

# Our Theory of Change

2020-2025 | Catalysts for a better future

A refreshed perspective on our priorities



# We are Ufi VocTech Trust

We champion the power of technology to improve skills for work and deliver better outcomes for all.

We act as a funding partner and essential friend to innovators in skills development, looking to help people progress in the workplace.

We catalyse a fundamental shift in how individuals, employers and UK society view, embrace and benefit from vocational skills development through digital innovation.



## Understanding our work

The strategic thinking that informs our actions are outlined in a number of key documents.

Visit our website for more details:  
[www.ufi.co.uk/who-we-are/publications](http://www.ufi.co.uk/who-we-are/publications) [↗]



# Introduction

At the time of publishing our first Theory of Change document, early in 2017, we could not have predicted the exponential growth of interest in VocTech solutions that occurred following the rapid move to online learning in 2020.

This refreshed Theory of Change is an evolution of our thinking and priorities, reflecting the shift in awareness of the role for, and potential of, digital learning technologies in adult skills.

# CHANGE



## What have we learned from our experiences?

Ufi was well positioned to be a part of that change process and to strengthen our reach as a supportive partner across the vocational and adult education sector. Our focus on demonstrating the art of the possible - using our extensive experience of what we know is effective in digital learning - was crucial in supporting training providers new to VocTech to rapidly adopt new and innovative ways of working.

Our VocTech Challenge response brought into focus the confidence and motivation of those most at risk of being further disadvantaged as the world uses more digital solutions. We recognised that this is a multi-faceted challenge and restated our commitment to work in partnership with others tackling different aspects of the digital divide. But for us, this work reinforced the need for us to target our support and resources where market forces and mainstream funding are not currently making change quickly enough.

Our experience in building our Ventures portfolio has also been a significant learning journey: taking deep-dives into state-of-the-art uses of tech to address challenges in a number of key sectors; horizon-scanning for where the future applications of technology are heading; and partnering with other investors to support some really exciting early-stage companies. The insights gained from this side of our work have impacted across the whole organisation.

We have made big steps forward in looking at how our whole organisation can have impact: substantially growing our Ventures portfolio; passing the 250 projects funded milestone; and achieving the transfer of our core funds into investments aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals closest to Ufi's mission, so that they also work for positive change.

We see our interventions as an organisation having a lasting impact on those we influence, maturing into long-term relationships and partnerships and scaling to create lasting change in outcomes for those most in need of support.

# How do we see our world in the future?

Our primary focus remains unchanged: helping to shape a UK economy where investment in all individuals gives them opportunities to perform to their best ability and in turn achieve higher levels of economic and social benefit.



For us, this means ensuring that everyone gets a chance to develop skills for work. We have a particular role to play in those communities, sectors, skill levels and geographies that are not well served by mainstream provision.

We envision a future where digital tools and learning technologies give easy access to learning opportunities and bridges into employment, helping reduce skills gaps in key sectors, as well as supporting the development of new jobs in sectors embracing emerging technologies.

We are taking big steps forward into a digital future where people aren't just playing catch-up but have the chance to thrive in new industries and sectors. And we want those opportunities to be for everyone, whatever their starting point in their journey into learning and work.

