Acknowledgements

This Review was commissioned by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and was undertaken by Professor Peter Tyler and Angela Brennan from Cambridge Economic Associates assisted by David Henderson from the Insight Collective. The Review was guided by a Steering Committee that comprised Ruth Sime, Head of Programmes, Donna Chisholm, Head of Business Innovation and Sector Growth, Alison Sharp, Corporate Planner, Andrea McColl, Graduate Engagement Manager, Lara Pollard, Business Engagement Manager, Laura McHattie, Placement Programme Co-ordinator and Jeni Oliver, Development Manager, Inner Moray Firth.

The Review team would like to thanks members of the Steering Committee for their help during the course of the Review. They would also like to thank the many organisations, placements, stakeholders and HIE officers who participated in the Review giving generously of their time.

The views expressed in this Review Report are those of the consultants alone.
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Executive summary

The rationale behind the programme

TalentScotland programme is designed to support business innovation, knowledge transfer and growth in the Highlands and Islands by assisting graduates with their career progression and by so doing it is hoped that they will be encouraged to stay in the Highlands and Islands and thus reduce the present under-representation of young people. The programme started in August 2010.

The underlying rationale is that organisations undertake too little of both innovation activity and graduate recruitment because of entrenched market failures that tend to be particularly severe in remote rural areas. Not putting sufficient resources into innovation constrains business growth. A failure to recruit graduates impairs business development and also means that there are fewer opportunities for young graduates to obtain employment in the Highlands and Islands. The absence of job opportunities leads to graduates leaving the region and this in itself reduces the economic vitality of the Highlands and Islands and its underlying competitiveness as a place to do business.

The Review

Cambridge Economic Associates (CEA) was commissioned by HIE to undertake a Review of the TalentScotland Placement Programme. The study was undertaken by Peter Tyler and Angela Brennan from CEA with David Henderson from the Insight Collective. The Review was required to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and the Value for Money (VFM) of the programme, as well as consider how well it was meeting its equality targets and aligning with other HIE activities. The term placement in this Review is used to refer to the student who is being placed in the organisation. GPP refers to Graduate placements and SPP to Summer placements.

The Review undertook in-depth interviews with 43 organisations and 43 placements (16 from the summer placement programme and 27 on the main graduate placement programme) and then followed this up with an on-line survey targeted on those undergraduates and graduates who had participated in the scheme. Where possible the placements were matched with their respective organisations. Interviews were also conducted with key stakeholder and HIE staff involved in different elements of programme design and delivery.

Over the period June 2010 to October 2012 the programme has expended approximately £1.24 million of HIE resource (of which 40.5% is from ERDF). The Scottish Funding Council has provided funds for the training element amounting to £0.2 million (of which 21% for Summer Placements). Skills Development Scotland has also provided £39,400 for accommodation costs (of which 18% for Summer Placements). The total public sector expenditure to-date is of the order of £1.48 million. The organisations involved have contributed around £888k. Thus, every £1 of public expenditure has generated around 60 pence of private sector contribution. This is a sizeable contribution.

The views of the stakeholders

Stakeholders believed that the programme had been well managed and the general view was that the TalentScotland Management Group had worked well and effectively. The
programme was seen as delivering a good product and well received. Scottish Funding Council finance for the training programme was developmental so there were clearly issues as to where funds might be found in the future. It was recognised that the wage subsidy was of great importance.

**Views of the HIE officers**

Experience of the programme on the ground was very positive and it was identified as adding real value—‘one of the best products that we have’. A well liked feature was the central administration combined with the customised local response through HIE account management. Officers identified pronounced market failure in both the use of graduates and the willingness of organisations to undertake enough innovation and product development. Adequate provision without intervention in both these respects was believed to be constrained by relative remoteness. Overall, other mainstream provision was believed to be insufficient or poorly targeted on the needs of either the individual organisation or the placement.

**The views of the organisations**

When the organisations were asked what would otherwise of happened in the absence of the TalentScotland Programme all of them stated that they would have done less project based activity and less graduate placement recruitment. Taking all responses together nearly a fifth felt that the project would not have happened at all. Some 57% of organisations believed that they would have done less, perhaps around 50%. Some 69% of organisations felt that the programme had been able to bring the project forward by an average of 14.4 months. This relatively high level of additionality tends to reinforce the view that the programme is addressing relatively high levels of market failure and that the underlying rationale for the programme is well-founded. On the basis of cautious assumptions the overall net present value of additional GVA per organisation at the level of the Highlands and Islands as a whole is £73548.

For the SPP only 13% of organisations felt that the project would not have happened overall but 88% considered that less of the benefits would have been secured, of the order of 57% more benefit had been achieved than would otherwise of been the case. 75% of those responding thought that the programme had brought the project forward in time by an average of 8.6 months. The overall net present value of additional GVA per organisation at the level of the Highlands and Islands as a whole is £82500.

For the GPP just over 26% of respondents believed the benefits arising from the programme to be fully additional. A greater proportion than the SPP as might be expected. Over 43% identified a higher level of project benefits, of the order of 55%, similar to the SPP. Some 65% thought the programme had accelerated delivery of the project by an average of 16.3 months and thus significantly higher than SPP. The overall net present value of additional GVA per organisation at the level of the Highlands and Islands as a whole is £70435.

For social enterprises a third of those responding did not believe that the project would have happened at all in the absence of the programme which was higher than the overall programme average in this respect. Just over 40% considered that more benefit had been achieved and this was identified to be an average of 88% more. Over 40% of the social organisations indicated that the programme had brought the project forward by around 25 months. The overall net present value of additional GVA per organisation at the level of the Highlands and Islands as a whole is £42101.
For non-social enterprises just under a fifth believed that the project would not have happened at all, whilst around 59% considered that there was more benefit obtained than would otherwise have been the case at around 45% more. Over 77% of non-social organisations stated that the project had been brought forward in time by around an average of 12 months. The overall net present value of additional GVA per organisation at the level of the Highlands and Islands as a whole is £86448.

