational pathways, with 25 of the UK's 99 event management courses no longer accepting applications.

This project will develop an AI-integrated immersive training platform that simulates high-pressure live event scenarios, allowing learners to develop crisis response and decision-making skills in a safe, controlled environment. The modular programme features AI-generated virtual team members and scenarios covering crowd control, extreme weather, and security threats such as terrorism. Real-time biometric monitoring adapts the training to each learner's engagement and stress levels, accelerating skill development and addressing talent gaps. By accelerating the development of situational judgment and crisis response skills, this solution aims to address talent shortages and raise professional standards across the UK events industry.

Combining AI and immersive technology with strong industry partnerships, this project offers an innovative approach to workforce development in a sector underserved by traditional training. It promises to transform learning through realistic simulations, preparing professionals for challenges that are impossible or unsafe to replicate in real life.

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AI modelling for next generation retrofit training

Ember Consult

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The retrofit assessor industry is suffering from low workforce retention rates, with as few as 8% of new entrants securing employment after training. This shortage is widening the skills gap and contributing to a 90% shortfall in retrofit activity required to achieve the government's 2030 net zero commitments. Current Level 3 Retrofit Assessor training focuses predominately on developing theoretical knowledge, offering limited development of the practical, diagnostic skills now required under updated whole-house retrofit regulations.

This project will develop an AI-driven archetype engine and modelling tool to support Level 3 Retrofit Assessor Training. The solution will provide a dynamic, scenario-based environment of any UK domestic residence, enabling learners to analyse, manipulate, and design retrofit solutions across a diverse range of building types and contexts. Learners will be able to interactively adjust insulation, glazing, heating systems, and structural modifications to understand the impact on EPC ratings in real time.

By promoting hands-on learning and diagnostic skill development, this tool addresses a critical training gap. Coupled with a direct link to contracted work, the project offers strong potential to boost workforce readiness and drive real impact in the retrofit sector.

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AI powered self-assessment platform




Mortar



In the UK, 5.7 million people work in the public sector, representing 17.7% of the total workforce. However, challenges in recruitment, onboarding, and career development mean that 52% of public sector employers are struggling to fill vacancies. One way to address this gap is by helping individuals interested in public sector careers to understand their existing skills and identify how to bridge gaps to access entry-level roles.

In partnership with Essex County Council, including their Targeted Employment Officers and Leads for Accessible Apprenticeships, this project will develop a user-tested, intelligent platform using AI with structured learner pathways into public sector employment. Learners will complete self-assessments and receive personalised development plans, learning resources and support. Public sector employers will benefit from aggregated insights to strengthen workforce planning, recruitment, and apprenticeship strategies.

By mapping Essex's apprenticeship and entry-level opportunities against the UK Government's Essential Digital Skills Framework and the Digital and Data Profession Capability Framework, the project will align training with real job requirements. This systemic approach will be co-developed with input from learners, local adult learning providers, job centres, employability programmes, colleges, and public sector employers. With its strong partnership with Essex County Council through the development of the Digital Help Finder tool, Mortar is well positioned to deliver meaningful impact.

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AI-assisted formative feedback on image and video-based e-portfolio submissions

sAlnaptic

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Apprenticeship completion rates stand at just above 50%, with higher dropouts at Level 3 and below. Of those who leave, 70% cite quality of training and lack of support as key reasons. Apprentices must submit portfolios for end-point assessments (EPAs), but feedback is often delayed, typically by 4–6 weeks. This delay makes it difficult for apprentices to track which knowledge, skills, and behaviours they've met and where gaps remain. The lack of timely feedback also results in missed opportunities for improvement, demotivation, reduced confidence, and strained relationships with apprentices, tutors and employers, ultimately leading to dropout.

This project will develop an AI-powered web app that delivers instant, personalised, examiner-level feedback on image and video portfolio submissions, which account for 30–40% of EPA evidence. By automatically mapping submissions to required competencies, the tool identifies demonstrated knowledge, skills, and behaviours and highlights areas for improvement. Immediate feedback will help apprentices focus their learning and enhance portfolio quality, while enabling tutors to offer targeted support.

By providing immediate feedback on multimedia evidence, this solution offers a new way to support skill development and behavioural demonstration, elements essential to effective vocational training. This solution has the potential to improve completion rates among learners, creating broader impact across the apprenticeship sector.

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AI-driven language and communication skills training for social carers

Specialist Language Courses

Around 300,000 non-EU staff work in direct care roles across the UK. To have secured a Health and Care Worker visa, an overseas applicant must have demonstrated a B1 level of English, an intermediate level slightly above GCSE. However, this level often is not sufficient for the complex communication demands of care work. As a result, there are many care workers who do vital work but struggle with the English language skills needed to manage the challenging communication demands such as navigating regional accents, understanding idiomatic expressions, and holding sensitive conversations with confused, distressed, or grieving service users and their families.

This project will develop an AI-powered language tool to build carers' confidence and communication skills. Accessible via web browser and mobile app, the tool will use real-time AI-driven roleplay and feedback to simulate natural care-related conversations and provide contextual learning. Powered by a Large Language Model (LLM) with Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG), the AI will dynamically reference relevant content to offer accurate, safe, and situation-specific guidance. Reinforcement learning from human feedback will be included to refine responses and provide contextually accurate, ethical, and safe advice tailored to carers' real-world communication needs.

Designed with carers' mobile-first preferences in mind, the tool offers personalised, on-demand support aligned with real-world needs. With strong sector relationships, SLC has identified a clear appetite for affordable, accessible language training.

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Apprenticeships360: Integrating employer and training needs

yfor (Skout Skills Hub)

Apprenticeships are a crucial pathway into skilled employment, but the current system is fragmented and difficult to navigate. In Northern Ireland's housing and construction sectors, employers struggle to align apprenticeship qualifications with business needs, find suitable training providers, and manage the administrative load of recruitment, tracking, and retention. Apprentices, meanwhile, face a lack of accessible, up-to-date information on local courses and providers aligned with their career goals, contributing to low retention and completion rates. These challenges are especially acute in construction, where strict regulatory and safety standards mean employers must ensure apprentices meet a wide range of compliance requirements. With over 240,000 apprentices needed in the UK over the next decade, streamlining this system is essential to building a skilled, resilient workforce.

This project will develop a centralised digital platform to simplify and connect the apprenticeship journey for employers, training providers, and apprentices. The platform will reduce administrative burdens, provide real-time information, and support better alignment between training and business needs, particularly in areas such as digital skills, building safety, compliance, and green construction.

For employers, it will simplify partnerships between providers and apprentices, offer tools to track skills, and integrate micro-credentials and open badging to support flexible, lifelong learning. For apprentices, it will provide clear, tailored information on courses and career pathways—helping them make informed choices and improving retention.

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Blend: TikTok meets workplace training for deskless workers





Blend

The UK hospitality industry employs 3.5 million deskless workers, yet a shortage of trained staff is costing the sector £25 billion annually in unmet customer demand. Onboarding typically requires 140 hours of basic training over a 90-day period, which coincides with the highest risk of staff drop out. With turnover rates close to 150%, businesses face recurring costs of up to £25,000 every three months. Rising employment costs, including increases to the National Minimum Wage and Employer National Insurance, have intensified pressure on employers to train, engage, and retain staff more effectively, particularly among Gen Z and non-native English speakers.

We Are Blend have created a microlearning platform designed for a modern, mobile-first, shift-based workforce. The platform combines user-generated video training content with an AI-enabled Learning Management System to make learning accessible, engaging, and tailored to individual needs. Their project with Ufi will develop a global skills marketplace on the platform offering TikTok-style video courses for core compliance training including Food Safety and Health and Safety, alongside a wider library of practical skills content, all available in multiple languages.

By using video, AI translation, and gamification, the platform is well placed to meet the needs of diverse learners and enhance training retention and accessibility. The solution responds directly to pressing sector challenges and is highly scalable, with potential applications beyond hospitality.

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CritiCAL Mathemagenic



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionising the future. As we delegate more and more decision-making powers, it becomes essential to ensure the future continues to support human needs and values. Surveys reveal that 50% of students aged 18–24 are concerned about how AI might affect their future careers. Both educators and employers are shifting their focus toward cultivating “future-proof” human skills that cannot be easily automated by AI. These include adaptability, creativity, collaboration, and, most notably, critical thinking – the skill most valued by employers in the World Economic Forum’s 2023 Future of Jobs Report.

This project represents a new approach to critical thinking training. An AI assistant will guide teams through logic-based challenges in an imaginary future world. Their mission is to identify and resolve problems using essential critical thinking skills like questioning assumptions, applying reasoning, communicating clearly, and considering diverse perspectives.

Learners will access the virtual world via two different platforms: a multi-user Virtual Reality (VR) experience and an Immersive Room (IR) that projects the environment around the users – no headset required. By comparing these formats, the study will assess the relative merits of each platform for supporting effective immersive collaborative learning experiences.

