



SOUTH of
SCOTLAND
ENTERPRISE

Digital Strategy

June 2022



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Introduction

Digital has the power to unlock potential, to connect communities, to empower the workforce, to reach international customers, and to improve the delivery of key services.

South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) is just entering year 3

- but in real terms, post-Covid, is in start-up mode.

We have our Regional Economic Strategy and are aiming to deliver on the vision and the ambition that sets out for the South of Scotland.

At SOSE, our focus is on the growth and wellbeing of our communities,

economy and our environment - its people, prosperity and planet.

We can't do that in isolation - we need to collaborate, we need people, partnerships and access to innovation and expertise, and we need to make the most of the key tools to help us reach globally from our local areas. Digital is one of these.

We have incredible, innovative outward-looking industries in the South of Scotland, and are

leading the way on Fair Work and Net Zero - making the South of Scotland an even more attractive place to live, work and learn.

We have huge ambition for the South - and digital is one more tool we can use to connect better, drive success and make sure that it is the place to thrive for our people, communities and businesses.

Jane Morrison-Ross

Chief Executive



Who we are

South of Scotland Enterprise, SOSE for short, is a new, dedicated economic and community development agency, established by the Scottish Government, for the South of Scotland. We have been established in direct response to the unique economic opportunities and challenges facing the South of Scotland, and we are here to lead the delivery of a fresh and locally focused approach required to succeed in responding.

Our aims

Our twin aims, as set out in legislation, are to further the sustainable economic and social development of the South of Scotland, and to improve the amenity and environment of the South of Scotland.

Our vision

Our vision is to drive inclusive growth, increase competitiveness and tackle inequality within the region. We want to establish the South of Scotland as a centre of opportunity, innovation and growth.

Our mission

Our mission is to work together with people across the South of Scotland to grow its economy in a just and sustainable manner. We will provide investment, expertise and mentoring to people and businesses and by doing so, we will inspire the region to think bigger and unlock the great potential of the South.

Realising the South of Scotland's potential through Digital

All businesses operate in the digital economy and all businesses have to be aware of the opportunities and threats that this represents.*

The challenges faced by today's businesses are not new: reaching new markets, managing growth, increasing productivity, and using information to make better decisions.

Digital technologies can help with all of these challenges - *digital* is a competitive advantage and companies need to engage or risk being left behind.

That said, in a region where the majority of companies are small and

micro-businesses, we recognise that it's tough to find the time, money or motivation to engage with a rapidly changing landscape.

SOSE's role is to provide clarity and context, matching digital solutions to enterprise challenges.

Digital is not the outcome in itself, but an enabler to unlock ways of doing business better.

The technologies continue to evolve, both in power and affordability, meaning that advances in technologies such as

5G, virtual reality, sensors, and 3D printing are able to be adopted by all, not just larger companies. In terms of broadband coverage, and while there are still some areas which are a concern, the state-aided investments in fibre and mobile infrastructure mean that excellent digital connectivity is available like never before.

This document is SOSE's Digital Strategy for the next three years and outlines how SOSE will influence, support and invest in all enterprises in the South to grow through embracing digital.

[*From: "A changing nation: How Scotland will thrive in a digital world"](#)

SOSE'S DIGITAL STRATEGY

To support enterprises in the South of Scotland to harness the opportunities afforded by digital, to increase the sustainability, competitiveness & growth of the area as a whole.

Three ways we'll deliver this strategy

1 CONNECTIVITY, ACCESS & SKILLS

We influence physical & economic infrastructure

2 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION & MATURITY

We deliver tailored support

3 INNOVATION & LEADERSHIP

We invest in your success

DIGITAL MATURITY JOURNEY

Why these three areas?

From our strategy development work, we believe these three areas are the building blocks to digital maturity & economic growth.

1. Connectivity, Access & Skills

***We influence
physical & economic
infrastructure***



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1. Connectivity, Access & Skills

We influence physical & economic infrastructure

The Challenge

The essential foundations for any digital development are a network (Connectivity), devices with which to communicate with the network (Access), and the ability to use them (Skills). All enterprises within the South of Scotland require access to each of these to grow commercially.

Physical Infrastructure:

Currently the South of Scotland lags behind Scotland as a whole, though our area is comparable with other rural Local Authority areas for access to Superfast (>30Mbps) Broadband. 4G coverage is not complete, and 5G coverage is minimal.

