Appendix 2

Rationale

The Role of the RICs

'Improving Scotland's Schools: an OECD Perspective' set out key recommendations to the Scottish Government in 2015:

'**Strengthen the professional leadership of CfE and the "middle"-** Having implemented CfE at the system level, the centre of gravity needs to shift towards schools, communities, networks of schools, and local authorities in a framework of professional leadership and collective responsibility

Focus on the quality of implementation of CfE in schools and communities and make this an evaluation priority - No matter how well designed a curriculum may be, this makes little difference unless it is successfully implemented in practice. This calls for full engagement from schools and teachers who are clear about direction and who work closely with learners, families, and communities. It calls for a strong role for the "middle", covering such organisations as local authorities, teachers' and head teachers' associations, and different networks and collaboratives, that each have prime responsibility for implementing certain aspects of CfE.

Develop a coherent strategy for building teacher and leadership social capital - Teachers who work in cultures of professional collaboration have a stronger impact on student achievement, are more open to change and improvement, and develop a greater sense of self-efficacy than teachers who work in cultures of individualism and isolation. Not all kinds of professional collaboration are equally effective. We suggest that collaboration in improving teaching, assessing CfE, and connecting schools to take collective responsibility for each other's improvement and results, should be top priorities

Strengthen evaluation and research, including independent knowledge creation - A strong research and evaluation system requires researchers, those with specialist analytical capacities, policymakers, and practitioners to work together. We believe that strong relationships with the evaluation and research communities and/or with independent and non-government agencies working at some arm's length from political decision-making would benefit Scotland's education system.'

In response to these recommendations and in partnership with their local authorities and Education Scotland, The Regional Improvement Collaboratives began operating within Scottish education in 2017.

Within the 'Review of the Regional Improvement Collaboratives' (2021) the Scottish Government sets out the role of the RICs as intended to:

- provide educational improvement support to practitioners through dedicated teams of professionals - drawing on local authority staff, Education Scotland staff and others
- provide focus across all partners through a regional plan and work programme - aligned to the National Improvement Framework (NIF)
- facilitate and create the conditions to support collaborative working across the region.

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This review also states that 'RICs were not intended to be formal bodies within the education system. They intended to bring together local authorities and Education Scotland to develop different ways of working, bring together capacity across a region and add value through collective efforts.'

In 'Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education' (2021), Professor Ken Muir also highlights the unique role that Regional Improvement Collaboratives play within the Scottish education system - 'From the outset it was made clear that the establishment of RICs was not about creating new formal bodies, but was *about* **developing different ways of working, bringing together capacity from across an area and beyond, to add value through collective efforts**.'

The Current Context

- The Scottish education system is complex, with the education reform process bringing to light stakeholder confusion around roles and responsibilities within the system and a desire for greater clarity.
- Within a complex system there is an increased risk of duplication of effort. This is further exacerbated by lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities
- With increased pressure and demands across the education system, collaborative improvement activity can be perceived to be an 'add-on' to core activity
- Without collective responsibility, collaborative improvement activity leads to minimal impact

Building Clarity and Coherence

In response to the current context and to build greater clarity around the purpose and added value of the RICs, it is important to be clear about associated roles and responsibilities, as well as ensuring robust processes are in place to evidence improvement. As clarity grows, other parts of the education system build a shared understanding of the role of the RICs, leading to increased engagement, reduced duplication and ultimately, system wide improvement.
In preparing for implementation of the Scottish education reform, the RICs are ideally positioned to 'strengthen from the middle' and close the gap between policy and practice. To maximise impact, the RICs have developed a research-based self-evaluation framework which aims to encapsulate their core purpose as set out by the Scottish Government, as well as recommendations arising from national reviews as outlined above. In order facilitate a shared focus on building confidence, clarity and coherence, the self-evaluation framework makes use of Fullan and Quinn's 'Coherence Framework' (2016) and is organised around each of the four components:

- **Focusing Direction** – purpose driven goals that bring clarity of strategy and change leadership
- **Cultivating Collaborative Cultures** – Collaborating is not just about creating a place where people feel good but rather about cultivating the expertise of everyone to be focused on a collective purpose
- **Deepening Learning** – Shifting to a deeper understanding of the process of learning and how we can influence it. This requires knowledge building partnerships for everyone engaged

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- **Securing Accountability** – Developing conditions that maximise 'internal accountability' and reinforce internal accountability with external accountability

The RIC Self-evaluation Framework uses each of the four Coherence components listed above to evaluate RIC roles and responsibilities, with a clear focus on the Scottish education context in relation to policy, process and language. Where relevant, the reflective questions are aligned to challenge questions within HGIOS4. Whilst the framework aims to build a shared understanding and expectations of the role of the RICs, it also facilitates local responses to the unique contexts and operating models within each of the regions. It is the intention of the RICs to use the self- evaluation framework to support self and peer evaluation and has the potential to support reporting processes at a regional and national level, building greater clarity around the role and purpose of the RICs, as well as understanding evidence of impact.

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1. Focusing Direction

Component	Evidence	Questions	What does success look like?
Shared purpose drives action	• The RIC vision and values reflect the intention and purpose of Scottish RICs and is used to focus direction within each RIC's context	• What range of data and information are utilised to understand the context of the RIC? • To what extent do stakeholders have a shared understanding of the purpose of RICs as it aligns with local and national roles?	• Universal clarity around purpose of RIC and ensures RIC focus on collaborative improvement activity targeting key local and national priorities • Avoiding unnecessary duplication of local authority and national offers • Collaborative activity, supported by the RIC, focusses on improved outcomes for learners
A small number of goals tied up to learner outcomes drives decisions	• All stakeholders have the opportunity to influence the RIC plan.	• How effective are processes for involving stakeholders in the creation of the RIC plan?	• Stakeholders have greater ownership of priorities

	• Agreed priorities reflect key local, regional and national priorities	• To what extent has engagement with stakeholders and analysis of local, regional and national data informed RIC priorities?	• Increased engagement in improvement activity leading to improved outcomes for learners
A clear strategy for achieving the goals is known by all	• Improvement strategy makes clear the RIC's approaches to communication, collaboration, improvement and evaluation	• How effective are RIC approaches to communication, collaboration and improvement? • How effective are approaches to evaluating and monitoring the impact and sustainability of collaborative working?	• Meaningful collaboration leads to greater coherence across the region and improvement in key areas of focus
Change knowledge is used to drive the RIC forward	• Robust approach to planning, monitoring and evaluating progress	• What processes and/or progress indicators are in place for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the effectiveness and impact of RIC activity?	• Practitioners report that collaborative improvement activity is leading to improved outcomes for learners

2. Cultivating Collaborative Cultures

Component	Evidence	Questions	What does success look like?
A growth mindset underlies the culture	• Professional learning is responsive to need within the RIC • Increasing numbers of practitioners are engaging in relevant RIC level collaborative enquiry/ professional learning, leading to impact	• What processes are in place to ensure that professional learning is in response to need? • To what extent are practitioners reporting increased knowledge and confidence as a result of professional learning?	• Planned opportunities to build trusting relationships, resulting in collaborative improvement activity at regional level

Leaders model learning themselves and shape a culture of learning	• Members at all levels of the system learn with and from one another • Leaders use inclusive language such as 'our RIC' • Practitioners are encouraged to engage in RIC activity which adds value to their context	• To what extent are all local authorities engaging with RIC activity? • How well do local authority and RIC processes support engagement with collaborative improvement activity?	• Reduced silo working and duplication of effort – greater collaboration over common themes Improvement in national priorities through deeper collaboration at a local/regional level
Collective capacity building is fostered above individual development	• Connecting practitioners and learners under common themes / shared problems • Connecting practitioners and learners with opportunities to inform local/regional/ national policy	• How well are RICs facilitating opportunities for practitioners, learners and leaders to connect and collaborate around common themes / shared problems/ policy?	• Increased range of voices influencing local/regional / national priorities • Increased engagement in local/ national policy across the system
Structures and processes support intentional collaborative work	• There are agreed processes which facilitate meaningful collaboration with a focus on whole system improvement • Collaborative improvement activity avoids/reduces duplication of and adds value to activity within the RIC	• To what extent do RIC governance structures support and challenge realisation of the RIC vision and plan? • How well do systems and processes support a growing collaborative culture? How do you know? • How rigorous are processes to effectively plan, monitor and manage RIC funds?	• Evidence of increasing numbers of educators connecting, collaborating and improving • Evidence of increasing numbers of educators collaborating at a deeper level • Greater clarity around roles and responsibilities within the system