For those organisations in located in fragile areas around 29% estimated that the project would have not happened at all in the absence of the programme. Just over 42% identified a higher level of project benefit at some 63% overall. Just over 71% believed that the project had been brought forward by around 16 months. The overall net present value of additional GVA per organisation at the level of the Highlands and Islands as a whole is £9943 partly reflecting a high level of displacement.

For organisations located in non-fragile areas around 21% estimated that the project would not have happened at all in the absence of the programme. Some 58% stated that the project benefits had been greater at an average of 54% and nearly 67% felt that the project had been advanced by an average of 14.5 months. The overall net present value of additional GVA per organisation at the level of the Highlands and Islands as a whole is £92145.

The differences in net present value of additional GVA generated by grouping of organisation reflects a number of factors and in some cases are based on relatively small numbers of respondents overall. GVA per employee is generally lower in social organisations than non-social organisations, in some cases substantially so. Displacement at the HIE area level also tends to be much higher overall for those organisations in the fragile area and social organisations sample.

The organisations were asked a number of questions relating to the wage subsidy element. They were asked how important it was to them. They were then asked what their response would have been if the wage subsidy had been lower with the options being whether they would have taken the graduate at all, reduced the duration of the appointment, delayed the placement and/ or offered a reduced wage level. When interviewed they were probed as to the sensitivity of their response to a reduction in the level of the subsidy. The wage subsidy was seen as being of great importance by the organisations scoring 4.3 on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being very important. The majority of the organisations believed that they would not have participated in the placement scheme at all with a lower level of wage subsidy.

Social enterprises were much more likely than the rest of the sample to indicate that all of the benefits and impacts were attributable to the programme and would not otherwise have occurred in its absence. They were twice more likely than non-social enterprises to identify a lack of resources being the reason for this. In a similar vein 29% of the organisations responding that were in fragile areas stated that all of the benefits and impacts were attributable to the intervention compared to 21% across all other areas. Albeit on the back of small numbers, this does tend to support the view that the market failure being addressed is more pronounced in the fragile areas.

**The views of the placements.**

When asked what they felt would have otherwise of happened if they had not participated in the programme a significant proportion (45%) believed that they would have remained in a job of less career relevance. A further 41% of those responding felt that they would have been less likely to have entered the labour market in the Highlands and Islands or delayed their entry. A significant number of those participating in the Graduate programme stated
that in the absence of the programme they would have left the Highlands and Islands and moved elsewhere for a job. As might be expected, the impact of the Summer placement were less noticeable with the main outcome in the absence of the programme being that they would have been less likely to have entered the labour market in the Highlands and Islands.

When questioned about the perceived influence of the programme some 70% identified a positive impact on the level of earnings that they could command in their next job. A significant number of those on the Graduate programme had continued to work in their host organisations. There was also some evidence that summer placements maintained a relationship with their host organisation by continuing in a part-time capacity and this was a positive outcome.

**Overall Review conclusion**

The rationale for the programme remains very strong. Organisations are benefitting from an enhanced level of innovative behaviour in product, and to a lesser extent, process development. Young people are gaining valuable work experience, and in many cases jobs, in the Highlands and Islands. The implication is that they are thus more likely to stay in the Highlands and Islands. The number of young people in the Highlands and Islands is being increased relative to what would otherwise be the case in the absence of the programme. A virtuous circle is thus being created whereby the skill base of the workforce available to organisations in the Highlands and Islands is also being increased.

The additional impact of the programme on organisations arises partly by bringing forward activity that increases turnover (and thus value added) relative to what it would otherwise have been. About a fifth of respondents felt that the impact on their organisation was totally additional and a number of other organisations pointed to a significant impact on the scale of activity generated.

The placements in general feel that they had enhanced their labour market skills, increased their confidence, gained work experience and in a significant number of cases obtained a job with the placement organisation. The placements identified a potential uplift in their earnings potential. There was evidence that more of them would now remain in the HIE area labour market than would otherwise of been the case.

The design of the programme, focusing as it does on a Graduate placement scheme and a summer internship element, is appropriate in the light of its objectives and the local circumstances in which it is being applied. The programme supports both social enterprises and businesses in the private sector. Social enterprises benefit particularly from the capacity building the programme provides. The programme appears to operate in a broadly similar way with similar impacts across both fragile and Non-Fragile areas, albeit fragile areas are incentivised somewhat more by the wage subsidy.

We have adopted what we believe to be cautious assumptions in estimating the value of the benefits associated with the programme given the conceptual and measurement problems that exist in deriving such estimates (See Para 4.11 and associated footnote). The Benefit Cost Ratio for the programme is estimated at around 4.4 on the basis of these cautious assumptions. Benchmarking evidence indicates this represents good Value for Money. The total net additional GVA for the Highlands and Islands as a whole is estimated to be of the order of £6.48 million, equivalent to just over 200 net additional job years (FTEs) for the Highlands and Islands as a whole.
Recommendations in relation to future delivery

The Review did not find support or need for any fundamental change in the way the programme is being delivered. A central HIE team combined with flexible local customised delivery through HIE area officers is working well and the Review did not find any evidence that this approach should change.

The training programme is well received and meets an important need. This is particularly the case for the Graduate programme. For those without any formal business training it provides some valuable insight into business management. However, the significant benefits arise through confidence building, awareness (as in the preparation of CVs etc) and, very importantly, networking. Since the funding for the training element of the programme is not mainstreamed at the present time there is obviously interest in whether it could be provided in different ways, at perhaps lower cost, than the present face-to-face approach (i.e. perhaps web-based).

The difficulty with not providing the training element face-to-face, and perhaps through web-based approaches, is that it is quite likely that the confidence building and networking benefits would probably be much reduced. During the course of the Review it also became clear that some organisations and placements felt that there could be benefits from trying to build on the networking and presentation events of the Talent Scotland Programme further and perhaps seeking to integrate them into other aspects of HIE support. In the light of this there may be some scope to extend the out-reach element and perhaps share its costs with other programmes.