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IngenuityLabs: Gamified industry challenges for future talent

White Rose Innovation Agency



Learners in underserved regions often lack access to training that integrates technical and strategic skills through hands-on, practical experience. At the same time, 93% of employers report difficulty finding talent with this dual skillset, and 96% say the gap harms their business. Traditional learning programmes focus heavily on theory, leaving learners unprepared for modern workplace demands. In West Yorkshire, where 22% of neighbourhoods rank among the 10% most deprived nationally, skills shortages are directly tied to economic disadvantage, with lower-than-average qualifications at Level 4 and above.

This project will develop IngenuityLabs, a platform that turns real-world employer scenarios into structured, gamified learning experiences. In collaboration with UK telecoms operator aql, the platform will offer narrative-driven missions across a range of technical domains providing contextual guidance and rule-based assessment. Acting like an expert mentor, IngenuityLabs will track learner progress, highlight common barriers, and deliver learning analytics.

The project will pilot and test the platform with Leeds City College Digital Support Services and Digital Production Design and Development T-Level students to assess engagement, technical and strategic skill development and the effectiveness of AI, ensuring the platform meets both learner and workplace needs. By bridging the gap between vocational training and industry needs, IngenuityLabs offers an innovative, scalable solution, empowering learners with in-demand skills and giving employers access to a better-prepared talent pipeline.

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PharmPlay: Immersive learning for patient-facing roles

EL Healthcare Education



The UK's community pharmacy sector employs around 78,000 staff, including approximately 30,000 medicines counter assistants (MCAs) and dispensing assistants (DAs). Despite their frontline role in patient care, these workers face high vacancy rates, ranging from 3% to 11%. Many come from socially disadvantaged areas and have minimal academic qualifications, making traditional, text-heavy Continuing Professional Development (CPD) inaccessible. This contributes to poor staff retention, limited career progression, and a workforce ill-equipped for evolving service demands like Pharmacy First.

This project will develop an interactive CPD course on the ELELearn platform and its mobile app, focused on the NHS Pharmacy First service. Using serious game design and AI-powered patient chatbots, the course will teach essential skills such as triage, prioritisation, service delivery, and communication through realistic, scenario-based simulations. Designed for mobile access, it ensures flexible learning for a workforce with limited digital access or time.

By making training accessible, immersive, and directly relevant, the project aims to boost learner confidence, improve job satisfaction, and support better patient outcomes. By aligning with clear workforce needs, this initiative has the potential to transform vocational learning in community pharmacy by addressing real-world challenges with a practical, learner-centred solution.

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Remote Wind Lab: Expanding access to renewable energy vocational learning

Energy Skills Partnership Scotland



The UK offshore wind sector is set to triple in size by 2030, with workforce demand rising from 32,000 to over 100,000, requiring 10,000 new recruits annually. Scotland is a leader in floating offshore wind and is central to this growth, however, significant barriers persist. Access to specialised training equipment is limited, especially in remote areas, and many learners are confined to space-restricted, noisy lab environments. These challenges hinder practical skill development. Additionally, awareness of STEM and green energy careers remains low among certain groups, contributing to persistent underrepresentation. Women currently make up only 23% of the UK energy workforce.

This project aims to address both access and engagement issues by developing an innovative Remote Wind Lab. Housed in a container with a wind turbine and air intake system, the lab will allow students to access and manipulate live experiments via an online interface. Users can adjust parameters such as blade pitch, yaw, and wind speed to understand their impact on power generation. A centralised booking system will enable equitable access for colleges across Scotland.

By removing physical access barriers and delivering engaging, hands-on learning, the Remote Wind Lab supports a more diverse and better skilled green workforce. Designed to complement both vocational and higher education pathways, it's especially valuable for part-time learners or those balancing other commitments.

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Skill Bursts: Gamified microlearning for AI and digital literacy

miFuture Group



According to the Wales Centre for Public Policy, over half of adults in Wales lack the essential digital skills needed for work, figures that lag behind the rest of the UK. Nationally, all Regional Skills Partnerships report shortages in exactly the roles employers are trying to fill. This disconnect is driving jobs abroad, suppressing innovation, and locking young people out of high-value careers. AI literacy is rapidly becoming the most in-demand skill in the workforce, according to LinkedIn and the World Economic Forum. Yet it remains out of reach for many young people leaving school, with a whole generation of young adults entering the workforce without any kind of AI Literacy learning.

This project will integrate skill-based games into miFuture's microlearning platform to build AI and digital literacy in school leavers and young adults. The 'pick up and play' design meets young people where they are – with short, engaging, mobile-first experiences that validate real skill development. As learners progress, they will unlock career interventions including bite-sized video tutorials, job insights, and apprenticeship opportunities – each one linked to live employer demand. This is not just about learning, it is about direct routes to meaningful employment.

With strong links to major employers, education providers, and learners in the Cardiff region, miFuture is well placed to deliver this innovative solution. By combining gamification with practical career support, the project addresses a critical digital skills gap and offers an accessible, engaging alternative for young people who are not pursuing university, opening new routes into sustainable careers.

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The Digital Bridge: Connecting learners with SEND to employers

Urban Hax CIC



The employment rate for adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is 4.8% and predicted to decline. While school leavers with special educational needs and disabilities are capable of working, they face significant barriers in demonstrating their abilities, as traditional assessments often fail to identify their talents. Qualification requirements often exclude those from specialist schools, widening the skills gap. A lack of standardised supported employment practices, few trained advisors, and limited employer awareness further compound the issue.

The Digital Bridge project is working to tackle unemployment among adults with SEND by creating an accessible platform that improves communication between prospective employers and learners with special educational needs and disabilities. User profiles will display digital badges, showcasing vocational skills for learners and accessibility features for employers. The platform includes a matchmaking function, profile suggestions and guidance on earning new badges. Trusted employers and SEND institutions will also be able to create custom badges tailored to their needs.

By bypassing traditional hiring barriers, such as exams, interviews, and misconceptions about capabilities, Digital Bridge fosters direct, meaningful connections between learners with special educational needs and disabilities and inclusive employers. This innovative approach addresses real-world challenges and has the potential to deliver sustainable, long-term impact.

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T-levels: bridging the gap between the classroom and the workplace

RLC Technology

RLC LAB

The UK is facing a national shortage of skilled technical laboratory staff, including within the NHS. In response, the government and education charities are promoting apprenticeships and T-levels as alternative pathways to university, particularly targeting young people from low-income backgrounds. However, uptake of T-levels has been lower than anticipated. While T-level Health has seen interest, enrolment in T-level Science remains very low, and drop-out rates across T-levels are higher than those for A-levels.

This project aims to support T-level learners through the development of interactive, web-based simulations that replicate real laboratory experiences. These simulations are built using raw data from real experiments and mirror the functionality of actual laboratory software. Where appropriate, webcam footage captures moving equipment components, enhancing the realism of the experience. The simulations allow students to adjust instrument settings, explore different protocol configurations, and observe corresponding results, providing a hands-on, exploratory learning environment. The simulators will be accessible via computers, laptops, or tablets with internet access, ensuring broad accessibility. They will also be customised to reflect the needs of local employers, such as NHS laboratories, helping students build confidence and acquire industry-relevant skills.

This project offers a practical, cost-effective, and scalable solution by providing simulations of industry-standard equipment to make T-level Science more engaging and aligned with real-world requirements.

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Unlocking vocational skills in prisons through virtual learning

Novus

Vocational learning in prisons plays a vital role in developing essential skills, improving employability, and reducing reoffending. Research from the Prisoners' Education Trust shows that individuals engaged in education while in custody are more likely to secure employment and less likely to reoffend within a year of release. Sectors such as construction face acute labour shortages, with an estimated 225,000 additional workers needed by 2027, particularly in hands-on roles that demand practical experience. However, vocational training facilities are often limited by space and facilities within the prison.

Novus aims to address both challenges by using virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) to deliver immersive, secure vocational training environments within prisons. In partnership with two prisons, and an extended reality (XR) technology specialist, successful delivery of the project will enable prisoners to develop practical skills through step-by-step, risk-free simulations in fields such as construction and logistics. The immersive format will support engagement, enhance digital literacy and cater to neurodivergent learners, while bridging the gap between prison-based education and real-world employment.

This project offers a scalable, innovative approach to improving rehabilitation outcomes, increasing job prospects, and directly responding to national skills shortages. By aligning prison education with employer needs in high-demand sectors, the solution has the potential to transform both individual futures and wider workforce capacity.

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Video-based vocational training in prisons

Socrates Software



In 2023–24, over half of the 38 adult prisons inspected in England and Wales were rated 'Poor' for purposeful activity, including vocational learning. This reflects systemic issues such as limited facilities, staff shortages, frequent prisoner transfers, and restrictive regimes. Nearly half of people in prison have been excluded from school, making traditional classroom learning ineffective for many and highlighting the need for more accessible, flexible education. Although prison education is linked to lower reoffending rates, current methods often fail to meet the complex needs of learners.