Economic Infrastructure:

In terms of skills, only 17% of businesses in the South feel their workforce is fully equipped to meet their digital needs. While there are several national (Scotland and UK) initiatives to address these gaps, the landscape can be hard to navigate.

As well as influencing the organisations providing infrastructure, SOSE has a role in helping enterprises navigate how to access these providers, enabling them to be connected and confident in their skills.



Only 17%

of businesses in the South feel their workforce is fully equipped to meet their digital needs.

1. Connectivity, Access & Skills

We influence physical & economic infrastructure

Rationale

Physical Infrastructure

SOSE will provide support through ambassadorship with our partners across the public, third and private sector, promoting and representing the interests and needs of the South of Scotland within the Scottish and UK Governments' programmes for Connectivity, Access and Skills.

Economic Infrastructure

SOSE's focus is to act as a bridge between centrally-administered programmes (such as R100, S4GI, Digital Inclusion) and their local delivery arms, ensuring delivery agents are empowered through these programmes, and that their needs are heard by policy-makers.



1. Connectivity, Access & Skills

Our commitments

Influence

national connectivity and skills forums to provide strong support for the needs of the South.

Invest

in opportunities to further develop digital skills which will be important in many job roles of the future.

Work

with national and local network builders and operators to ensure their work is prioritised in the South.

2. Digital Transformation & Maturity

***We deliver
tailored support***

2. Digital Transformation & Maturity

We deliver tailored support

The Challenge


Once connected, to stay relevant businesses must stay competitive, the South of Scotland has an opportunity to catch up and overtake.

As an example, *The Digital Economy Business Survey* stated that between 2017 and 2021 there was a 34% increase in SoS businesses using Cloud computing. However, there was a 38% increase in the same across Scotland as a whole, showing that the South risks falling behind its competition, even while it progresses in absolute terms.

We believe that the South of Scotland has the potential to not only match the pace of its neighbours but to surpass them, and in order to do so, businesses need to be informed about the opportunities and risks that digital technologies can bring.

Making the right choices for investment of time and money is crucial, and it can feel easier to ignore a potential digital opportunity for fear of making a costly investment which does little to overcome a challenge, particularly when the landscapes for both support and technologies are crowded.

SOSE's role is to help make sense of this and to match organisations to the relevant support to develop their digital capabilities.



We believe
that with the right support, the South of Scotland has the potential to not only match the pace of its neighbours, but to surpass them.

2. Digital Transformation & Maturity

We deliver tailored support

Rationale

Digital technologies can be a key enabler to overcoming many of the challenges faced by businesses and community groups. If the goal of a business is to find a customer, sell to a customer and keep a customer, then there are several known digital solutions which can help organisations do all of these better.

SOSE's first role is to listen to what is being asked, before providing tailored support appropriate to the diagnosis.

Transformation and enablement activities will form a significant part of SOSE's digital development work. From using social media and websites more effectively, to better use of data, higher standards of cyber-security, robotic process automation and implementation of machine-learning, SOSE will support organisations within the South (and those looking to relocate here) during the steps of their digital transformation journey.



2. Digital Transformation & Maturity

Our commitments

Support

enterprises within the SoS with targeted assistance, respond to opportunities & threats using digital technologies.

Develop

peer-to-peer relationships through knowledge sharing to empower our community to use digital to better develop, grow and sustain.

Build

awareness around key areas, specifically Cyber Crime and Cyber Security to help enterprises be more resilient.

3. Innovation & Leadership

*We invest in
your success*

3. Innovation & Leadership

We invest in your success

The Challenge

The South of Scotland is an area which can inspire and deliver innovation, sustainable economic growth and leadership. SOSE has the ambition to foster much more in this area by harnessing digital technologies.

There are existing stand-out businesses in the South of Scotland leading the way, but we want to see many more start up, scale up and relocate to the South. As a rural area, we do have challenges – but we also have an opportunity to promote our region as a place to live, relocate to and set up business.

We are starting with a clean slate and looking at how we position our unique regional capital to investors, academic partners and to new recruits.

For those organisations looking to become leaders within their fields, SOSE will work with them, ensuring that they benefit from the opportunities that digital can unlock in providing new services, working in new ways, and finding new applications and markets for existing technologies.