It has also emerged during the course of the Review that there is much interest in sharing experience and Best Practice across the relevant communities in the Highlands and Islands. Thus, a small number of organisations thought that there were opportunities to discuss business opportunities with colleagues further when they attended graduate presentations. The placements who had/ were participating in the programme welcomed further opportunity to network with their colleagues. HIE officers and other stakeholders involved in delivering the programme felt that there were opportunities to share best practice. The placements have highlighted a number of things that they feel might be done to promote the programme, help with mentoring and add further benefit to them from having participated in the programme.
1. Introduction

Review objectives

1.1 Cambridge Economic Associates was commissioned by HIE to undertake a Review of the TalentScotland Placement Programme. The study was undertaken by Peter Tyler, David Henderson (Insight Collective) and Angela Brennan (CEA). The Review was required to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and the Value for Money (VFM) of the programme, as well as consider how well it was meeting its equality targets and aligning with other HIE activities.

The TalentScotland Programme

1.2 TalentScotland programme is designed to support business innovation, knowledge transfer and growth in the Highlands and Islands by assisting graduates with their career progression and by so doing it is hoped that they will be encouraged to stay in the Highlands and Islands and thus reduce the present under-representation of young people.

1.3 The underlying rationale is that organisations undertake too little of both innovation activity and graduate recruitment because of entrenched market failures that tend to be particularly severe in remote rural areas. Not putting sufficient resources into innovation constrains business growth. A failure to recruit graduates impairs business development and also means that there are fewer opportunities for young graduates to obtain employment in the Highlands and Islands. The absence of job opportunities leads to graduates leaving the region and this in itself reduces the economic vitality of the Highlands and Islands and its underlying competitiveness as a place to do business.

1.4 The programme was originally labelled ‘HI-Grads’ and envisaged as a stand-alone HIE programme. However, an opportunity arose to develop and promote the scheme with a similar one run by Scottish Enterprise. This allowed access to extra funding, enabled a joint approach to the promotion of a Scotland-wide programme to graduates but retained sufficiently flexibility to allow HIE and SE to use different funding sources, products and criteria. The combined programme was branded the TalentScotland Graduate Placement Programme (TSGPP). The progress of the programme is overseen by a Steering Group that comprise representatives from HIE, SE, Scottish Funding Council, Skills Development Scotland, the Association for Graduate Careers Advisory Services and the Skills and Lifelong Learning Directorate of the Scottish Government.

1.5 The overall management of the TalentScotland programme in the Highlands and
Islands is undertaken by three project staff with appropriate IT resource based in HIE’s Inverness office. The team works closely with universities, the Scottish Funding Council, training providers (University of Strathclyde and Robert Gordon University) and the Association for Graduate Careers Advisory Services. This team also works alongside HIE area based team officers to deliver the programme to local organisations. The HIE officer assists local businesses to identify a ‘project’ that it is felt will make a contribution to the competitiveness of the organisation and hopefully enable it to grow more quickly than it would otherwise have done. Many of the projects help the organisations to innovate, develop new products and to recognise the advantage of recruiting undergraduates and graduates.

1.6 The Graduate Placement Programme (GPP) has a target of delivering 130 graduate placements in the HIE area over the period 2010 to 2013 (subsequently increased to 160 in January 2012 but involving targeted shorter placements). Some 71 placements in 65 organisations had been made by June 2012 of which 17 organisations were social enterprises. A further 14 placements were being recruited and 37 placements were in a discussion phase at that time. There is also a Summer Placement Programme (SPP) that lasts for eight weeks and which provides an important link between businesses and students. It has been set a target of 160 placements over 2010-2013 and it is estimated that some 100 students have been placed over the period 2010-2012.

1.7 Both placement programmes are supported by a wage subsidy to employers. The wage subsidy is 50% to organisations on the Summer Placement programme. For the Graduate Placement programme the subsidy varies by location. It was initially 25% in Inverness, 40% elsewhere, 60% for social enterprises and Employment Action Areas and 60% in the Fragile areas. About half way through the life of the current programme this was changed to 40%, 40%, 60% and 70% respectively. The intervention rate for social enterprises remains at 60% unless located in a fragile area.

1.8 The third element of the programme is generic training on business development, innovation and entrepreneurship delivered by Robert Gordon’s Business and Strathclyde’s Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship to 950 candidates in Scotland (both HIE and SE areas). Over the three years it has been delivered to 120 graduates on 5 day courses and 45 undergraduates on 2 day courses in the HIE area.

1.9 Over the period June 2010 to October 2012 the programme has expended approximately £1.24 million of HIE resource (of which 40.5% is from ERDF). The Scottish Funding Council has provided funds for the training element amounting to £0.2 million (of which 21% for Summer Placements). Skills Development Scotland has also provided £39,400 for accommodation costs (of which 18% for Summer Placements). The total public sector expenditure to-date is of the order of £1.48
The organisations involved have contributed around £888k. Thus every £1 of public expenditure has generated around 60 pence of private sector contribution. This is a sizeable contribution.

Methodology

1.10 The Review undertook in-depth interviews with 43 organisations and 43 placements and then followed this up with an on-line survey targeted on those undergraduates and graduates who had participated in the scheme. Where possible the placements were matched with their respective organisations. Interviews were also conducted with key stakeholder and HIE staff involved in different elements of programme design and delivery.

1.11 Of those interviewed, some 25 had participated in the Graduate Placement and 18 in the Summer Placement elements of the programme over the period 2010-2012. Some 10 organisations interviewed had experience of taking both Summer and Graduate placements. The Graduate Placements which were interviewed primarily in relation to that element of the programme represented 32% of the total number of organisations that had been involved in that element in 2011 and 2012. The equivalent Summer Placement figure is 42%. Of all the organisations interviewed some 27% were social enterprises. 26% of the organisations were located in a Fragile Area. There was coverage of response across all the HIE regions with a good spread by sector and size. The placements had a variety of degree backgrounds.