This project will pilot a secure video calling platform at a selected HMP that enables remote vocational instruction via digital tablets. The solution allows instructors to reach many learners without having to attend prisons in person, giving prisoners access to a wider range of learning opportunities and more frequent instruction. It also allows employers to deliver training directly, helping to develop a future workforce.

By enabling continuity of learning, particularly following prison transfers, and expanding secure access to vocational education, this scalable solution addresses major barriers in prison learning. In a system with no current provision for video-based instruction, the project represents a significant step forward in improving rehabilitation outcomes, enhancing employment prospects, and supporting reintegration into society.

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VR and AR are being used to deliver immersive, secure vocational training environments within prisons.



VocTech Ignite

VocTech Ignite provides early-stage support for those new to grant funding or needing extra help to bring their ideas to life.

The VocTech Ignite programme runs alongside every open grant call, offering a small group of organisations the chance to receive Ufi's distinctive 'enriched support'. Through VocTech Ignite, participants are matched with experienced mentors and given access to tailored specialist guidance.

After our VocTech Activate 2025 grant call, four projects took part in the VocTech Ignite programme. The recipients showed strong potential for meaningful impact, often supporting learners furthest from opportunity, but were not yet ready for VocTech Activate funding. While VocTech Ignite provides valuable early support, it does not guarantee progression to further Ufi grant funding.

ufi.co.uk/ignite

Organisation	Project idea
Ashley Community Housing (ACH)	ACH plans to develop an immersive technology proof of concept to enhance their ESOL and employment programmes for refugee learners. Through a pilot in the hospitality sector, they hope to address challenges around learner confidence, retention and progression in employment.
Girlguiding	Girlguiding is seeking to create a digital tool that will strengthen high quality data use across its 80,000 volunteer network, improving decision making, programme delivery and long term data skills.
Ambitious about Autism	Ambitious about Autism aims to build a platform and app offering personalised, accessible vocational learning to support autistic young people in developing the skills they need for work.
I'm Back	I'm Back is looking to develop a platform providing personalised, bite sized confidence building content to support new mothers returning to work, helping more women stay and thrive in the workforce.

VocTech Challenge

To tackle specific challenges facing adult learners in the UK, especially those furthest from opportunity, we bring our funding, partnerships and advocacy workstreams together around a VocTech Challenge.

Each VocTech Challenge is focused on tackling an identified issue in vocational learning and designed to catalyse systemic change.

ufi.co.uk/how-we-work/challenge-programmes

Skills for an economy in transition

Ufi and Learning and Work Institute (L&W) came together at a time of rapid change in the UK economy and labour market, with the shared aim of driving a major increase in adult participation in learning and addressing the widening skills gaps affecting individuals, employers and regions across the UK.

Grounded in extensive research and consultation, *Skills for an economy in transition* was launched in 2024 as an ambitious £3m multi-year programme of work and funding designed to tackle the complex, interwoven and systemic barriers that contribute to the UK's continued low rates of adult participation in learning, and catalyse an acceleration in the development of skills for work.

ufi.co.uk/skills-for-an-economy-in-transition



AI-powered live translation is supporting students with low English proficiency access course content.



Skills for an economy in transition

Placed-based projects

Ufi and Hull College are bringing local stakeholders together to develop new digital tools to transform learning in the city.



As part of our commitment to co-create a new programme of place-based collaborations, Ufi and L&W identified four locations across the UK where there is a need for greater participation in adult learning and skills, desire from local leaders to work collaboratively, and a network of partners able to deliver a programme of work. These locations are Aberdeen, Belfast, Hull and Newport.

Together with local stakeholders, Ufi and L&W have explored the most significant barriers preventing adults from engaging in learning, identifying the local factors that hold participation back, and considering what joint actions could help to remove those obstacles. Across the four places, we are supporting a range of tech-enabled approaches that can strengthen adult participation in learning, drawing on the full breadth of expertise and resources available from both organisations.

ufi.co.uk/place-based-collaboration



Aberdeen

Ufi and L&W are working with Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and North East Scotland College to address barriers adults face when moving into learning and employment, including digital exclusion, low confidence, limited experience and unclear progression routes. Partners are developing accessible online and in-person support, including a regional digital platform, virtual work-experience resources and locally informed employability tools. This collaboration aims to strengthen pathways into work and help more adults take confident steps toward sustainable employment.

 ufi.co.uk/place-based-collaboration/aberdeen

Hull

In Hull, Ufi and L&W are working with Hull College and HEY! Volunteering to tackle barriers to adult learning, including mental health challenges, access issues, and language needs, through tailored, technology-enabled solutions. With Ufi funding, the partnership is developing a growing portfolio of micro-credentials, now including 16 live courses and new AI and LinkedIn modules undergoing employer validation. Alongside gamified learning tools and volunteer pathways, the project aims to boost employability, broaden participation, and provide a model other UK cities can adopt.

 ufi.co.uk/place-based-collaboration/hull

Belfast

In Belfast, Ufi and L&W are working with Belfast City Council and local partners to address systemic barriers to adult learning, including poverty, digital exclusion, and a fragmented skills system. Stakeholders have highlighted the need for clearer pathways into work for people facing multiple barriers, such as disabilities, long-term health conditions, or caring responsibilities, and better support for employers navigating skills provision. This collaboration aims to create more joined-up, accessible routes into learning and employment across the city.

 ufi.co.uk/place-based-collaboration/belfast

Newport

Ufi and L&W are working with partners in Newport to address barriers to adult learning, particularly in the Ringland area, where low skills, limited qualifications and low awareness of opportunities restrict progression. The collaboration is mapping existing provision, exploring referral practices through local health and wellbeing centres, and identifying gaps in digital confidence and access. This work aims to develop clearer pathways into learning and employment and inform potential VocTech solutions that better connect residents with opportunities.

 ufi.co.uk/place-based-collaboration/newport

Skills for an economy in transition

Grant Fund

Informed by the learnings from our place-based collaborations and drawing on extensive research as part of the *Skills for an economy in transition* programme, this grant fund is designed to tackle three fundamental challenges contributing to the UK's continued low rates of adult participation in learning and the development of skills for work; employer integration, pathways into and within work, and vocational language barriers.

We sought innovative yet practical plans to boost adult learning participation and drive systemic change in the UK skills system, with each organisation aiming to support at least 1,000 learners and develop a sustainable, scalable solution.

ufi.co.uk/challenge-grant



Klik2Learn's language platform offers sector-specific training for asylum seekers and refugees with limited English.



Accelerating language skills at work through AI-powered learning solutions

Leap powered by FlashAcademy



Many businesses struggle to ensure their workforce has the English skills and industry-specific vocabulary needed for success. Strong language skills boost engagement and support career progression. For employers, poor language skills pose health and safety risks, reduce productivity, impact wellbeing, and increase onboarding costs. The Learning and Work Institute's 2018 report indicated this costs the UK economy £48 billion annually. Targeted language training is essential, yet existing options are often too generic, while bespoke solutions remain expensive.

Leap powered by FlashAcademy® will address this challenge by using advances in large language models (LLM) to develop a platform using artificial intelligence (AI) to create tailored, pedagogically-robust English training and assessments that address industry-specific needs. Employers will be able to simply upload their company materials to create a fully bespoke learning programme. AI tutor-assisted learning, in both the learner's native language and English, will empower independent and contextualised learning and boost learner engagement. Employers will be able to validate employee progress and proficiency while improving productivity, safety and satisfaction.

The project will take a systemic approach, gathering feedback at each stage. FlashAcademy® will complete pilots with existing industry partners, including FE colleges, training providers, Local Authorities and charities. The next stage would be to further scale adoption through partners, such as Palladium, who have identified use cases ranging from support for driving theory tests to school support staff.

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AI PathwayPro

Built Environment Smarter Transformation (BE-ST)

BE—ST

The Climate Change Committee called for a 'step change' in developing low carbon skills in construction in a 2023 report. To meet the 2045 Net Zero target for the built environment we need to address skills imbalances. Identifying the potential to build on an existing competence knowledge base capability, BE-ST, Scotland's National Innovation Centre for a Net Zero Built Environment, is addressing the skills challenge. It is doing this by building upon its successful hands-on and experiential training within Retrofit, Passivhaus and digital transformation. BE-ST is also working with sector innovators to develop tech-enabled approaches.

Developed in partnership with Intelartes and Dynamic Knowledge, this capability is a key building block of AI PathwayPro – a platform which provides pathways into training and work by aligning employer needs, learner needs, and training courses. The AI PathwayPro platform will create a comprehensive system for matching competency demands and supplies to aid skills transferability. The platform will use AI to more effectively link low-carbon skill requirements and know-how, competences and relevant standards with training or other learning interventions – making upskilling more visible, accessible, and adaptable.

