

Our Context

The College mainly serves the borough of Boston and the districts of South Holland and East Lindsey although its geographical reach is wider than this. The areas are characterised by a low skill, low wage economy and consequently a high level of deprivation and rural poverty. The Indices of Deprivation show that Lincolnshire's coastal wards stand out as being amongst the most deprived neighbourhoods nationally with Boston and East Lindsey included in the highest rankings. For example, 2.8% of Boston neighbourhoods are in the 10% most deprived nationally and in terms of income deprivation, Boston is ranked 91 out of 333 authorities (source MHCLG, IMD). The proportion of working aged residents claiming unemployment benefits rose to 4.6 in 2023 compared to 2.8 for the rest of the East Midlands. Those *in* work can also expect to earn significantly less (£5351 per annum) than those in the rest of the region and residents are more than twice as likely to have their home repossessed. This is unsurprising since adults in Boston rank second highest in the East Midlands for financial vulnerability (levels of over-indebtedness are 20%). For these people, applying for further credit to support training for example is not an option. The access to services is further compounded by the paucity of public transport in the region with some outlying villages served only by infrequent bus services which preclude the vast majority of people from flexible/evening travel outside work hours unless they have their own vehicle.

Education Levels

According to the latest census information, Boston has the second highest proportion of people reporting no qualifications in England at 27.6% compared to a national average of 18.2%. Boston has the third lowest amount of people with a Level 4 or above qualifications (29 per cent). South Holland has the sixth least (20.1 per cent) and East Lindsey (21.5 per cent) has the seventh least. This is a stark difference to the highest levels in London of 46.7%. The compound effect of poorly

paid work and the inaccessibility of education around work has a particular impact on adult learners wishing to upskill or reskill to improve their earning potential. Whilst the pandemic did much to speed the adaptation to digital technology in many industries and in education, this pace of change was not seen in our region due to the largely manual and human-facing employment sectors. Additionally, there is a lack of basic infrastructure in our area to access a reliable broadband signal, poverty which leads to a lack of funds to afford connectivity and poor basic digital and literacy skills.

OUR CORE VALUES

Bravery – we make the right decisions with learners at the heart

Respect – we ensure that all people feel valued

Inspiration – we are creative and innovative to maximise opportunities for all

Growth – we are a learning organisation

Hope – we raise aspirations

Truth – we are open, honest and have integrity at all times

Energy – we are passionate, purposeful and productive

Nurture – we are kind and care for each other

OUR VISION

BRILLIANT today, *BETTER* tomorrow

OUR MISSION

“To inspire lifelong learning, growing people to be their brilliant best, energising our communities and brightening all our futures.”

OUR GREEN THREAD - *we are committed and relentless in our whole college ambition to achieve net zero and a sustainable planet*

OUR GOLDEN THREAD – *we are committed and relentless to ensure that employers, the community and our partners are key drivers in our intent, implementation and impact of our mission.*

The Strategic Plan 23-25 is based on our '5 Pillars' – People, Performance, Productivity, Partnerships and Personality and incorporates the following objectives, defining our approach to skills.

- We will partner with key employers to address skills gaps and the barriers of our local low wage economy.
- Our community partners value our collaboration to tackle inequalities in our region.
- We will work closely with other educational partners to provide clear pathways to encourage lifelong learning and social mobility.
- We will maintain a close and collaborative relationship with our civic partners to maximise investment and growth opportunities for the area.
- We will support key sectors particularly Green Energy, Engineering and Automotive, Health and Care Industries, Transport and Logistics, Creative and Cultural industries.
- We will develop the employability skills of all students to help prepare them for lifelong success and contribution to society.

Our college has experienced change in its executive and senior leadership teams since the last full inspection in November 2017. In 2020, the senior team underwent some restructuring to include the Business Innovation and Partnerships directorate headed by an executive level post. The purpose of the new directorate has been to take the lead on the remit of colleges articulated through the Skills for Jobs white paper (2019) and the team to lead on employer and external partnership engagement for the college. This recognised the degree and pace of change demanded and the importance of flexibility and the relentless response needed to meet our duties. In meeting this agenda, the Business,

Innovation and Partnerships team lead on cross-college employer engagement, innovation in delivery and securing purposeful and productive business relationships for the betterment of all.