1.12 This summary sets out the main findings from the Review.

Report structure

1.13 The report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 sets out the views of the organisations that agreed to be interviewed;
- Section 3 provides feedback from the placements who participated in the Review;
- Section 4 considers the overall impact of the programme on the basis of the evidence from stakeholders, HIE regional teams, organisation and placements. It concludes with an assessment of Value for Money.
- Section 5 draws together key conclusions and recommendations as to how the programme might continue in the future.
2. The views of the organisations

Engagement of organisations

2.1 The Graduate Placement Programme started in August 2010. By August 2012 there were 71 placements in a range of different types of organisations across the Highlands and Islands. A further 14 were being recruited and 37 were in discussion. Around a quarter were social organisations. The charts below show the breakdown by location and the type of project the placements were engaged in. A very large number of the projects were centred on product development and marketing. The first Summer placements were in Summer 2011 and there has been a second round in June to September this year.
The organisations interviewed

2.2 As part of the review of the TalentScotalnd programme some 43 organisations were interviewed to gain insight into their experience of the programme. It was important to establish what they gained from participating in it and what they believed would otherwise have happened if they had not. Of the organisation interviewed 28% were involved in social enterprise. The interviews sought experience of the Summer and Graduate components with 35% of respondent having participated in the Summer element. Some organisations had experience of both Summer and Graduate Placement. Around 23% of all organisations interviewed were in Fragile Areas.

2.3 Figure (2.1) shows the distribution of the companies interviewed according to their employment and shows that there was a good spread. Around a third employed less than ten. Figure (2.2) presents evidence on the companies according to their turnover and indicates a good coverage.

Perceived problems in recruiting graduates and placements

2.4 Organisations identified a number of factors that they believed constrained their ability to recruit graduates and graduate placements in particular. Figure (2.3) summarises the responses. It shows that the most significant factor identified by both Graduate and Summer programme participants was the reluctance of graduates to work in the Highlands and Islands area. Organisations involved with the Summer placement programme, not a social enterprise and located in a Fragile areas tended to perceive this as more of a problem than those involved in the Graduate placement programme.
Figure (2.1). Organisations interviewed; total employed in Highlands and Islands.

Figure (2.2). Organisations interviewed; annual turnover (£'000s)
Figure (2.3). Perceived problems in recruiting graduates/placements (Average scores 1 minor to 5 v significant)
Main objectives of placement project to business

2.5 Organisations were asked to identify the main objectives behind undertaking the placement project (Figure 2.4). They placed particular emphasis on the use of the graduate placement project to develop new products and marketing opportunities and trial a graduate for a longer term position. Organisations participating in the graduate placement programme were more likely to mention this. The projects concerned were usually of quite significant importance to the future development of the organisation concerned. The placements played a key role by bringing expertise and know-how and also enabling the freeing-up of internal resources. Social Enterprise organisations were more likely to see the project as an opportunity to develop a market opportunity and enhance their skill base, particularly in ICT. Organisations in Fragile areas placed more emphasis on the project enhancing their skill base and it freeing-up resources that would enable them to undertake more innovative activity.

Benefits of the project on the business

2.6 In terms of the actual perceived benefits summer placement projects identified more with product based innovation (Figure 2.5). Graduate project placements pointed to new market opportunities developed and improved sales techniques. Social enterprises placed more significance on all the benefits relative to the non-social enterprises. In general, the differences between those organisations in Fragile areas and elsewhere were not that pronounced.
Figure (2.4). Main objectives of placement project to business (Average scores 1 minor to 5 v. significant)
Figure (2.5). Benefits that GPP project had on business (Average scores 1 minor to 5 very important)
The role of the wage subsidy

2.7 The organisations were asked a number of questions relating to the wage subsidy element. They were asked how important it was to them. They were then asked what their response would have been if the wage subsidy had been lower with the options being whether they would have taken the graduate at all, reduced the duration of the appointment, delayed the placement and/or offered a reduced wage level. When interviewed they were probed as to the sensitivity of their response to a reduction in the level of the subsidy.

2.8 The wage subsidy was seen as being of great importance by the organisations scoring 4.3 on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being very important. The majority of the organisations felt that they would not have participated in the placement scheme at all with a lower level of wage subsidy. (Figure 2.6). This was particularly the case for the Graduate placement programme. Summer placements would have been more likely to have offered a reduced wage. All of the social organisations and virtually all organisations in fragile areas would not have taken a graduate at all in the absence of the wage subsidy.

Figure (2.6). What organisations would have done with a lower wage subsidy (%)?
Retention of graduate

2.9 In a significant number of cases the graduate had continued to remain in employment with the organisation, particularly in the case of social enterprise organisations and those in non-fragile areas (Figure 2.7). This was clearly a more relevant outcome for organisations involved in the Graduate placement programme since Summer placements returned to their studies. However, in some cases there was evidence that some Summer placements were still undertaking part-time work with their Summer placement organisation or returned the following year.