By addressing the evolving needs of employers and workers, this solution could be key to closing the skills imbalances and reducing fragmentation in the Built Environment sector. With support from Scottish FE colleges, this project aims to scale and be pivotal in addressing the low-carbon upskilling requirements across the Built Environment workforce.

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Build your future: from migration to vocation

Klik2Learn



Hospitality, Social Care, and Construction in the UK face staff shortages, while many migrants with the right to work – around 736,800 adults – remain economically inactive or unemployed. Limited language skills are a key barrier, with demand for training exceeding supply by 7:1. Klik2Learn aims to address this imbalance and create pathways into employment by providing innovative language learning solutions, partnering with the Department for Work and Pensions, FE, employers, recruitment advisors and local government.

This project will build on Klik2Learn's current language platform to offer employability skills and sector-specific training in hospitality, social care and construction for asylum seekers and refugees with limited English. It will create tailored language courses, immersive interview simulations, and 3D workplace scenarios with AI-enabled feedback on vital communication skills. Working with City & Guilds, the project will develop short online courses in these sectors, mapped to entry level qualifications. In partnership with the National Skills Academy, learners will reflect on their skills and aptitude for roles in these sectors and gain insights into what employers are looking for.

Klik2Learn has already worked on a pilot with 100 learners in partnership with Glasgow Life. They have 7,000 refugees on their waiting list for English for speakers of other languages. This project has the potential to create a step-change in how refugees are supported into work, how employers can fill vacancies and add diversity to their workforce and how vocational language skills are taught, providing a clear pathway into employment in high-demand sectors.

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Flourish – improving pathways into green jobs in Cornwall and Grimsby

Institute for the Future of Work



The Institute for the Future of Work (IFOW) has identified issues with skills development and a lack of career pathways in Grimsby and Cornwall due to industrial decline and a shortage of skills needed for modern jobs, particularly in the growing green energy sector. IFOW's research has highlighted that Cornwall and Grimsby have regional strengths in green industries but face shared challenges. There are significant skills gaps, low innovation readiness, and low uptake of vocational qualifications in these areas, creating barriers for local workers and young people transitioning into green jobs.

To address these challenges, IFOW has developed the Flourish platform using artificial intelligence algorithms and data, including analysis of 65 million UK job adverts. The platform is designed to help individuals understand their skills, explore green job opportunities, how their skills map to these jobs, and connects them with relevant vocational training. It also facilitates system-level coordination by connecting employers, training providers, and local government to improve green job pathways.

With support from Ufi, IFOW will test Flourish with learners in Grimsby and Cornwall, and develop training modules and resources for green job seekers. They will also produce a report with key findings on green job pathways and the future of work in these regions. IFOW aims to create systemic change in rural communities through data-driven solutions which could serve as a model for broader adoption, first in targeted local areas and then nationally.

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Smart pathways into employment

First Step Trust



First Step Trust know that confidence with written tests is a significant barrier to learning, especially for those furthest from opportunity. With Ufi's support in 2021, they explored how augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and video could enhance their motor vehicle maintenance programmes for learners, many of whom are long-term unemployed or have experience in secure mental health facilities. Their solution enabled learners to practice and demonstrate skills in a virtual garage without needing to read or write. Successfully tested in their physical garage and secure mental health facilities, the approach gained interest from several health trusts. Results showed that VR and video learning boosted confidence, reduced stress, increased enthusiasm, and encouraged learners to return for more sessions.

Since then, First Step Trust has developed an accredited 10-module programme, supporting 800 people in taking their first steps into learning. Now, they will scale their approach across the UK by introducing a new VR module focused on electric vehicle (EV) maintenance. With the UK's EV industry rapidly growing and a rising shortage of qualified technicians, this project will develop a platform and licensing model to enable delivery across the UK. Additionally, First Step Trust are in discussions with a national chain of autocentres to develop a new approach to their apprenticeship training programme that will incorporate the blended VR solution, making career pathways into vehicle maintenance apprenticeships more accessible and effective for learners. First Step Trust bring decades of insight and expertise on creating pathways into employment. Their strong industry partnerships will support the programme's long-term sustainability.

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Removing barriers to employment for temporary workers

Aposto



The event staffing sector inadvertently excludes workers due to a reliance on word-of-mouth recruitment and the costs of training new staff. This particularly affects individuals who do not speak English as a first language or have learning disabilities, with technical terms posing a significant challenge. Major incidents at event venues highlight the need for better crowd management skills, yet some employers hesitate to hire new workers due to training expenses and verification checks, such as Right to Work and DBS, which are often repeated for the same employee. At the same time, the UK events market continues to face staffing shortages.

With support from Football Safety Officers Association and the UK Crowd Management Association, Aposto is addressing these challenges by developing a platform to remove unnecessary duplication of checks and training. Their project with Ufi will expand on their existing platform by introducing a portal featuring a 'digital passport' system, enabling event staff to store their details and access multiple job opportunities efficiently. Learning modules, created in collaboration with the UKCMA, will help workers quickly gain relevant skills. Employers will be able to choose from a library of training modules or create their own. Using artificial intelligence, the platform will match staff with jobs in real time, identify skills gaps, and update CVs automatically.

This shift from one-to-one employer relationships to a one-to-many could drive systemic change, reducing recruitment and training costs while making it easier for workers to find jobs and advance their careers.

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VocTech Together

Launching in 2026, VocTech Together is a new £2.85m programme designed to accelerate the adoption of vocational technology across the UK skills system. Building on our long-standing commitment to innovation and systemic change, the programme focuses on ensuring technology reaches the adults who need it most, helping those furthest from opportunity gain the skills and confidence to thrive.

We aim to grow a movement of organisations working together to unlock the full potential of vocational technology and make opportunity more equitable through digital solutions.

ufi.co.uk/together



Games-based learning technology being used by Healthcare Assistants at the University of Derby.



VocTech Together

Support programme

The VocTech Together support programme will offer six weeks of practical mentoring, peer learning and hands-on guidance to help learner-facing organisations move quickly from intention to implementation. A small grant will be available to organisations taking part in the programme.

VocTech Together

Impact Partnerships

Our Impact Partnerships will bring together impact-focused stakeholders – whether linked to a place, learner community or industry sector – to tackle significant skills challenges across the UK. Each partnership will co-design and deploy proven technologies to demonstrate how vocational technology can respond to real-world problems and create scalable models for change.

VocTech Together

Grant fund

The VocTech Together grant fund will offer £20,000–£40,000 to organisations with a clear learner need and strong potential for vocational technology to make a significant difference. Whether supporting large groups directly, or smaller cohorts that illustrate wider challenges, the fund will support meaningful, sustainable adoption across the skills ecosystem.

VocTech Together

Advocacy and influence

Across all workstreams, VocTech Together places strong emphasis on evidence and learning. By capturing what enables successful adoption – and what gets in the way – the programme will share practical insights, strengthen confidence in VocTech, and help influence wider practice and policy.

Ufi Ventures

Ufi Ventures is the UK's specialist investor in vocational technology, backing early-stage companies developing digital tools to help people and businesses build the skills needed for work, now and in the future.

As part of our current thesis, the Ufi Ventures Challenge Fund, we provide initial investment of £250k with the capacity for further investment as companies grow. The Ufi Ventures Challenge Fund is designed to support early-stage companies with an ambition to use vocational technology to make a positive and scalable impact on skills development in the UK.

We are specifically looking for businesses that have a product already in the market, with early signals of commercial viability and solid plans in place for growth.

ufi.co.uk/ventures




Assemble You



Podcast listeners continue to increase at a rapid rate, with many people finding audio an effective way to learn new things. However, audio remains largely underserved in corporate learning programmes.

Assemble You create podcast-style audio courses in a range of topic areas. Their goal is to help screen-fatigued workers learn on the go and provide deskless frontline workers with a means to learn without a desktop screen. They reduce barriers to skills development through producing succinct, structured audio courses, that have the potential to engage users in new ways, increasing learning outcomes for adults.

Ufi first invested in Assemble You in October 2022 alongside a group of private investors. Assemble You used this first round of funding to grow production capacity and market reach, with a primary focus on supporting existing clients and attracting new B2B revenue. The company also delivers bespoke custom content for clients, has established an impressive resell partner channel, and has plans to move into the B2C space.

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AutonoMe



Everyone should have equal access to the benefits of meaningful employment, however currently only 4.8% of people with learning disabilities and autism are in work, a decline from 6.6% over the last ten years.

AutonoMe is addressing this challenge using mobile technology to help people with learning disabilities and autism develop skills for independent living and employment. The programme combines human support with assistive technology to help adult learners achieve their full potential. By using the app employees develop skills and overcome barriers to gain and sustain paid employment. At the same time, employers benefit from expert support to increase their diversity and inclusivity, together with greater insight into the needs and abilities of their workforce.

By accessing personalised support from a Job Coach and employment-specific instructional videos, the AutonoMe app helps learners develop motivation and resilience for job seeking. Learners are equipped with the practical and social skills required to secure meaningful paid work. Once in work, bespoke training and support is tailored to the personal needs of the learners and their employer, creating the right conditions for sustained employment. Learner progress is monitored and regularly communicated with both the learner and employer to ensure any challenges are identified and addressed proactively.