Accountability Statement

Our strategic plan has recently been completed and signed off by the Corporation in May 2023. This statement has been developed concurrently whilst awaiting the Greater Lincolnshire Local Skills Improvement Plan to be completed. This statement includes content from the strategic plan and also our action plan to address remaining priorities noted within the draft LSIP for our area.

- Employers:

The college has worked with employers and key stakeholders to create a clearly articulated Employer Framework to identify and address skills needs, which in turn defines our internal organisational development strategies. These ensure that our structures, workforce, and learners are employment and future ready, as well placing the college center-stage in the developing local and regional skills agenda through key partnerships. We currently work with over 400 employers in a broad range of sectors from retail agri-tech to reflecting the breadth of employment opportunities in our area. These partnerships range in depth and breadth from work experience opportunities, advisory panels and visits, careers fairs to apprenticeships, commercial training and sector skills academy work. Our employers, community partners and other key stakeholders support directly with insight into curriculum planning alongside a range of other sources to inform direction including Vector for the latest labour market intelligence. Employer forums are a particularly effective mechanism for some areas such as engineering to acquire vital business intelligence for employer demand for existing and emergent skills sets. The college is experienced at flexing traditional patterns of delivery to ensure that we are agile and highly responsive to employer and community needs to deliver growth and maximise opportunities for the area.

We have also worked with our employer base to codesign and introduce live project briefs to support programmes in a wide variety of sectors including construction, business, early years education, engineering, health care, logistics, creative arts and agri-food tech.

Our apprenticeship managers work hard with employers to encourage apprenticeship recruitment through initiatives such as a levy exchange programme, supporting larger employers in the area to encourage new talent into their businesses whilst offering mentorship and support. The college is proactive in terms of matching demand for workforces with supply pathway, for example holding successful 'meet the employer days' where employers are invited into promote progression routes for apprenticeships. The Future Skills Solutions Group has driven new initiatives and curriculum, for example in HGV and professional driver training programmes as a direct response to skills shortages.

In terms of direct support for the current workforce, development activities include leadership and management development, and a range of commercial programmes. Apprenticeship management and delivery, moving from frameworks to standards and back to industry days, improving progress tracking, inspiring learners upskilling and co-delivery opportunities with employer partners. Strong sustained relationships with construction and engineering companies ensure our students and our staff have access to the latest industry developments for inclusion within the curriculum. Recent examples include training on ground source heat pumps benefitting both full time learners and tradespeople wishing to expand their skill set to take advantage of the emphasis on green energies.

The college has developed a range of digital and technical courses in conjunction with specialist employers in direct response to local, regional, and national skills needs. An example of this is the Lincolnshire Co-op, a large business that identified a need to upskill their employees' digital skills due to implementing a new electronic payroll and HR system.

Courses that respond to the emphasis on green careers – one of the 'gamechangers' being driven by GLLEP - include courses on hydrogen technology, hybrid and electric vehicle technologies and ground source heating.

- Civic Partners

We contribute to key partnerships across the region, to share best practice, resources and skills. These include the collaborative creation of joint bidding for capital and educational skills investments. Additionally, the College's strong relationships with our civic partners has helped to secure significant private investment in the area. An example of this was the collaborative work done with the economic investment arm of Boston Borough Council, the DWP and ourselves to pave the way for a large new employer to site their factory. Through a joint approach, the company were confident that the partnership could help them to recruit a well-trained and responsive workforce from the outset. Other examples include writing successful bids with college consortia for strategic development funds and professional development grants for skills and workforce development, whilst supporting other partners such as local authorities and higher education

Institutions. An example of this is the Centre for Fresh Food Produce Logistics (CfFFPL) a partnership joint venture with Lincoln University and funded by the Town Deal, supporting food-related businesses to attract and train staff and innovate their business models.

We have been highly successful in delivering the Lincolnshire County Council sponsored 'Multiply' project for local maths provision and a range of courses funded under PCDL. The college is a key deliverer of this community learning contract and maintains excellent relationships with the contract managers ensuring smooth administration and a reliable income stream. This important work contributes to widening participation, adult engagement and progression to mainstream adult funded provision by increasing confidence and self-belief. We have strengthening bonds with our local MP Matt Warman, Councillors and other civic postholders who recognise and value the importance of the college to its communities within the town and surrounding areas. Regular visits to the college have taken place over the past 12 to 18 months.