Assessment of the management and delivery of the programme and willingness to participate in the future

2.10 The organisations were very positive about the overall management and delivery of the programme by HIE (Figure 2.8). They were relatively less positive about follow-
up and after care but this partly reflected the fact that organisations were at different stages in the cycle of the scheme. Companies were in general very positive about the TSGPP approach to recruitment of the placement and valued the time and effort that it had saved them. They believed that the recruitment procedures were appropriate for the organisation and the factors affecting it at the time (Figure 2.9). The only thing that companies suggested might be done to improve the usefulness of the programme was to reduce the amount of paper work. The majority of companies indicated that they would be very willing to continue to participate in the programme in the future (Figure 2.10).
Figure (2.7). Has graduate continued in employment with organisation? (%)

- **Main**
- **Summer**

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<td>1</td>
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- **Social Enterprise**
- **Non Social Enterprise**

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- **Fragile**
- **Non-fragile**

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Figure (2.8). What is your assessment of the management and delivery of the programme (Average scores, 1 very poor to 5 very good)

Figure (2.9). Was TSGPP recruitment appropriate for your company and the factors affecting it at the time?
Figure (2.10). Will you consider participating in the programme in the future?
3. The views of the placements

Engagement of placements with the programmes

There have been some 71 placements by August 2012, a further 14 had been recruited and 37 were in discussion. Chart 3.1 shows the background of the placements by broad subject area and around a quarter were studying business, finance, management and accountancy. The next largest group at around 15% were studying arts and humanities.

Chart 3.1.

Difficulties experienced in obtaining a job of the desired sort

Placements pointed to the problem of obtaining the type of job they wanted in the Highlands and Islands (Figure 3.1). For the Graduate placement respondents the difficulty of obtaining a job either in the local area or the rest of the Highlands and Islands was identified as the key constraint. The summer placements that had experienced difficulty in securing a placement highlighted the lack of jobs of the right quality and duration with many indicating that they were aware that in the absence of the placement opportunity they would probably have taken part-time work in retail.

Objectives in applying to the programme
3.2 The placements applied to the scheme to increase their ability to get a job in their chosen career and to secure paid work (Figure 3.2). There were only relatively small differences between the Graduate and Summer placements in this respect. Overall, placements expressed a high level of satisfaction with the programme (Figure 3.3), stating that it was relevant to their career ambitions, gave them breadth of work experience and provided sufficiently challenging work in a location that they wanted to be in. The salary level was generally felt to be at an acceptable level.

**Benefits graduates obtained from the placement**

3.3 The benefits that the placements identified as arising from the placement (Figure 3.4) were the ability to prioritise and solve problems, work in teams and communicate effectively, as well as providing them with awareness of the business world. The programme helped them get a job with the placement employer or obtain a job elsewhere in Scotland including the Highlands and Islands.

**Figure (3.1). Difficulties experienced in trying to obtain the type of job you wanted (Average scores: 1 minor to 5 very difficult)**

![Difficulty Graph](image-url)
Figure (3.2). Main objectives of graduate in applying to the scheme (Average scores: 1 minor importance to 5 very important)

Figure (3.3). Graduate’s general satisfaction with their placement (Average scores: 1 low to 5 very high)
Benefits from the training programme.

3.4 Placements varied considerably in the subject they had followed, or were following, at university. Those who had taken a business orientated degree were clearly in a different position to those who had taken a more scientific/engineering subject. The training programme, particularly as it related to the Graduate Training placements, was very well received with virtually no exceptions (Figure 3.5). It had helped them improve their management, marketing and human resource skills. However, the main influence was in providing networking opportunities, confidence building and preparing the graduate for the placement project (Figure 3.6).
The views of placements about the training part of the programme were further assessed through an on-line survey. The online survey reinforced the generally very high levels of satisfaction with the training amongst participants. While some comment had been made during the evaluation about the length of the residential training 12 of the 17 respondents felt that the length was ‘about right’. Three of the 12 felt it was too short and these respondents tended to feel that the content was ‘too condensed’ as a result. The networking benefits of the residential course emerged very strongly from the evaluation. The online survey provided a means of exploring whether and how this aspect of the programme could be enhanced. Some of the suggestions made included organising additional, shorter, ‘meet-up’ events in alternative locations, follow-up events upon completion of the placement, another event with greater employer input and a designated face-book page.

Some research has also been undertaken by Professor Jonathan Levie and his colleagues at the Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship at the University of Strathclyde. This research has examined the impact of the training programme on different aspects of empowerment and job satisfaction. It has also assessed its impact on aspects of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and also how interested the trainees were in working in their placement company after the internship. We do not report this research extensively here but a report provided by Professor Levie states ‘comparing
means core results before and after the training course, there were increases in HR, finance and Product development self-efficacy and a smaller increase in management self-efficacy’ (Internal Report, Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship, University of Strathclyde).

Assessment of management and delivery and general satisfaction with programme

3.7 The overall assessment was that the management and delivery of the programme had been good (Figure 3.7). The rating on follow-up and aftercare was lower but placements were at different stages in their progression when interviewed. Placements expressed a high level of overall satisfaction with the programme (Figure 3.8).

Figure (3.7). Assessment of the management and delivery of the programme (Average scores: 1 very poor to 5 very good)

Views of the Placements on how the programme might be further promoted

3.8 A total of 17 placements responded to an online survey which sought to get their views on how the programme could be further promoted. The majority of those who responded were Graduate Placements (14 out of 17). Student and graduate respondents were asked to rank what they thought would be the most effective means of promoting awareness of the programme (with lower values representing more effective means) (Figure (3.9)).

3.9 Online recruitment services (at 3.3) and student unions (3.9) were identified as the second and third most frequently identified sources of information. Four ‘other’ options were identified – all of which related to social media. Perhaps surprisingly,
Skills Development Scotland (5.5) was cited less frequently than the other given options.

3.10 Higher education careers services were identified as potentially the most effective means of promoting awareness, scoring 2.2. Taken alongside the response to the student union option this would suggest a marked preference for on-campus marketing and promotion.

3.11 In relation to promotion and marketing on Campus there appeared to be differences between higher education institutions. Some higher education institutions seem to market the scheme very effectively while others do so with less effect and the follow-up online survey developed this theme. Placements were asked what they thought “higher education institutions should do more of to ensure that students and graduates are aware of the programme”. As one of the 16 respondents to this question noted:

“This was not mentioned once whilst I was at University. We had a class towards the end of degree programme in my 3rd year to allow us to discuss options but this was not mentioned”.

Another respondent noted:

“I attended an Aberdeen University Career talk where TSIS Internships were mentioned but not Talent Scotland”.