Ufi Ventures first invested in AutonoMe in April 2023. The seed investment has enabled AutonoMe to provide support to more people and expand its platform with the development of new features to make it more accessible and user-friendly.

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Bodyswaps



Many sectors are going through significant transformation through automation and digital innovation, not least those which have traditionally been labour intensive such as retail or transport. In this new realm, companies increasingly depend on employees' soft skills to add operational value. Therefore, rapidly developing the soft skills of the workforces is critical.

Virtual and augmented reality has very high potential to enable access to soft skills training at scale. Bodyswaps has developed a Virtual Reality (VR) learning platform and content library offered as a service to businesses that uses VR and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to provide soft skills training similar in performance to expert coaching and roleplaying, but close to the cost and scalability of eLearning. The platform empowers learners to safely practice their skills and measure their progress through a library of VR role-play simulations. An example of one of the company's innovations is a healthcare module to improve communication with patients, developed in partnership with the Royal Society of Medicine.

With Bodyswaps, organisations of all sizes can boost and scale their training programmes with affordable learning experiences far more effectively than with traditional online exercises or even facilitated role-playing.

Ufi first invested in Bodyswaps in September 2020 alongside Haatch Ventures and a group of private investors. This investment fits with our focus on investing to help people learn the essential skills needed for work, now and in the future – including interpersonal skills.

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Healthcare students using VR simulations from Bodyswaps.



CAPSLOCK

CAPSLOCK

By 2030, more than 100m workers in developed economies will need to switch occupations. There are many sectors in the economy with skills shortages, with some of these sectors also perceived as highly challenging to get in to for those looking to re-train. The Cyber Security sector is an example of this, with wide-spread skills gaps and a shortage of new workers. Typically, those looking for a career change have moved into other areas due to the complexities of the space, the high up-front cost of retraining and a lack of a clear pathway into jobs.

CAPSLOCK removes barriers to reskilling in this high demand sector, enabling those looking to retrain to access quality work, without having to pay a penny until they've landed a high-paying job. Learners are taken through online 'bootcamp' learning, delivered entirely within a collaborative digital learning environment that has been built to simulate real working scenarios. Prospective learners are also offered a wide range of financing options to remove upfront cost barriers for retraining. Post upskilling, the business also actively helps cyber talent into roles across a wide range of industries. So far, CAPSLOCK has enrolled hundreds of learners, with 65% of graduates securing employment and seeing an average salary increase of £12k in their first cyber role.

Ufi invested in the company in March 2021 alongside GC Angels and Tynton Group. This investment is aligned with objectives of increasing access to work for adults in the UK by improving skills, and addresses issues identified in our investment thesis: removing financial barriers to training as well as improving access to roles in high demand skill sectors.

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Certchain



CERTCHAIN

Certchain is a workforce skills and credential platform for regulated, safety-critical industries, starting with construction. It helps employers and workers move away from fragmented training records and manual checks, towards a single, verified view of what someone is qualified to do, and what they need next to progress.

Certchain's product enables contractors and large subcontractors to onboard and verify their workforce and supply chain at scale, with real-time visibility of skills coverage and gaps across projects. Its companion mobile app, the Skills Pass, gives workers a portable record of verified qualifications and experience that can be carried between employers and sites, reducing repeated checks and duplicated training.

The impact is clearer routes to learning and progression. Workers can see where they are "blocked" from certain roles and be directed towards the relevant training or accreditation to upskill. Employers can identify capability gaps, target training spend more effectively, and support progression pathways across both employed and subcontracted workforces.

Certchain is already being deployed with two major UK Tier 1 contractors, with additional partnerships providing a route to reach SMEs and specialist subcontractors who often have the least structured support to manage skills and progression.

Ufi invested in the business in 2025, as part of our Challenge Fund investments, alongside Haatch.

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Chorus



Industries where safety is critical, such as energy, utilities and infrastructure, are grappling with outdated, fragmented and inefficient training systems. As the energy transition accelerates and regulatory expectations evolve, organisations are increasingly exposed to risk. Many still depend on manual spreadsheets, disconnected software and generic training that fails to reflect real operational needs. This creates significant competency gaps, pulling workers away from their roles without delivering meaningful outcomes. With complex safety requirements, growing skills shortages and pressure to remain audit-ready, businesses urgently need more agile, integrated and reliable ways to assess and develop workforce capability.

Chorus directly tackles these challenges with a comprehensive, AI-enabled training and competence management platform built specifically for safety-critical industries. Their system replaces fragmented tools with one unified solution that brings training delivery, competence tracking and regulatory compliance into a single, intuitive environment. Chorus helps organisations understand exactly who is competent and compliant, providing evidence-based insights that support both day-to-day safety and long-term workforce planning. Industry-specific, on-demand content, developed in collaboration with sector partners, ensures training reflects real-world risks rather than generic requirements. The platform also streamlines audits with real-time reporting, reducing administrative burden and enabling confident, data-driven decision-making.

Backed by a £710k investment from Ufi Ventures and Haatch, Chorus is expanding its content and scaling its impact across hazardous sectors.

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Data Literacy Academy



Businesses spend hundreds of billions of pounds each year on data headcount, infrastructure, and technology but executives, managers and business users fail to exploit the full value, due to poor data literacy. Accenture found that although 75% of the global workforce have access to data analytics software only 21% of employees are confident with their data literacy skills. As workers are increasingly interacting with data as part of their role, the need for a more holistic approach to data literacy is becoming essential.

Data Literacy Academy is a learning platform providing clients and their employees with access to live and on-demand data literacy training. It breaks down the traditional barriers to understanding analysis, reporting and data-driven decision-making. The platform uses live and on-demand classes and courses to upskill employees across organisations and at all levels on how to engage with and benefit from the data their organisation holds, ultimately bridging the gap between data experts and their colleagues. Classes are taught by leading members of the data community, including data leaders from organisations such as Gymshark, Huel, and Sky.

Upskilling and empowering employees to be more data literate has a multitude of benefits, including improved decision making, more innovation and productivity, and better employee and customer experience. Data Literacy Academy aims to help 10,000 businesses and their employees achieve data literacy by 2030.

Ufi Ventures first invested in Data Literacy Academy in December 2022 alongside Haatch Ventures and private investors including Jason Foster, Founder and CEO of data and analytics strategy consultancy Cynozure.

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Fabrio



With the Computer Aided Design (CAD) software industry advancing significantly in the past 5 years and the advent of modern manufacturing processes, firms are embedding CAD even deeper into their processes, exponentially increasing the need for CAD skills across their workforces. Conversely, the number of workers with 'job-ready' CAD skills is decreasing. Whilst CAD modules form a component of many school, college and university courses, traditional classroom-style teaching has been a large barrier for many, limiting the numbers of graduates going on to take up careers in engineering, manufacturing and FX.

Fabrio teaches CAD through a range of interactive learning materials aimed at reducing teacher intervention and promoting independent learning.

Fabrio integrates into industry-level software to tailor learning and increase the efficiency of the design process through real-time marking and prompts.

By integrating into industry-level CAD software, Fabrio supports users to "build and learn" simultaneously through an embedded learning approach. Whether learning new CAD software on the job, in university, college or school, or for super-users wanting to solve their design problems more efficiently, Fabrio is making CAD more accessible for learners of all backgrounds and levels of experience, transforming how people learn CAD and bring their ideas to life.

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FlashAcademy



The UK needs to radically improve access to high-quality essential skills training. There are 9m workers in the UK with low literacy, limiting their access to work now, and to further training for the jobs of the future. VocTech can help to bridge some of those gaps.

FlashAcademy's mission is to make language accessible to everyone. The platform uses a proven combination of lessons, assessment, games, flashcards, tutor videos, and object translation to support people in becoming more confident in using English where it is not their first language. FlashAcademy Workplace was developed with Ufi's grant funding to accelerate learning of technical and non-technical vocabulary in the workplace. For employers, workplace learning helps ensure quality delivery through training and understanding of compliance matters such as health and safety.

Ufi first invested in FlashAcademy in July 2020 alongside Midven and several individual investors. This investment fits with our focus on investing to help people in the UK to build the essential skills needed for work, now and in the future, including literacy, numeracy, digital skills, interpersonal and problem-solving skills.

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Gladys



The UK home care sector is facing persistent challenges that make it difficult for families to find reliable, affordable support and for carers to access fair, flexible work. Growing demand, inconsistent service quality and outdated systems mean that arranging care is often more complex and time consuming than it should be. Traditional models can leave both families and carers navigating unnecessary barriers, highlighting the need for approaches that are simpler, more transparent and better aligned with the realities of modern care.