While

there are existing stand-out businesses in the South of Scotland leading the way, we recognise that many organisations face challenges particular to our region.

3. Innovation & Leadership

We invest in your success

Rationale

Ours is an area rich in natural capital, with a track record in innovation in Agri-Tech, Food & Drink, Tourism, Green Energy and more.

For ambitious, innovative enterprises looking to grow their business in the South, scale their solution or break into international markets, SOSE will invest time, expertise and money in their success. Whatever the sector, SOSE's role is to invest and cultivate our area's success.

For innovative leaders, SOSE's support can take many forms and be designed to maximise potential returns.

We will use our reach and networks to make sure our start-ups and innovators have access to the best digital practices, from networking and introductions, to expert help, accelerator programmes, to funding, to embedding research students within organisations.

3. Innovation & Leadership

Our commitments

Establish

programmes to foster entrepreneurship and innovation, harnessing digital technologies where appropriate.

Promote

organisations from the South for leadership and accelerator programmes and work with national providers to ensure the presence of Tech Scalers in the South.

Broker

national & international opportunities for those truly ground-breaking business to realise their ambitions, using the full extent of our networks.

Be more “digital”

Everywhere we look enterprises are trying to become more “digital” but what does that really mean and what does it mean for us at SOSE?

For some it’s about technology, devices, big ticket items like Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain or the Internet of Things. For others it’s embracing it as a new way of engaging with customers or citizens. Or is it a new way of doing business?

At SOSE we say it’s all of the above and more, “digital” has allowed us to continue to do business even through a global pandemic. “Digital” has made the world smaller, whilst expanding the universe for regional businesses.

Our strategy and our role is to help enterprises in the South of Scotland connect the dots, with tailored support at the right time, allowing the community as a whole to benefit.

Our message to you

- *If you know what you want, let us help you.*
- *If you don’t know how digital can help you solve your business problems, let us guide you.*
- *If you have the ambition to take your business to the next level, let us invest in your success.*

Get in touch

www.SouthOfScotlandEnterprise.com/contact-us

or call

0300 304 8888

How this digital strategy was developed

Timescales & Success Metrics

Influences

Timescale & Success Metrics

This strategy is based on a three-year timescale.

Measuring Progress

The main measurement of our success will be the Digital Economy Maturity Index (DEMI)* of the South of Scotland measured as part of the next Digital Economy Business Survey (DEBS), expected to be published in 2024. By this time, success would be a reduction in the percentage of businesses classed as “Minimal” (currently 5%) or “Basic” (currently 43%) in the DEMI.

During this time, we would also look to have a growing portfolio of successful digital SOSE intervention with businesses and communities.

[* The Digital Economy Maturity Index](#)

Success

would be a reduction in the percentage of businesses classed as “Minimal” (currently 5%) or “Basic” (currently 43%) in the DEMI.

Influences

No strategy can be without its influences and ours is no different.

SOSE works with a range of government, third sector and commercial partners all of whose work we support and promote in the South of Scotland. Our Digital Strategy both supports and connects to national and regional economic and digital strategies.

Digital Inclusion is critical and we would like to acknowledge the influence of both Connecting Scotland and the work of Third Sector Interface in Dumfries & Galloway to address this.

<https://connecting.scot/>

<https://www.tsdg.org.uk/digital-use/>

Listed to the right are the strategies considered through this process.

National & Local Influences

- [Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation \(NSET\)](#)
- [South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy](#)
- [Scotland's Digital Strategy: A Changing Nation: How Scotland will Thrive in a Digital World](#)
- [Scotland's AI Strategy](#)
- [Scottish Technology Ecosystem Review](#)
- ['Safe, secure & prosperous: A cyber resilience Strategy for Scotland' Cyber Security Strategy](#)
- [Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal Digital Strategy](#)

Constituent Council Strategies

- [Scottish Borders Council's Digital Strategy \(Fit for 2024\)](#)
- [Dumfries and Galloway Council's Digital Strategy](#)

Contact us

Find out more at

www.southofscotlandenterprise.com

Or get in touch to find out how we can tailor support to your individual needs and circumstances.

www.southofscotlandenterprise.com/contact-us

Call us on 0300 304 8888

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