## How we make change happen

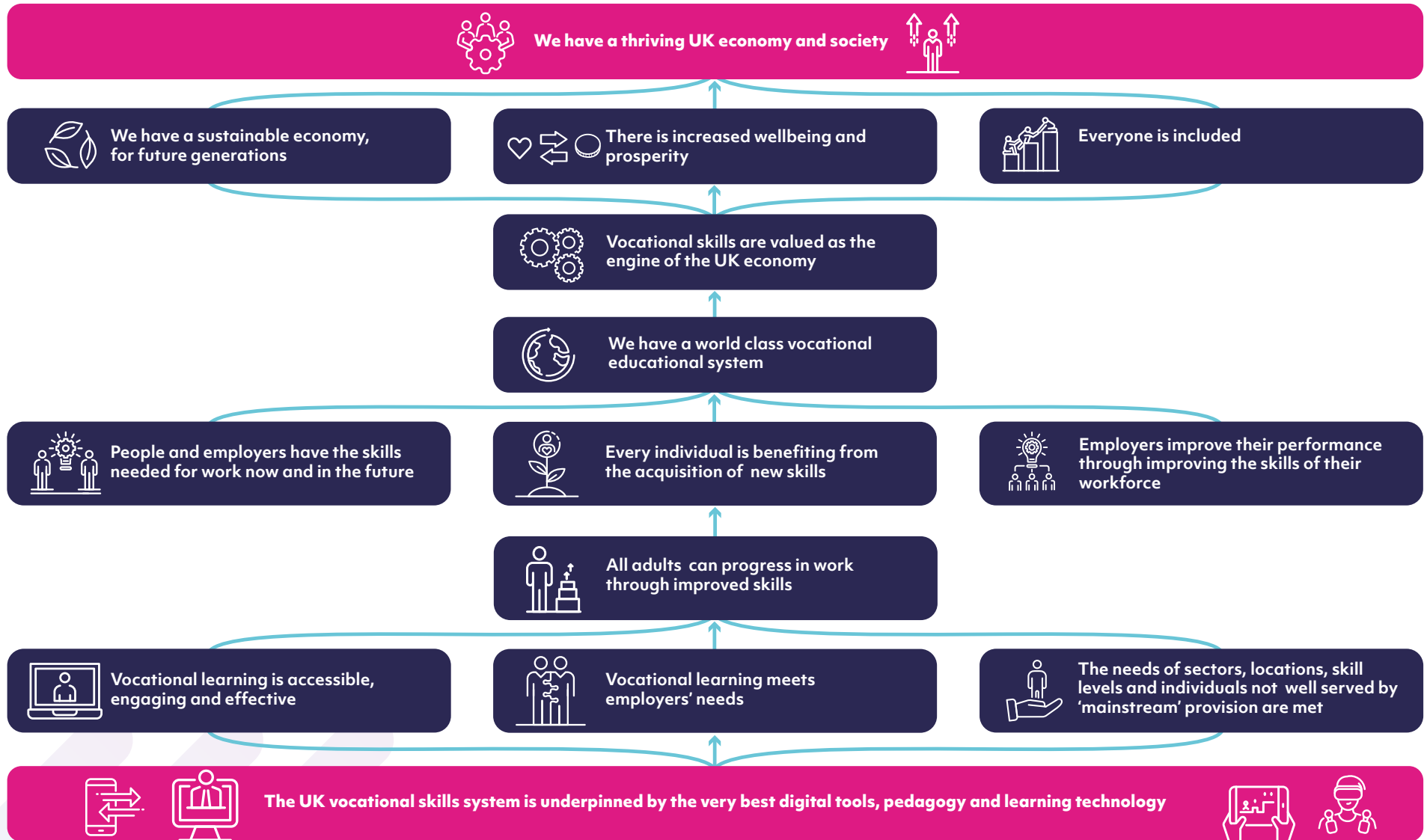
Ufi is a relatively small organisation with a disproportionately large effect on the sector. We are effective not just by doing things ourselves – we create the right conditions where others can also succeed. We are happy with risk and we welcome unexpected outcomes – there is learning in all innovation.

We see our interventions as an organisation having a lasting impact on those we influence, maturing into long-term relationships and partnerships and scaling to create lasting change in outcomes for those most in need of support.



**We are catalysts  
for a better future**

# Ufi's Vision is a world where...



# Our Theory of Change



# The principles that underpin how we work



## Equity of opportunity

Digital tools and learning technology, effectively used and scaled, present us with a chance to disrupt past patterns and create catalytic change for the benefit of people, places and employers. We have a particular role in unlocking economic potential in the communities, sectors, skill levels and geographies that are not well served by mainstream provision.



## Investing for impact

Our actions as an organisation can have an impact on many levels and we will seek to make the most of all our resources in service of our mission, through grant funding, venture investment and targeted investment of our core funds so that they also work to make positive change happen.



## Best chance of success

We focus on achieving the best possible outcome for our funding by being an active and engaged funding partner, offering enrichment and expertise from the outset and developing long-term, supportive relationships. We will strengthen our own knowledge base so that we can better support our projects and investments.



## Strength in partnership

We will have the strongest impact by increasing the size of our community and working collaboratively with key partners across the VocTech landscape so that our actions cause a ripple effect across a much wider audience. We will amplify each other's voices and raise awareness of opportunities for VocTech.



## We are okay with risk

We are open to being a test bed for new technologies and business models or using established tech in exciting new ways. We know that innovation and change involve risk and we work to share this and put in place all the support we can to mitigate those risks.