Gladys offers a transformative approach. The AI-powered platform directly connects care seekers with trusted local carers and helpers, removing intermediaries and reducing the cost, stress and complexity of arranging care. By combining smart logistics, conversational AI and seamless back-office automation, the platform manages scheduling, compliance, payments and communication in one streamlined system. This enables faster, more personalised matching while giving carers greater control, better pay and opportunities to develop their careers.

Gladys is designed to build strong local care communities nationwide. The £1.5m investment round, supported by Ufi Ventures alongside Cornerstone, Exceptional Ventures and others, will help scale the platform across the UK, enabling hundreds of thousands of hours of home support by 2026. With tens of thousands of hours of care already delivered, Gladys is setting a new standard for compassionate, tech-enabled home care that works better for families and carers alike.

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Greenworkx

GREENWORKX

To reach net-zero, the world needs to decarbonise homes, roads and energy systems – dramatically transforming the physical infrastructure of the world.

With 72% of green employers agreeing that there is poor careers advice for green jobs, Greenworkx is working hard to increase awareness of how impactful, accessible and rewarding they can be.

Greenworkx helps employers to train, certify and upskill the talent essential to power the energy transition. Through their online platform, Greenworkx helps job seekers find and apply for green jobs in various industries, as well as equipping people with the technical knowledge and skills needed for these roles.

Ufi invested in Greenworkx in July 2024.

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Kinderly



There are c.270,000 early childhood education practitioners in the UK who are not using digital tools to support and develop their practice. The wider UK childcare market comprises c.80,000 childcare settings which care for more than 2.4 million children under the age of five. Low usage of digital tools in this sector leads to more time spent on administration, less frequent and lower quality training and development opportunities and ultimately less time available for the children. Kinderly offers two software products to address this challenge.

Kinderly Together makes it quick and easy to digitally capture the early years learning journey, allows childcare providers to enhance parent communication and helps to improve the home learning environment. It also provides reporting and tools to better manage childcare provision by viewing developmental progress of all children at a glance with progress tracking, effective planning and reporting via a personalised dashboard. Kinderly Learn helps early years practitioners to manage their own Continuing Professional Development. All the learning has been designed to be engaging, bite-size, accessible and affordable.

Ufi invested in the company in December 2019 alongside Development Bank Wales and several individual investors. This investment fits with our focus on the opportunities to invest in VocTech for the care and education sectors.

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Learnerly



People in work want to feel that they are developing in their career. When they do, this helps companies retain and attract great people, and upskills the workforce. Learning content, a learning budget and personal development plans are all important aspects of a strong learning and development offer but sourcing and organising training for a diverse range of learners and managing tight budgets across a business can be complicated. Fair and equitable access to training can be a real issue and these are challenges that VocTech can help to address.

Learnerly encourages self-directed learning by empowering employees with personal learning budgets and a personal development plan; guiding them to resources based on what and how they want to learn. They select from curated learning opportunities including books, coaching, courses, conferences, podcasts, and videos. This personalised approach leads to industry-leading levels of engagement and turns the fixed cost of enterprise-wide e-learning/training licenses, with limited utilisation into a variable one – minimising waste of Learning & Development budgets.

In addition Learnerly has established an AI HR Transformation business called Hutora (hutora.com). It delivers strategic and cultural change by connecting people and business data, getting leaders closer to ground truths, and reimagining how talent is managed, developed and deployed.

Ufi first invested in the company in December 2019 alongside Triplepoint, Front-line Ventures, Playfair Capital and several individual investors. We have participated in two further funding rounds, through which Beringea became a shareholder.

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Metaverse Learning





Although the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated a move to online learning, very little has changed about how many skills qualifications are delivered. With the rise of immersive technologies, there is an opportunity to innovate skills training and assessment to support learner success in the UK and beyond.

Metaverse Learning is a global leader in the transformation of education, training, and assessment through Extended Reality (ER), including Virtual Reality (VR), Virtual Environments (VE) and Augmented Reality (AR). In partnership with education providers and industry, the company has produced a rich library of immersive programs covering many subject areas. Each program is co-created to fulfil sector-specific learning needs, helping to transform learning, build confidence, increase attainment, decrease costs, and equip learners with the skills they need to access further education, higher education, apprenticeship, and employment opportunities.

Through immersive work-based scenarios, learners develop real-world skills and in safe online environments and demonstrate knowledge and understanding through assessment. Metaverse Learning's virtual programs connect to any Learning Management System, and learners can review their performance and see where they have been successful and where they can improve.

Ufi invested in Metaverse Learning in February 2023. This investment developed a new-to-market Assessor Mode feature, helping tutors gain deeper learner insights, enabling personalised learner journeys, and providing in-program learner support. This investment supports Metaverse Learning to build upon their program library.

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Mobilise



With one in five carers finding that they need to stop work to care for loved ones, the service offered by Mobilise is crucial in helping people navigate the complexities and challenges of caring while also maintaining employment.

Mobilise is a digital platform and community providing access to knowledge, expertise, and skills for the 13.5 million unpaid carers in the UK. Their mission is to build a global community in which people with caring roles can support each other not just to care, but to care and thrive.

Mobilise works with Local Authorities to help identify and provide support to unpaid carers in their communities, harnessing their collective knowledge, wisdom and expertise and empowering them to thrive through online skills sharing and support. Ufi Ventures first invested in Mobilise as part of a £400k early-stage funding round in 2022.

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MyPocketSkill



MyPocketSkill works at the intersection of EdTech and FinTech, with a mission to empower GenZs to “Earn, Save, Learn”. It was launched in 2020 to address the decline of opportunities for young adults to find skilled work, learn about vocational paths open to them, and receive relevant financial education.

MyPocketSkill supports young people to become more employable and financially capable by using their existing skills and acquiring new ones. The platform connects young people with households and businesses to complete paid tasks, such as tutoring, social media management, music coaching, digital design, and other digital tasks, and manage their earnings through innovative embedded e-wallets. In the process it delivers short financial education videos to nudge young adults towards better financial skills and behaviours. MyPocketSkill, has teamed up with Lloyds Bank to help students become financially independent.

Ufi invested in MyPocketSkill in April 2023 alongside investors including London Business School's E100, the Capital Angel Network, and the SyndicateRoom EIS fund. MyPocketSkill has been grant funded by the Money and Pensions Service and Innovate UK. It has also received recognition for its approach and for its founders, such as winning Deutsche Bank and ATOS' Female FinTech competition in 2021.

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Purlos

Exited



Student access to, and outcomes from, Further Education (FE) are tightly linked to engagement. However current methods of engaging with prospective students, like email and phone calls, don't work at scale and often aren't their preferred communication channel. As a result, many students don't receive the help they need to understand which courses are available and overcome barriers to enrolling.

With the FE sector under financial pressure and an anticipated 90,000 additional 16–19-year-olds to enter further education by 2025, the conversion of applications to enrolments and then retaining enrolled students is absolutely key. Improving and automating student engagement before and during College is crucial, as is capturing where students go next.

Purlos is an experience management platform for student enrolment and destinations mapping on behalf of FE colleges, Local Authorities and training providers. Applicants and learners text message and 'WhatsApp' their way through the administrative tasks of applying and enrolling. Purlos supports FE colleges and training providers to help convert and retain students more effectively and helps learners find, access and succeed in the right course. Local authorities engage with Purlos to increase the number of people able to access further education and training.

Ufi Ventures invested in Purlos in October 2022 as part of a £450k fundraising round. Purlos was acquired by Jawanda Holdings in 2025.

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Slinger



The UK hospitality industry faces significant challenges to recruitment and workforce development. Although many people are attracted to working in hospitality, traditional recruitment processes are slow, outdated and expensive and career pathways unclear.

Slinger is on a mission to transform hospitality recruitment, supporting people to find quality work and develop their careers in the hospitality industry. To help hospitality staff find their next job, Slinger has replaced traditional CVs with video submissions, provides a frictionless route to signing-up, and only lists job opportunities paying a UK Living Wage or above. Shifts are claimed on the platform within an average of just 60 seconds.

Slinger is also focused on helping people move into hospitality and raising awareness of the variety of career paths available. To support career development, the platform is developing a programme comprising mentorship, upskilling, interview preparation and work experience.

Ufi invested in Slinger in October 2023 as part of a £500k pre-seed funding round led by Fuel Ventures with co-investment from Resolution Foundation, Cornerstone VC and angel investors. The investment supports Slinger to focus on developing their digital career programme, increasing their client acquisition and growing their team with a specific focus on customer care and community.

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SonicJobs



95% of job candidates abandon job applications before completion making the process frustrating and wasteful for applicants and recruiters. The SonicJobs team believes that the future of recruiting requires both technological innovation and intentional verification to ensure suitable candidates reach the right opportunities.

SonicJobs delivers verified applications from search and social media into a recruiter's Applicant Tracking System: meaning that suitable candidates are surfaced and their skills recognised.

Ufi invested in the company in June 2020 alongside JetSynthesys and the British Business Bank. This investment fits with our focus on investment opportunities which help people to navigate the retraining and recruitment market especially in sectors and roles going through radical change e.g. retail, transport.