3.12 Almost all of the respondents highlighted the need for better promotion within their higher education settings. In five instances, without prompting, respondents suggested that university/college careers services play a more active role. Some of the specific suggestions included using student/graduate participants to promote awareness on campus, on campus posters, more involvement in career fairs and targeting of specific departments rather than career services

Support for placements

3.13 The Review found that students and graduates generally felt well-supported on placement. A minority, however, did have negative experiences and the support aspect of the programme was thus probed further through the on-line survey. Providing effective on-going support and avoiding negative outcomes is clearly an important aspect of maintaining the programme’s effectiveness and economic impact. The online survey examined ways in which HIE might support placements more effectively. Some of the more frequently identified means included having clear, measurable, milestones and targets as part of the placement agreement against which to measure progress and more opportunities for out of hours contact as some placements found it hard to express issues in their office environment. As an alternative to these some respondents felt that monthly email communication
could be used to chart progress, or there could be more on-line questionnaires to report progress or the prospects of unannounced visits by HIE staff.

**Employer support**

3.14 A smaller number of participants (12 of the 17) made suggestions about employer support. Common themes were identified, however, and the responses suggested, perhaps, the need for a good practice guide for participating employers. A short good practice guide might, in fact, help promote good employee engagement practice within organisations more generally. Some of the comments made included the view that employers need to understand that some students/graduates are relatively new to the workplace and need additional support in the early stages and it would be helpful if the employer could sit-down with the student to sort-out achievable goals and identify the most appropriate support within the organisation given that senior staff are busy people. It was felt that employers should set-aside a regular schedule to support the student and promote their involvement as part of the team within the organisation. It was felt that promoting the student helped to give the student access to others within the organisation but also could help to enhance mentoring skills within the host organisation.

3.15 Figure (3.8). Graduate’s general satisfaction with their placement (Average scores: 1 low to 5 very high).
Figure (3.9): Ranking the most effective means of promotion (average scores)
4. Evidence on impact and value for money

Introduction

4.1 This section draws together the evidence from stakeholders, HIE officers, organisations and placements to assess the impact that the programme has had and to gauge whether it represents Value for Money.

The views of the stakeholders

4.2 Stakeholders believed that the programme had been well managed and the general view was that the TalentScotland Management Group had worked well and effectively. The programme was seen as delivering a good product. Scottish Funding Council finance for the training programme was developmental so there were clearly issues as to where funds might be found in the future. It was recognised that the wage subsidy was of great importance, particularly in the light of the previous Scottish Enterprise experience. There was an interest in building on the importance of the project element to companies given the very low levels of R&D and product innovation currently occurring across the relevant business base. The training element was believed to be of high quality. However, by its very nature, it was relatively costly. Web-based offers were being explored, but the face-to-face element was of great value, particularly in facilitating networking.

Views of the HIE officers

4.3 The programme was considered to be well-managed. A well liked feature was the central administration combined with the customised local response through HIE account management. Experience of the programme on the ground was very positive and it was identified as adding real value-‘one of the best products that we have’. The evidence remained of pronounced market failure in both the use of graduates and the willingness of organisations to undertake enough innovation and product development. Adequate provision without intervention in both these respects was believed to be constrained by relative remoteness. Overall, other mainstream provision was believed to be insufficient or poorly targeted on the needs of either the individual organisation or the placement.

4.4 The recruitment process was generally believed to be effective and reduced deadweight, although there were inevitably exceptions. Ensuring that the project offer was the most appropriate one for the organisation was seen as the best way to ensure genuine additionality. The project had to demonstrate how it had the potential to enhance potential for future business growth. By participating in the programme...
organisations had to articulate their objectives and identify how the project would assist in achieving them. It was highly desirable that there was some flexibility in how the programme was deployed and avoid being too prescriptive by sector or any other characteristic of the organisation. The programme was believed to be an important way of building the capacity of the social sector, particularly in relation to their ability to develop new market based opportunities.

4.5 The Youth Employment agenda is rising in importance. Both the Summer and Graduate Placement elements were well placed in this respect. There was a view that there was scope to share experience across the network. There was also interest in exploring how the programme might be used to encourage networking and knowledge transfer more generally between business, graduate talent and network officers.

What would otherwise have happened in the absence of TalentScotland? The views of the organisations

4.6 When the organisations were asked what would otherwise of happened in the absence of the TalentScotland Programme all of them stated that they would have done less project based activity and less graduate placement recruitment. Nearly a fifth felt that the project would not have happened at all. Some 57% of organisations believed that they would have done less, perhaps around 50%. Some 69% of organisations felt that the programme had been able to bring the project forward by an average of 14.4 months. This relatively high level of additionality tends to reinforce the view that the programme is addressing relatively high levels of market failure and that the underlying rationale for the programme is well-founded.

4.7 The wage subsidy was seen as being of great importance by the organisations scoring 4.3 on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being very important. The majority of the organisations were of the view that that they would not have participated in the placement scheme at all with a lower wage subsidy. Social enterprises were much more likely than the rest of the sample to indicate that all of the benefits and impacts were attributable to the programme and would not otherwise have occurred in its absence. They were more twice more likely than non-social enterprises to identify a lack of resources being the reason for this. In a similar vein 30% of the organisations responding that were in fragile areas stated that all of the benefits and impacts were attributable to the intervention compared to 19% across all other areas. Albeit on the back of small numbers, this does tend to support the view that the market failure being addressed is more pronounced in the fragile areas.

4.8 The companies were asked for their estimates of business impact over a three year planning horizon till 2015. They tended to emphasis a possible impact on their sales. The turnover figures can be translated into a value added equivalent.
What would have happened in the absence of the programme and perceived influence. The views of the placements.