# Our long term goals

Our strong, independent voice and flexible funding mean that we can bring expertise, insight and resources to develop the opportunities and tackle the challenges we identify here. We are clear in our focus, and will work with others to create a ripple effect of change across a wide sphere of influence.



The four pillars of our Strategy: the levers we can pull to create lasting behavioural and cultural shifts that create a better future for all.

## Making Change Now

- Deliver a portfolio of grants and Ventures that deliver positive changes within a short timescale, acting as demonstrators for the power of VocTech to catalyse new solutions and outcomes.
- Manage a balanced risk profile, enabling us to support ground-breaking disruptive ideas as well as demonstrating impact in real-time.
- Extend our reach progressively into under-served communities and better understand their changing needs, working with organisations and employers well connected to our target audiences so that we can see a direct line towards a step change in their outcomes.
- Provide grant funded projects and Ventures with a bespoke package of support, appropriate to a demonstrator, that gives them the best chance of success.

## Change for a Better Future

- Build a portfolio of actions that develop innovative technologies for the future, seeding the market with new ideas and testing concepts at an early stage.
- Develop user-centred processes that enable new ideas clearly to establish their unique position in the VocTech market with clarity on user needs and ambition to be scalable.
- Provide grant funded projects and Ventures with a bespoke package of support, appropriate for an early stage idea, that gives them the best chance of success.
- Manage our financial resources to create change on a wider scale by aligning our investments with UN Sustainable Development Goals to achieve long term impact as well as financial and fiduciary returns.



## Our long term goals – continued

### Supporting the Market

- Support vocational education and training professionals (VET) with the skills and confidence they need to adopt digital tools and pedagogies into their practice so that they become champions for best practice in digital and hybrid learning.
- Maintain and build communities of practice so that developers, trainers, employers and all working in vocational education can easily connect and share the benefits of their experience with others.
- Develop the skillset of developers and EdTech entrepreneurs so that the fundamentals of good user design and learning design are apparent in all relevant funded projects and Ventures.
- Encourage the development and transfer of innovative practice and seek examples of good practice across all educational levels so that vocational learners benefit from all new approaches wherever they originate.

### Building the VocTech Community

- Use our influence to catalyse change by connecting with others who can amplify our message to help us achieve real change on a large scale, including the development of strategic partnerships with mission aligned organisations.
- Develop a robust market intelligence programme to research and analyse investment activity in VocTech so that we can better understand how to support market growth.
- Engage in an active programme of public affairs engagement to ensure that we are up-to-date with the latest thinking around education and skills development and able reach those in decision making roles to share our vision of a digital future.
- Maintain a regular communications diary of events, speaking engagements, podcasts, webinars and briefings that is inclusive of the whole geography of the UK and offers clarity on our vision and mission.

# Our medium term strategy



In each of the four pillars we have developed structured and targeted interventions, supported by a robust evaluation process. We want to know what works so that we can use that success to inform our future thinking. We need to ensure that we give each of our ideas long enough to prove whether they are effective, learning all the time which aspects give the best return and building more of those elements into our future plans. These medium term strategy elements are explored in detail in the Ufi Strategy document, [Learning Without Walls: Beyond 2020](#) [↗].

# Our short term actions



Each calendar year we produce a **Delivery Plan** [↗] that details the grant funding and investment opportunities that we are planning for that period. We are mindful that as a small, lean organisation we need to be selective in what we offer each year to maintain our focus on offering exceptional value and the best chance of success to all those that we engage with. We underpin those actions with clear KPIs for the Board of Trustees to use to measure successful delivery and report annually on what we have achieved through our **Annual Review** [↗].

# Evaluation and measurement



It is important to us to be able to measure the outcomes of all that we do. At Ufi VocTech Trust we are focused on impact:

- **Impact at an organisational level**
- **Impact at scale to improve learner outcomes**
- **Impact across the vocational sector**

Evaluating the impact of our funding informs how we use our resources, funding, partnerships, and focus our advocacy. Evaluation is embedded in how we work. A common thread runs from this Theory of Change right through to how we evaluate our actions.

We commissioned an external evaluation of our 2015-2020 portfolio of grand funded projects in 2019 and have embarked upon a follow-up review now that 90% of those projects have completed their work. This year we are also developing an impact framework for Ufi Ventures which will consider both the impact of our funding on the individual companies we invest in and the impact of the fund as a whole.



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