- Community Partners

Through our extensive community links managers work collectively to address the multiple barriers to employment in our locality. This extends not just to the development of technical skills, but to the enhancement of wider employability and transferable skills. We are committed to augmenting the community voice into learner outcomes via a community educational forum to enhance the inclusivity and participation with the local skills agenda. Partners include St. Botolph's Church, Centenary Church, Solution Centre, St Barnabas, Lincolnshire CVS and NHS.

The management and oversight of the college's Community provision ensures that there is focus upon learners we otherwise may not otherwise engage with, widening our reach and areas of support.

Our adult provision education programmes consider not just skills needed immediately for employment, but also those already in employment where the lack of maths and English is a barrier to job progression. Working collaboratively with employers such as the NHS and community impact services, here our Employability and Skills team deliver blended programmes at level 1 with active internal support to progress to level 2, tailoring delivery times to suit the work or attendance pattern for the learner.

This has a key focus on wellbeing and educational pathways for those that have disengaged with services for a multitude of reasons including their mental health, homelessness and those socially isolated due to cultural difference and inequities. We support people impacted by welfare reform measures, for example those that have migrated from legacy

benefits to Universal Credit and require digital skills and proof of educational and employability engagement in order to receive payment. This work, in turn, aids in the prevention of homelessness. We have recently been working with NHS partners and home office subcontractors SERCO in the delivery of educational packages for those who are seeking asylum within the UK. Person-centric sessions positively impact inclusivity through the provision of language skills and future employability skills in readiness to achieve economic independence for these most vulnerable of citizens. Our rapid response to provide support for Ukrainian refugees in sheltered accommodation and in partnership with other services, is an example of this work. Further community impact can be noted with our rapid response to those seeking refuge from Ukraine.

Other programmes aim to build learner confidence through solutions which offer engagement with education leading to career opportunities in industries such as the health and education sectors and food and agri sectors by means of training, work experience and increased personal independence. The CfFFPL project already noted, has targeted at hard-to-reach groups in their respective community settings, those with long term mental health issues and those who have English as a second language to bring hope and aspiration.

Social cohesion (or lack of) is a prevailing concern for our area. A relatively recent and dramatic shift in the ethnic profile of the town (a 460% increase in the migrant population between 2004 and 2014, a tenfold increase between 2010 and 2021), continues to cause unrest due to the differing views on immigration and famously led to the unfortunate label of 'Brexitland'. The key issue is not immigration per se but rather the lack of investment in the infrastructure needed to support entrants. The College has recognised and embraces the positive impact that we can have to support the newer communities and provide ESOL and employability programmes to reduce the barriers to social mobility and integration for migrant workers and their families.

Other community partners include Beam Café (a mental health charity), Centenary Church and Centrepoint Homeless Outreach service, offering a range of courses for people who are living with mental health challenges, helping them to develop strategies and techniques to use in their daily lives to promote self-management and confidence.

The college was a national finalist for the AoC Beacon Award and was commended **for the Edge Award for Excellence in Real World Learning in 2021**. The 'Police Stop Search Scrutiny Panel' was an original and innovative collaboration between the Uniformed Public Services department at Boston College and the Lincolnshire Police. The project maximised real-world experience by actively engaging learners as community partners, assessing footage of raw police bodycam footage as part of a formal reviewing panel to ensure that officers demonstrated respect for cultural diversity.

As part of our work with the local Job Centre's at Spalding and Boston, we partner with the DWP to offer access to skills development through sector work-based academies which directly lead to employment. We have worked collaboratively with local libraries to conduct community surveys to establish and act upon local needs. This research indicated that there is a need for upskilling in digital and IT skills and we have responded promptly to these findings and designed accessible courses to meet this demand. The college has specific projects that engage and aid social mobility. These include:

- Career Net is a programme support young people back into education or employment, supporting individuals who are in their last year of school and at risk of exclusion.
- The Building Better Opportunities programme has been predominantly used for engagement with individuals that require a lot of support with confidence building, low self-esteem and anxiety.
- The LEAP programme supports learners looking for employment alternatives by increasing their work-readiness.