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		• How well is the RIC offer communicated? How do you know? • To what extent are local authorities and national organisations collaborating in order to reduce duplication and create more coherence?	• Educators feel more connected and less isolated • Wellbeing and learning of learners and educators improve • More effective and efficient use of resources

3. Deepening Learning

Component	Evidence	Questions	Impact
RIC roles and responsibilities are clear to everyone and drive collaborative improvement activity	• RIC Recruitment and induction processes in place • Regular supervision meetings with RIC central team members • Regular and impactful meetings with regional Education Scotland Team/SRAs • Positive , collaborative contributions from Education Scotland Team and other partners.	• What processes are in place in order to ensure clarity around roles and responsibilities in improvement activity? • How well does implementation of recruitment processes result in the best candidate for the post? • To what extent are approaches to induction and mentoring supporting newly seconded staff? • How effectively is RIC activity building shared understanding and expectations within national priorities? • How are partnerships between RICs and Education Scotland Senior Regional Advisers and their teams helping to drive improvement?	• Greater clarity of RIC roles, responsibilities within collaborative improvement activity • Shared ownership of priorities and deeper collaboration to improve outcomes • Improvement is evident at local, regional and ultimately national level
A set of effective andragogy / professional practices is known and used by RIC	• Central team members have a shared understanding of how to facilitate effective	• To what extent are central team and programme contributors using effective andragogy/ professional practices	• Practitioners reporting high levels of engagement and satisfaction in collaborative improvement activity

central teams and programme contributors	collaborative improvement activity • Professional learning and collaborative improvement activities are evaluated effectively	• To what extent is professional learning based on the values and actions within the GTCS professional standards?	
Robust processes are used to improve practice over time • **Research informed** • **Policy informed** • **Collaborative improvement activity over time** • **External evaluations**	• Effective cross-RIC collaboration • Collaboration with colleges, universities and external partners • A range of collaborative improvement activities over time- some of which may be accredited	• To what extent do we critically engage with research, policy sources and developments in learning and teaching to inform our regional improvement activity? • Is an appropriate range of approaches being used which enable practitioners to learn with and from each other? • How well are we looking 'outwards' and 'forwards' within our processes?	• RIC collaborative improvement activity is evidence and research-informed, and engages with a range of partners both within and across regions

4. Securing Accountability

Component	Evidence	Questions	What does success look like?
Capacity building and internal accountability is used to continuously improve results	• Monitoring of internal RIC outcomes and process measures to illustrate progress over time and identification of next steps • Monitoring of regional progress within NIF measures in order to identify next steps	• How well do we use evidence from tracking and monitoring of collaborative improvement activity to measure progress over time? • How well do we use regional progress within national global measures to inform RIC improvement activity?	• Improvement in RIC measures over time • Evidence of clear links between local, regional and national priorities • Ultimately, improvement in NIF measures, over time

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		• How reliable is our evidence of impact on learner outcomes?	
External accountability is used to support progress	• RIC external accountability processes- eg ➢ Education Scotland ➢ Scottish Government ➢ External partners	• What sources of external accountability are used to inform RIC progress and to what effect? • To what extent to do we engage with peers and external partners to provide support, challenge and help identify appropriate next steps?	• Accountability processes contribute to the identification of next steps and build greater coherence

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