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TaskHer



Only around 3% of professional electricians, plumbers and heating engineers are female. Given the chronic skills shortage across all skilled trades this presents a huge economic opportunity that is currently being missed due to a lack of visibility and outdated gender norms.

TaskHer is helping professional tradeswomen win more work and encouraging more women to enter the skilled trades through its booking platform. TaskHer allows customers to book and pay for tradeswomen online, as opposed to being a directory where customers can find tradespeople but then have to contact them, discuss the job and negotiate prices. For tradeswomen there's no pitching, no costs and no admin, they simply accept the jobs they want to take on.

With more than 30% of customers so far making a repeat booking through the platform, and tradeswomen receiving market-leading rates of pay, the number of users joining the platform is on the rise.

TaskHer are also focused on demystify skilled manual trades and encourage more women to develop careers in the sector. Ufi first invested in TaskHer in December 2022 alongside fellow impact investors Bethnal Green Ventures and Resolution Foundation.

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Springpod



Even those young people in the UK who can demonstrate high levels of education and qualifications are often seen by employers to lack the necessary experience of work. Only 50% of employers say students are properly prepared for work when they start. Workplaces are crying out for stronger candidates with relevant skills and are looking to engage with young talent at an earlier stage than ever before.

Springpod empowers young people (16-24) to prepare for and secure their next step through their all-in-one platform. The platform connects students with employers, apprenticeships, Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) earlier than ever before. Young people use Springpod to build work ready skills, whilst completing meaningful virtual work experience with top employers, ahead of applying for their next steps, whether in employment or education.

Ufi first invested in the business in July 2021 alongside Triple Point, with co-investors since including Edge VC and Britebound. This investment fits with our focus on investing in increasing access to high quality work experience for young people. With young people suffering disproportionately as a result of stagnant economic growth and a transitioning economy, we believe it has never been more important for students to be connected with and well informed about the full range of future opportunities available to them whether in work, training or education.

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● Strategic Partnerships

Working together to maximise our collective impact and accelerate the pace of change.

We know we can't achieve our mission alone, which is why we work in partnership with organisations who share our ambitions to create conditions for success and accelerate the pace of change.

Our Strategic Partnerships go beyond individual projects or one-off activities. They focus on driving systemic change and creating the environment needed for vocational technology to be adopted and embedded across the UK.

From inspiring leadership-level engagement to commissioning research and supporting the sharing of knowledge, partnership is crucially important.

ufi.co.uk/strategic-partnerships

AELP

Supporting independent training providers to deploy the best digital tools and pedagogies



Ufi and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) are working together to develop insight into the sector, exploring how technology can be used to enhance high-quality delivery. The partnership seeks to influence the strategy and practice of organisations across the sector, producing a long-term shift in the adoption and deployment of high-quality digital pedagogies.

Together we have convened discussions and undertaken national research to explore how independent training providers are using or planning to use technology and digital pedagogies in their delivery. We seek to understand barriers to adoption and how the funding and regulatory landscape can support innovation.

 ufi.co.uk/strategic-partnerships/aelp

Association of Colleges

Supporting further education colleges to deploy the best digital tools and pedagogies



The Association of Colleges (AoC) is the national voice for further education, sixth form, tertiary and specialist colleges in England. Ufi and AoC are working together to increase the use of vocational technology in further education (FE) colleges to provide access to learning and skills, and improve outcomes for post-16 vocational learners.

Our partnership is informed by the joint report *Digital transformation in FE: a roadmap for action*, produced with Jisc, which highlights the need for stronger digital leadership, better infrastructure and a core digital skills framework to ensure every learner is equipped for the modern workplace.

To help put these recommendations into practice, Ufi and AoC have launched National Digital Insight Hubs at Basingstoke College of Technology, Heart of Yorkshire Education Group and South Staffordshire College. These hubs act as national demonstration sites, sharing effective practice and supporting colleges to progress faster on their digital journeys.

 ufi.co.uk/strategic-partnerships/aoc



Catch22

Mobilising the power and energy of tech ventures to drive reform in public service delivery



Reform through social enterprise has been at the forefront of Catch22's work for over 200 years. Together we are working to catalyse systems change in the adoption and deployment of vocational technology with a focus on the business to government market.

With support from Ufi, the GoodTech Ventures Community and Accelerator was launched to support early-stage impact-led tech ventures to design, build and deploy game-changing digital technologies into social and public service delivery. GoodTech Ventures released an Impact Report, showcasing the significant progress made in supporting early-stage tech-for-good ventures over the 22 months since its launch. We're proud to have helped lay the foundations for this community and we look forward to seeing what GoodTech Ventures achieve in their next phase.

Together with Catch22, public service commissioners and relevant stakeholders, we are exploring how we can design open innovation systems to better enable vocational technology that can support service delivery.

 ufi.co.uk/strategic-partnerships/catch22

FutureDotNow

Using technology to improve the digital capability and confidence of the UK workforce



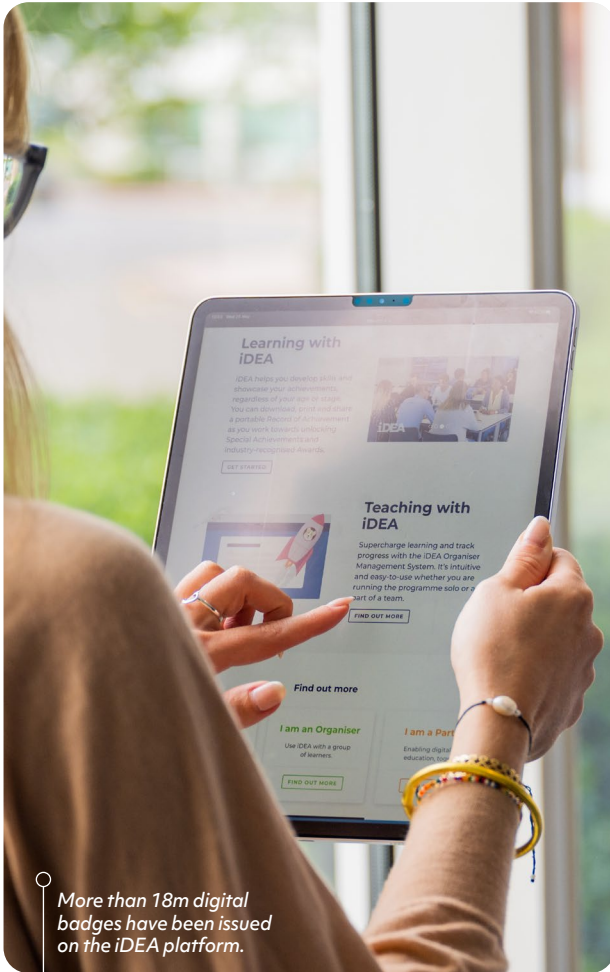
Ufi and FutureDotNow are working together to showcase how digital tools, technology and pedagogy can help improve the digital capability and confidence of the UK workforce. Our partnership has a particular focus on learners, sectors, geographies and communities who have not been well served by mainstream provision, helping to ensure everyone is included and nobody is left behind.

A key initiative within this partnership is FutureDotNow's UK Workforce Digital Skills Roadmap, which aims to empower employers to assist their employees in building essential digital skills. Ufi will be specifically contributing to the strategy and employer action workstreams, alongside organisations such as Accenture, the Cabinet Office, NHS England, M&S, Lloyds Bank, and the Institute of Coding.

Ufi has also signed FutureDotNow's Workforce Digital Skills Charter to help close the digital skills gap across the UK. The primary goals of the Charter are to raise awareness of current digital skill levels across the workforce, inspire organisations to take action, and underscore to policymakers the importance of this issue. Co-signatories include PwC, Salesforce, techUK and Nationwide.

 ufi.co.uk/what-we-do/strategic-partnerships/futuredotnow





More than 18m digital badges have been issued on the iDEA platform.

iDEA

Creating a step-change in digital skills and confidence for vocational learners in the UK



Launched in 2017, the Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award, known as iDEA, is an international award-winning programme that helps learners develop digital, enterprise and employability skills for free. Through a series of online challenges, learners can earn career enhancing badges, unlock new opportunities and, ultimately, gain industry-recognised Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards.

The iDEA platform demonstrates exceptionally well how scalable digital tools can open access to a very large number of learners. Together, we have extended the iDEA offer with the launch of the Gold Award, as well as supporting more organisations to use the platform with their learners through the creation of the specific Organiser Badge. We continue to focus on improving access, motivation, and retention for learners most impacted by the digital divide.