- **Education Partners**

Boston schools rank low in terms of GCSE attainment in terms of progress (out of 151 local authorities in England). With low starting points for many entrants and selective schools' admissions at Key Stage 3, the disadvantage for many young people starts at an early age. The traditional aspiration for many parents in our area is for their child to stay or join one of the grammar school sixth forms to study A-levels at 16. We work tirelessly to ensure that young people can make an informed choice at 16 through vibrant open events and innovative projects such as F1 in Schools and Elite 11. This F1 project encourages Key Stage 2 children to work as teams to build a mini race car, developing science and engineering skills alongside gaining insight into technical careers in this environment. Elite 11 is a multi-sport competition that again acts as a mechanism to deliver alternative careers advice in sports and fitness. We have also seen increased footfall by local schools at our University open events. Students from most of the local schools as well as our own students are able to speak directly with HEI's such as Nottingham University, Manchester University and the University of Sheffield at the Boston College event rather than incurring the cost of expensive visits. The strong partnership we have with the University of Lincoln has enabled us to take large groups of our learners to bespoke learning events in Lincoln, gaining insight and raising aspirations.

Our key higher education partnerships with the University of Lincoln and Derby University enable the college to offer a range of opportunities for students to progress to study at higher levels and are a key driver for social mobility and development. We offer a portfolio of courses in a range of subjects, aligning key provision to specific campus sites, aligned to local employment, as well as the needs and aspirations of national and global markets. Our degree

programmes are developed with a keen attention to progression into meaningful careers. A strong example of this has been the FdA in Creative Arts, validated by the University of Derby. The FdA in Creative Arts develops sector awareness to contextualise employment and self-employment opportunities, funding and policy direction, self-development, and subject specialist development.

We draw upon the expertise of governors who are aligned to curriculum where they have specialist knowledge and background to provide additional insight and challenge

Our Strategic Objectives - The 5 Pillars

Performance: Ofsted Good, Outstanding in most areas, HE Continuation and Progression, achievement and progression rates well above national average

Productivity: Good or better financial health, growth in adult education, HE and apprenticeships

People: Excellent staff and student satisfaction

Partnerships: Stakeholder surveys rated excellent

Personality: National reputation for excellence

A - PERFORMANCE objectives

1. Our curriculum is informed by our external partners and shaped to meet students' needs.
2. Teaching and learning is judged as good or outstanding in all sessions
3. All learners make exceptional progress from their starting points and progress to positive destinations.
4. All study programme learners have meaningful experiences in preparation for work and life.
5. 100% of awarding body external audits ensure compliance and assure quality.

B - PRODUCTIVITY objectives

1. Introduce lean processes to increase efficiency, reducing waste and repetition.
2. Continually seek new and maximise existing funding streams to support growth and investment.
3. Design and implement a robust and ambitious yet adaptive estates strategy based on our key priorities.

4. Invest in our IT infrastructure to ensure that staff and students have access to the latest technology and our systems are reliable and safe.
5. With the use of business intelligence our key stakeholders have convenient and effective access to information & systems, and where we can work and collaborate in the most efficient of ways.

C - PEOPLE objectives

1. Prioritise the health and wellbeing of all our people.
2. Motivate, inspire and support staff to achieve our organisational vision, mission and values.
3. All staff have and achieve an ambitious plan for their own continuous professional development.
4. Continually invest in leadership to develop organisational capacity and capability to deliver transformational change.
5. Value and recognise the contributions and achievements of all our people, celebrating diversity in our communities.
6. Engage and work in partnership with our people to manage change and opportunities.
7. Revise and simplify our approach to teaching resource to achieve fairness and affordability.

D - PARTNERSHIPS objectives

1. Partner with key employers to address skills gaps and the barriers of our local low wage economy.
2. Our community partners value our collaboration to tackle inequalities in our region.
3. Work closely with other educational partners to provide clear pathways to encourage lifelong learning and social mobility.
4. Maintain a close and cohesive relationship with our civic partners to maximise investment and growth opportunities for the area.