4.9 When asked what they felt would have otherwise of happened if they had not participated in the programme a significant proportion (45%) believed that they would have remained in a job of less career relevance (Figure 4.1). A further 41% of those responding felt that they would have been less likely to have entered the labour market in the Highlands and Islands or delayed their entry. A significant number of those participating in the Graduate programme stated that in the absence of the programme they would have left the Highlands and Islands and moved elsewhere for a job. As might be expected, the impact of the Summer placement were less noticeable with the main outcome in the absence of the programme being that they would have been less likely to have entered the labour market in the Highlands and Islands.

Figure (4.1). What would have happened to graduate in the absence of TSGPP? (NB Respondents could select more than one response)

![](image)

4.10 When questioned about the perceived influence of the programme (Figure 4.2) some 70% identified a positive impact on the level of earnings that they could command in their next job. Around 50% indicated that the impact could be around 10% whilst 25% thought that it might be up to 20%. Around 25% suggested that a greater increase might be possible. A significant number of those on the Graduate programme had continued to work in their host organisations. There was also some evidence that summer placements maintained a relationship with their host organisation by continuing in a part-time capacity and this was a positive outcome.
Figure (4.2). Perceived influence of the TSGPP on the placement. (Average scores: 1 small importance to 5 significant)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtain job with placement for employer</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified the need for more training with placement provider</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained job in Highlands and Islands</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased likelihood to continue to remain in Highlands and Islands</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmed my career choice</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to SME culture</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained job elsewhere in Scotland</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased earnings potential and thus ability to be promoted</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabled me to identify another career</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Value for Money**

4.11 The approach to assessing the Value for Money associated with the programme has been to ask the organisations what they believed would be the impact of the project on annual additional turnover after a three year period, i.e. by 2015 on the basis of an average project start date of 2012. Each organisation was asked to place a probability on the likelihood of the impact occurring. This probability was applied to the estimate of possible percentage increase in turnover for each organisation. The estimated additional turnover was translated into Gross Value Added using the Scottish Annual Business Statistics 2010 which provides ratios of GVA to turnover by sector. We have adopted what we believe to be cautious assumptions in estimating the value of the benefits associated with the programme given the conceptual and measurement problems that exist in deriving such estimates. 

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1 Organisations were asked what they believed the overall impact on their annual turnover as a result of the initiative over a three year period starting from the beginning of the start of the project. The midpoint was taken and then weighted by the probability that they assigned to this annual impact on turnover being realised. This was then adjusted for deadweight (the overall deadweight parameter was 54%). Turnover to GVA estimates were derived using information on a sector by sector basis where possible from the Scottish Annual Business Statistics data for 2010. Direct estimates of the additional GVA associated with the initiative were then made by allowing for displacement at the Highlands and Islands level (29.7% overall).
4.12 The Gross Value Added was then adjusted to allow for the organisation’s estimate of additionality, i.e. what they believed would otherwise have happened in the absence of Talent Scotland. Possible product market displacement and labour market leakage effects within the Highlands and Islands were then allowed for using information provided by each organisation. The results where then summed for all organisations.

4.13 The estimated additional Gross Value Added associated with the Talent Scotland programme will clearly take time to build-up and then persist for a period for a period of time. We have adopted what we believe to be a cautious assumption that future benefits will build-up in a straight line, peak in 2015 and then only last for two further years. It is more likely that the benefits will last much longer than this but we believe this thus provides a realistic minimum baseline estimate. The stream of GVA benefits were all discounted back to a 2012 base using HM Treasury’s Social Time Preference Rate of 3.5% to provide an estimate of the Present Value of net additional GVA benefits from Talent Scotland.

4.14 This amounted to net additional GVA of £2.28 million for the Highlands and Islands as a whole based on the findings from the organisations that formed the basis of the survey work. Some 34 organisations provided the required information. The estimated expenditure on the Talent Scotland Programme that generated these benefits for these organisations was around £0.54 million. Setting this against the Present Value of GVA benefits gives a base Benefit Cost Ratio of around 4.4. Benchmarking evidence from our recent work for the Department for Communities and Local Government in England on valuing benefits of economic development and regeneration\(^2\) suggests that this is good value for money.

4.15 Total expenditure on the Talent Scotland programme to-date is placed at £1.47 million and for the programme as a whole the total net additional GVA for the Highlands and Islands is thus estimated to be £6.48 million. Gross Value Added per employee in the Highlands in 2010 was £32106 and the additional GVA associated with the programme is equivalent to just over 200 additional job years\(^3\).

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The Benefit Cost ratio was then derived using only this direct information and this thus provided a cautious estimate. Leakage (i.e. that part of the GVA generated that might go-out of the Highlands and Islands because the organisation concerned employs people who do not actually live in the Highlands and Islands) was in fact actually quite small (8.29% overall) and would easily be offset by allowing for positive induced income multiplier effects and indirect supply chain effects that are usually allowed by applying a regional multiplier of around 1.4. Thus, translating the direct benefits into an estimate that allowed for indirect linkage, leakage and positive income multiplier effects might increase the cautious baseline benefit level adopted in this Report by up to a further 30%.


\(^3\) Gross Value Added per employee in the Highlands from Scottish Annual Business Survey (last updated August 2012). One year full-time job equivalents.
5. Conclusions and recommendations for future delivery

Introduction

5.1 The rationale for the programme remains very strong. It is a well received programme by the organisations, placements and those delivering it. It is identified as one of the best HIE products on offer at the present time. Organisations are benefitting from an enhanced level of innovative behaviour in product, and to a lesser extent, process development. Young people are gaining valuable work experience, and in many cases jobs, in the Highlands and Islands. The implication is that they are thus more likely to stay in the Highlands and Islands. The number of young people in the Highlands and Islands is being increased relative to what would otherwise be the case in the absence of the programme. A virtuous circle is thus being created whereby the skill base of the workforce available to organisations in the Highlands and Islands is also being increased.