Our partnership is leveraging the reach of the iDEA platform to seek wider insights into learner behaviour and experience in support of our shared mission to utilise the power of digital to open up access and enhance learning.

ufi.co.uk/strategic-partnerships/idea



Impact Investing Institute

Unlocking capital for skills and growth



The Impact Investing Institute and Ufi have formed a strategic partnership to help unlock more capital for skills and vocational technology across the UK. The collaboration focuses on overcoming the barriers that prevent many investors from engaging in impact investing, despite recognising its potential. By showcasing the triple benefits of investing in skills - improved learner outcomes, social impact, and financial return - the partnership aims to catalyse £5 million of new impact investment.

Through shared research, practical resources, events and thought leadership, Ufi and the Institute are working to shift investor attitudes and make impact investing more accessible. The partnership supports Ufi's mission to scale high-quality adult vocational learning through technology, while aligning with the Institute's goal of mobilising capital for public good. Together, we aim to drive significant change in how capital is deployed, specifically into vocational technology and initiatives that enhance skills for learners across the UK.

 ufi.co.uk/strategic-partnerships/impact-investing-institute

The King's Trust

Improving labour market opportunities for young people across the UK



The King's Trust and Ufi are working together to demonstrate how technology can improve access to and transform the delivery of skills and employability programmes for young people. Together, we will champion innovation and campaign for systemic change within the UK skills system.

Through this partnership, Ufi are supporting The King's Trust to implement a digital transformation strategy across the organisation, driving forward new approaches to learning and pathways to employment. We aim to help increase youth engagement, reduce dropout rates, and improve labour market outcomes, particularly for those facing multiple barriers in life.

We are also exploring opportunities to share our learnings and insights with government, other charities and policymakers, using our experience to advocate for wider change in policy and practice across the UK.

 ufi.co.uk/strategic-partnerships/the-kings-trust



Learning and Work Institute

Championing the role of technology in helping more adults in the UK to engage in learning for work

For more than a century Learning and Work Institute (L&W) has been working for a prosperous and fair society in which learning and work provide opportunities for everyone to realise their potential and ambitions throughout life.

There are large inequalities in access to learning by age, socioeconomic group, region and nation, and prior educational attainment. This is a significant problem if we are to deliver the skills we need for the future. Together, Ufi and L&W are working to show how a tech-enabled skills system can help close these gaps, working to develop new ways of thinking, to influence policy and help implement new approaches.

We are delivering the *Skills for an economy in transition* programme in partnership with L&W and are also a partner of L&W's flagship campaign Get the Nation Learning. We have also supported L&W's decades-long Adult Participation in Learning Survey, providing a deeper understanding of the role technology has to play in adult learning.



NCFE

Driving forward innovation in the assessment of vocational skills



NCFE and Ufi's shared goal is to harness the transformative power of technology to improve the assessment of vocational training and skills. We aim to foster innovation and advance learning around the role technology can play in creating assessment methods and models that can adapt and respond to the needs of the changing UK economy.

Through our partnership we have developed and delivered two Assessment Innovation grant funds that seek to encourage the development of learner-centric, inclusive and adaptable assessment solutions that meet the needs of learners and employers. In 2026, we are developing a new collaborative research programme to identify the best uses of technology within assessment.

We will use what we learn to advocate for policy and regulatory change in the UK assessment system.

 ufi.co.uk/what-we-do/strategic-partnerships/learningandworkinstitute

 ufi.co.uk/what-we-do/strategic-partnerships/ncfe



Resolution Foundation

Backing a new wave of innovators to improve the prospects, power and progression of low-paid workers

With the Resolution Foundation we are driving forward the development of technology which can play a crucial role in building workers' skills and employability, improving their pay and conditions and raising their collective voice.

After the success of the Workertech Partnership between 2020 – 2024, Ufi are proud to have invested into the new £6.75m WorkerTech Fund alongside the Resolution Foundation and other investors. The fund is focused on backing start-ups using technology to improve jobs, skills and prospects for workers experiencing low pay and precarious employment.

The fund will provide equity investments of between £75,000 and £200,000 at pre-seed and seed stages and can also make quasi-equity investments. Uniquely, ventures will have access to the pioneering research and expertise of the Resolution Foundation and other investors, helping founders to identify workplace problems and develop practical, tech-enabled solutions for lasting change.

Resolution
Foundation

RSA

Uniting people, places and ideas to show how tech can help tackle the UK skills crisis

Our partnership with the Royal Society for Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) provides a unique opportunity to lead the public debate on how to design better tech-enabled systems for adult learning – with people at its heart.

Drawing on The RSA's deep policy, research and systems change expertise and Ufi's practical, actionable insights from the organisations it supports, together we aim to unite people, places and ideas to show how tech can help tackle the UK skills crisis.

In a global first, Ufi and the RSA launched the Digital Badging Commission in May 2024, bringing together leading experts from across higher and further education, commerce and technology to broaden the understanding, development and adoption of digital badges by accrediting organisations and employers.

At our launch event, we unveiled the Commission's far-reaching recommendation for practical, transformative system-wide change together with the RSA, Phil Smith, Chair of Skills England, and senior leaders from education, industry, politics and technology.

RSA

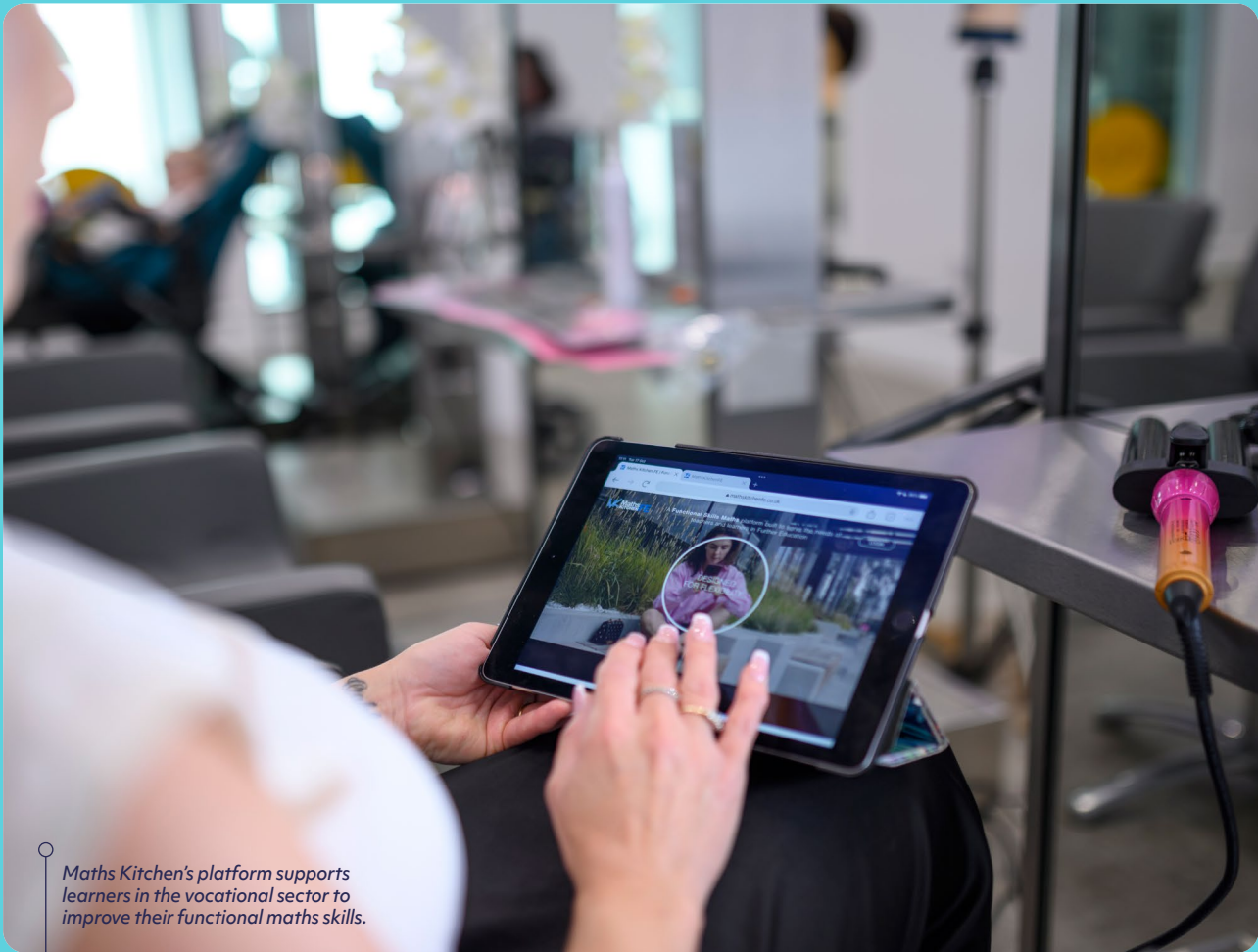
 ufi.co.uk/strategic-partnerships/resolution-foundation

 ufi.co.uk/strategic-partnerships/rsa





Phil Smith, Chair of Skills England, speaking at the launch of the Digital Badging Commission's recommendations.



Maths Kitchen's platform supports learners in the vocational sector to improve their functional maths skills.



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