# Enterprise & Skills Review

Call for Evidence, July 2016

## Personal experience?

1. **Have you had direct interaction with enterprise or skills advice or support?**

Yes

1. **Tell us briefly about your experience?**

Public libraries have a well-established role as providers of skills advice and support. With over 500 branches spanning the length and breadth of the country, and encompassing our diverse communities, public libraries are the first point of contact for many people in accessing support for developing skills. Libraries offer access to a range of resources – books and online learning materials – to support skills development and promote inclusive growth. Many libraries also provide dedicated support for employability via jobs clubs, which build confidence as well as targeting structural unemployment.

More recently, the public library network has expanded its offer to include support for enterprise skills too. [Ambition and Opportunity](https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwj37LSgubbOAhXoD8AKHT23D9QQFggeMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fscottishlibraries.org%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2015%2F01%2FStrategy.pdf&usg=AFQjCNHxfSIxzbo98FLKUbE6Ch0VUyaONg&cad=rja), our national public library strategy, outlines a clear role for public libraries in promoting economic wellbeing and contributing to the development of new enterprise. For decades, libraries have been incubators of ideas and, in the digital age, they have the potential to drive innovation by providing socially and geographically accessible co-working spaces and digital makerspaces. All public library services in Scotland will introduce 3D printing capability by September 2016, and some services already offer dedicated co-working spaces.

1. **If you have not used such services can you outline why this is the case?**

N/A

## Reflections on the system of support

1. **What do you see as the strengths and weakness of the current approach?**

Scotland has a high-quality, multi-agency approach to enterprise and skills development. This ensures that there is abundance and equality of opportunity for our people to develop their skills. However, there is currently no clearly defined pathway to guide users through the skills development journey. This means that people may be unaware of the options that exist and lack awareness about where to go for support. This also results in a lack of clarity regarding the roles of, and relationships between, all of the agencies contributing to the national agenda. A clear framework would enable all of our public services to work more effectively towards a common goal as a cohesive unit. This would in turn ensure best value and greatest efficiency of our public services.

1. **What needs to change in the current system of support to make it simple and clear, and help us deliver Scotland’s vision?**

There needs to be greater clarity regarding user journey so that people who need to access support know what is on offer and where it is available. Related to this, all of the agencies concerned with enterprise and skills development need to be fully apprised of their position within the user journey, and how this interacts with the remits of other agencies.

1. **What are the right:**
   1. **Roles;**

Agencies will need to develop roles that focus on partnership working in order to facilitate joined-up working. Roles with a greater focus on public outreach should also be considered in order to raise awareness of the provisions within the system of support within the population at large.

* 1. **Services**

The services provided by different agencies need to be considered within the context of the broader landscape of provision and brought together as a more cohesive offering.

* 1. **Skills; and**

Partnership and outreach work will be very important in achieving this transformation.

* 1. **Behaviours**

Cooperation and willingness to engage in coproduction activities will be important across agencies.

**needed from our agencies to support this transformation?**

1. **How might we ensure this step-change reaches and benefits all of Scotland, building on regional and local strengths?**

For all of Scotland to benefit from these changes, it is essential that people are aware of what is on offer and what options exist for support. Public libraries have a key role in disseminating information on behalf of public bodies and signposting to other agencies. They are also located within the heart of our communities and serve as the first point of contact for many people on the path to developing skills. As such, libraries could have a significant role to play in ensuring that people are well-informed about the range of opportunities for skills and enterprise development on offer across agencies, as well as being key players in delivering skills development opportunities.

1. **How would we know if the system is working better?**

An increased number of people accessing enterprise or skills advice or support services would be a strong indicator that the system is clearer for users. Tracking user journeys would demonstrate clarity and efficiency of the user pathway. Longer term, enhanced productivity and reduced inequality would be the key indicators in determining whether the system works better.

1. **How might public resources be deployed most effectively to match priorities, deliver value for money, and flow through the minimum number of levels and organisations to the user?**

The development of an inter-agency framework, detailing the roles and responsibilities of bodies working around the skills and enterprise agenda, would enable joined-up working. This would improve the user experience by offering enhanced clarity, and deliver value for money by reducing duplication of effort.

1. **Is there any other published evidence, or good practice, which you would particularly highlight that you wish us to take into account during the review?**

The New York Public Library (NYPL) Small Business Resource Centre is an example of excellent practice from public libraries supporting enterprise and skills development <https://www.nypl.org/help/services/smallbiz>. This example demonstrates the potential of the public library service in fostering a culture of innovation and supporting inclusive growth, by providing all members of the community with access to the resources required to realise entrepreneurial potential and enhance employability.

The Business and IP Centre offered by the British Library is also a model of good practice in the provision of information and market intelligence to support entrepreneurship and research and development <http://www.bl.uk/business-and-ip-centre/national-network>.

In Scotland, both Aberdeen Central Library and the Mitchell Library in Glasgow offer good practice models of support for business and enterprise <http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/Library_Service/Services/lib_business_home.asp> and <http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/libraries/the-mitchell-library/business-mitchell/pages/home.aspx>.