5.2 The additional impact of the programme on organisations arises partly by bringing forward activity that increases turnover (and thus value added) relative to what it would otherwise have been. About a fifth of respondents felt that the impact on their organisation was totally additional and a number of other organisations pointed to a significant impact on the scale of activity generated. The overall net present value of additional GVA per organisation at the level of the Highlands and Islands as a whole is £73548.

5.3 For the SPP only 13% of organisations considered that the project would not have happened overall but 88% felt that less of the benefits would have been secured. Of the order of 57% more benefit had been achieved than would otherwise have been the case. 75% of those responding thought that the programme had brought the project forward in time by an average of 8.6 months. The overall net present value of additional GVA per organisation at the level of the Highlands and Islands as a whole is £82500.

5.4 For the GPP just over 26% of respondents felt the benefits arising from the programme were fully additional. A greater proportion than the SPP as might be expected. Over 43% identified a higher level of project benefits, of the order of 55%, and similar to the SPP. Some 65% thought the programme had accelerated delivery of the project by an average of 16.3 months and this was significantly higher than SPP. The overall net present value of additional GVA per organisation at the level of the Highlands and Islands as a whole is £70435.
5.5 For social enterprises a third of those responding did not believe that the project would have happened at all in the absence of the programme which was higher than the overall programme average in this respect. Just over 40% considered that more benefit had been achieved and this was identified to be an average of 88% more. Over 40% of the social organisations indicated that the programme had brought the project forward by around 25 months. The overall net present value of additional GVA per organisation at the level of the Highlands and Islands as a whole is £42101.

5.6 For non-social enterprises just under a fifth believed that the project would not have happened at all, whilst around 59% considered that there was more benefit obtained than would otherwise have been the case at around 45% more. Over 77% of non-social organisations stated that the project had been brought forward in time by around an average of 12 months. The overall net present value of additional GVA per organisation at the level of the Highlands and Islands as a whole is £86448.

5.7 For those organisations in located in fragile areas around 29% estimated that the project would have not happened at all in the absence of the programme. Just over 42% identified a higher level of project benefit at some 63% overall. Just over 71% believed that the project had been brought forward by around 16 months. The overall net present value of additional GVA per organisation at the level of the Highlands and Islands as a whole is £9943. This figure was influenced by the relatively high level of displacement associated with the sample of organisations.

5.8 For organisations located in non-fragile areas around 21% estimated that the project would not have happened at all in the absence of the programme. Some 58% stated that the project benefits had been greater at an average of 54% and nearly 67% considered that the project had been advanced by an average of 14.5 months. The overall net present value of additional GVA per organisation at the level of the Highlands and Islands as a whole is £92145.

5.9 The differences in net present value of additional GVA generated by grouping of organisation reflects a number of factors and in some cases are based on relatively small numbers of respondents overall. GVA per employee is generally lower in social organisations than non-social organisations, in some cases substantially so. Displacement at the HIE area level also tends to be much higher overall for those organisations in the fragile area sample and social organisations.

5.10 The placements in general feel that they had enhanced their labour market skills, increased their confidence, gained work experience and in a significant number of
cases obtained a job with the placement organisation. The placements identified a potential uplift in their earnings potential. There was evidence that more of them would now remain in the HIE area labour market than would otherwise of been the case.

5.11 The Benefit Cost Ratio for the programme is estimated at just over 4 on the basis of cautious assumptions. Benchmarking evidence indicates this represents good Value for Money. The total net additional net present value GVA for the Highlands and Islands as a whole is estimated to be £6.48 million, equivalent to just over 200 net additional job years for the Highlands and Islands as a whole.

Recommendations in relation to future delivery

5.12 The evidence is that the programme is well founded in relation to its rationale and is delivering on its objectives. The design of the programme, focusing as it does on a Graduate placement scheme and a summer internship element, is appropriate in the light of its objectives and the local circumstances in which it is being applied. The programme supports both social enterprises and other organisations. Social enterprises benefit particularly from the capacity building the programme provides. The programme appears to operate in a broadly similar way with similar impacts across both Fragile and Non-Fragile areas, although fragile areas are incentivised financially.

5.13 The additional benefits associated with the programme compared to its public expenditure are significant and represent Value for Money. It is difficult to obtain comparable Benefit Cost ratios for similar programmes elsewhere but on the basis of recent research undertaken for HM Government on the Benefit Cost ratios for local economic development in England the results look impressive.

5.14 The Review did not find support or need for any fundamental change in the way the programme is being delivered. A central HIE team combined with flexible local customised delivery through HIE area officers is working well and the Review did not find any evidence that this approach should change.

5.15 The training programme is well received and meets an important need. This is particularly the case for the Graduate programme. For those without any formal business training it provides some valuable insight into business management. However, the main benefits arise through confidence building, awareness (as in the preparation of CVs etc) and, very importantly, networking. Since the funding for the training element of the programme is not mainstreamed at the present time there is obviously interest in whether it could be provided in different ways, at perhaps lower cost, than the present face-to-face approach (i.e. perhaps web-based).

5.16 The difficulty with not providing the training element face-to-face, and perhaps
through web-based approaches, is that it is quite likely that the confidence building and networking benefits would probably be much reduced. During the course of the Review it also became clear that some organisations and placements felt that there could be benefits from trying to build on the networking and presentation events of the Talent Scotland Programme further and perhaps integrate them into other aspects of HIE support. In the light of this there may be some scope to extend the out-reach element and perhaps share its costs.

5.17 It has also emerged during the course of the Review that there is much interest in sharing experience and Best Practice across the relevant communities in the Highlands and Islands. Thus, a small number of organisations thought that there were opportunities to discuss business opportunities with colleagues further when they attended graduate presentations. The placements who had/ were participating in the programme welcomed further opportunity to network with their colleagues. HIE officers and other stakeholders involved in delivering the programme felt that there were opportunities to share best practice. The placements have highlighted a number of things that they feel might be done to promote the programme, help with mentoring and add further benefit to them from having participated in the programme.