Our consultation and research

We commissioned independent consultants IBP Strategy and Research to adopt a mixed-methods approach to capture a wide range of views from across the region

22
Stakeholder Depth Interviews

One-to-one interviews with senior representatives from a wide range of organisations across sectors and geographies.

2
Local Authority Workshops

In-depth workshops with Local Authority partners to explore opportunities, challenges and regional priorities.

1
Education Stakeholder Workshop

Focused workshop with education stakeholders to understand key opportunities and challenges for the sector and region.

61
Wider Online Stakeholder Survey

Online survey with organisations across the region to gather feedback on views on priorities and the future of the Fund.

1,170
Public Survey via ScotPulse Panel

Survey of members of the ScotPulse Panel to understand the views of people across the North of Scotland.

Robust evidence
Broad perspectives
Informed decisions

1,255
total responses
(stakeholders and members of the public)

Coverage across urban, rural and island communities

Representation from across sectors and geographies

Mix of qualitative and quantitative insights and evidence

Overall emerging picture

Key messages from stakeholder consultation

Stakeholders across sectors share a common view of the Regional Fund's strengths and where it can evolve further.

Strong consensus

The Fund fills an important gap
It is addressing real needs and supporting strategic projects.

Strategic approach
Broad support for the overall direction and purpose of the fund.

Current themes remain relevant
People, Place and Fuel Poverty are seen as the right focus.

Strong support for partnership working
Collaboration is viewed as fundamental to acheiving regional impact.

Desire for increased scale and ambition
As the Fund grows, stakeholers want to see even greater impact.

A strong foundation to build a more strategic, transformational and impactful Regional Fund for the future.

Main challenges emerging

Better define 'regional'
Clarity needed on what makes a project regional, just not geographically wide.

Better define 'transformational'
Ensure projects create lasting change and leave a legacy.

Greater clarity around priorities
Stakeholders want clearer priorities within each theme that can evolve over time.

Better articulation of themes
Themes, especially 'Place' are not well understood by applicants.

Stronger strategic focus
Investing in projects that tackle underlying issues

Improved communication
Clearer guidance, examples and ongoing engagement are essential.

The message is clear

- **Current direction** is broadly supported
- **Greater clarity** will unlock potential
- **Stronger partnerships** will drive impact
- **Ambition must grow** with funding

Regional Fund review

Recommendations at a glance

Overall direction
Build on the current regional fund model by strengthening clarity, strategic impact and long-term investment while retaining flexibility and innovation.

Immediate recommendations

1. Clarify priorities and outcomes
Retain the existing themes while publishing clearer priorities, desired outcomes and examples beneath each theme.

2. Strengthen communications
Communicate more clearly the Fund's purpose, transformational impact and characteristics of successful projects.

3. Develop early engagement
Continue to strengthen project screening, early engagement and support for project development.

4. Clarify assessment
Improve understanding of assessment criteria through clearer guidance rather than introducing new criteria.

5. Broaden funding offers
Develop complementary funding mechanisms for projects at different stages of maturity.

6. Increase longer-term funding
Use multi-year funding more widely where transformational change requires longer delivery times.

Long-term development

7. Develop a more proactive Fund
Progressively evolve towards a more strategic and proactive investment approach.

8. Strategic Investment Fund
Consider establishing a Strategic Investment Fund alongside the existing Regional Fund.

9. Develop organisational capacity
Ensure organisational structures and resources evolve to support these recommendations.

Implementation should be incremental, building on the current strengths of the Regional Fund as resources and ambition increase.