E - PERSONALITY objectives

1. Define the key sectors that we support particularly Green Energy, Digital, Engineering and Automotive, Health and Care Industries, Transport and Logistics, Creative and Cultural industries.

2. Develop the employability skills of all students to help prepare them for lifelong success and contribution to society.
3. Learners co-collaborate in all aspects of college life.
4. Governors make an active contribution to the success of the college.
5. All decisions respond to our commitment to helping tackle the climate emergency
6. We support all learners to become the best versions of themselves

Addressing the Emerging Priorities of the Greater Lincolnshire Local Skills Improvement Plan

Work Readiness and Essential Skills

KEY FINDINGS	ACTIONS	LINK to 5 Pillars
Essential Skills Framework	Make a Difference (MaD) Curriculum in place Focus on Employability for Adults – in place	A.1, A.4, E.2
Exposure to Work Experience	Increased emphasis on work experience	A.1, A.4, E.2
Preparedness for differing work environments	MaD Curriculum extension to current offer	A.1, A.4. E.2
Staff Recruitment and Retention	Support for employers through employer forums and business breakfasts	E.1
Communication	MaD curriculum and further focus in main study programmes Inclusion in employability curriculum	E.2

Digitisation and Smarter Working

KEY FINDINGS	ACTIONS	LINK to 5 Pillars
Digital Skills Basic Training Offer	Continue to offer digital skills training in Spalding, Boston and Horncastle. Plans to deliver digital skills training in Mayflower from 2024/25	B.2, B.4, D.1, D.2, D.3, E.2

Digital Skills within study programmes, apprenticeships and Adult courses	Curriculum planning is now complete for 23/24. Consider the inclusion of digital skills in some provision from 2023/24 with full implementation in 2024/25.	B.4, B.5, E.1, E.2, E.6
Bitesize course in emerging technologies e.g. AI	Develop teaching capacity and capability for high level skills delivery. Seek additional trainers on part-time contracts.	B.4, D.1, E.1
Support for businesses in digital solutions for productivity	Continue Business Breakfasts to support digital solutions. Revise business to business offer to include digital solutions from 2023/24.	D.1, D2., D.4
Digital finance training	Continue to offer Xero training in Spalding, Boston and Horncastle,	A.1, D.1, D.3, D.4

De-carbonisation and Green Skills

KEY FINDINGS	ACTIONS	LINK to 5 Pillars
Identify current gaps in priority occupations	Work with civic partners and employers to identify the specific skills needs in green jobs. Support investment procurement to build infrastructure to encourage new entrants and support existing businesses in these sectors.	A.1, A.4, B.1, D.1, E.1, E.5
Industry-specific net zero (online) programmes	Develop own and utilise existing courses on net zero for our distance learning offer.	A.1, A.4, B.1, E.1, E.5
Specific training in decarbonisation for engineering and construction	Develop capability and capacity ion staff for these areas – 2023/24. Continue to work with employers to offer bespoke training in these areas. Continue to seek project investment to underpin the growth in capacity and capability to deliver training.	A.1, E.1, E.5

Local Socio-Economic Conditions

KEY FINDINGS	ACTIONS	LINK to 5 Pillars
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Assessment of transport provision and remove barriers for learners	Undertake an updated assessment of travel to learn. Explore solutions to overcome transport barriers for ALL learners.	D.3, D.6
Courses to develop disability-awareness solutions for employers.	Undertake enquiries into the level, areas of need in disability awareness with our current employers.	D.1, D.2,D.3, D.4, E.2, E.3, E.6

Leadership and Management

KEY FINDINGS	ACTIONS	LINK to 5 Pillars
Develop leadership and management programmes accessible to employers	Continue to offer and grow our provision for leadership and management training. Improve capacity for delivery and consider revised models to meet the needs of employer e.g. hybrid/online training.	A.1, A.4, B.2, B.5, D.1, D.4, E.2, E.6

Skills Systems

KEY FINDINGS	ACTIONS	LINK to 5 Pillars
Prioritise collaboration work with other providers	Work with other providers where possible prior to skills-orientated bids to ensure synergy and strengthen funding applications.	A.1, B.2, B.5, D.3, D.4