

Paper: Endorse the Strategic Development of Cross-Institutional Academy for Research Technical Professionals in Scotland

1. Executive Summary

Between 2025 and 2026, the Scottish Research Technical Professionals (SRTP) Academy pilot was jointly delivered by the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and St Andrews through the Wellcome InFrame project. The initiative aimed to strengthen professional development, leadership capability, and peer-to-peer support for Research Technical Professionals (RTPs) working across research environments.

The pilot addressed recognised sector-wide challenges affecting technical professionals, such as limited visibility, fragmented professional networks, inconsistent access to development opportunities, and unclear progression pathways. Through cross-institutional collaboration, the Academy created opportunities for networking, leadership development, peer support, knowledge exchange, and collaborative learning.

Evaluation findings demonstrated meaningful positive outcomes in:

- strengthening leadership confidence and professional identity;
- developing cross-institutional networks and peer support;
- increasing collaboration and knowledge exchange;
- improving access to professional development opportunities;
- supporting wider institutional and sector research culture priorities.

Participants consistently reported strong perceived value in technician-focused development and networking opportunities, especially when these enabled collaboration across institutional and disciplinary boundaries. The programme also contributed to wider institutional objectives connected to research culture, support for staff, technical sustainability, and implementation of the Technician Commitment.

This paper recommends continued institutional support for a collaborative Scottish technical professionals network and proposes development of a sustainable cross-institutional Academy aligned with the University's research culture and strategic priorities.

Key Actions

The evidence from the pilot points to three strategic priorities for institutions:

1. Embed RTP development within institutional research culture, workforce and Technician Commitment strategies;
2. Protect participation time through workload allocation and active managerial support; and
3. Establish a sustainable Scottish Technical Professionals Academy to provide shared leadership development, networking and communities of practice across institutions.

Endorsements

The paper seeks endorsement for:

- recognition of the SRTP Academy as a strategic contribution to research culture and technical workforce development, aligned with institutional priorities;
- continued institutional participation in a coordinated Scottish cross-institutional technical professionals network, including ongoing collaboration between participating institutions; and
- exploration of sustainable governance and resourcing arrangements to support the continued delivery of cross-institutional technical professional development activity in Scotland.

Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	1
2. Background and Sector Context	3
2.1 The Technician Commitment and Technical Workforce Development	4
2.2 Research Culture and Sector Alignment.....	5
3. Overview of the SRTP Academy Pilot.....	6
3.1 Activities Undertaken	6
3.2 Engagement and Emerging Outcomes	6
3.3 Key Findings / Outcomes	7
3.4 Key Impact Measures	8
4. Strategic Relevance	9
5. Recommendations.....	12
5.1 Embed technician leadership and professional development within institutional research culture strategies.....	12
5.2 Sustain investment in cross-institutional networking and communities of practice... 13	
5.3 Protect time and institutional support for participation	13
5.4 Sustain and formalise cross-institutional collaboration through a Scottish Technical Professionals Academy.....	14
6. Resource Implications.....	14
7. Endorsement Sought.....	15

2. Background and Sector Context

Research Technical Professionals (RTPs) play a vital role within higher education and research environments. RTPs support research delivery, infrastructure, innovation, teaching, specialist equipment management, laboratory operations, and data management across a wide range of disciplines and activities. Across the UK higher education sector, increasing attention has been given to the visibility, recognition, sustainability, and professional development of technical staff. This situation reflects both the growing complexity of research infrastructure and wider concerns relating to recruitment, retention, career progression, and technical workforce sustainability.

For the purpose of this paper, RTPs are defined as technical specialists whose work is embedded in, or directly supports, research activity. They are technicians with a research focus who provide advanced, discipline-specific expertise that enables the design, delivery, analysis, and dissemination of research across a wide range of fields. In alignment with the

Technician Commitment, RTPs are recognised in this paper as integral contributors to research, whose roles combine technical expertise with active support for research processes, and whose contributions are important for research quality, continuity, and innovation.

The need for sustained investment in RTPs is particularly critical in the lead up to REF 2029. Universities are under increasing pressure to demonstrate positive research culture, promote interdisciplinary collaboration, and to tangibly evidence staff development and research sustainability. RTPs play a central role in enabling high-quality research and innovation, but continue to report limited access to leadership development, recognition, and cross-institutional networks. The SRTP Academy pilot demonstrates that relatively modest investment in technician-focused development can strengthen leadership capability, retention, collaboration, and institutional engagement across research environments.

2.1 The Technician Commitment and Technical Workforce Development

The UK-wide Technician Commitment, launched by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation in May 2017, has become a key driver of institutional and sector change relating to technical professionals, and specifically RTPs. Established to improve visibility, recognition, career development, and sustainability for technicians working in higher education and research, the commitment has now been adopted by over 140 UK universities and research institutions.

The Technician Commitment identifies four interconnected strategic priorities:

- **Visibility:** ensuring technical professionals are visible and recognised within institutional systems and research environments;
- **Recognition:** supporting professional recognition, inclusion, and acknowledgment of technical expertise and contribution;
- **Career Development:** improving access to progression opportunities, leadership development, and professional learning; and
- **Sustainability:** supporting long-term workforce sustainability, retention, succession planning, and technical resilience.

Sector evidence consistently shows that technical professionals often experience fragmented or unclear career pathways, inconsistent access to professional development, limited visibility within research leadership structures, isolation within specialised technical roles, and uneven institutional support and recognition. These challenges are particularly significant within increasingly interdisciplinary and infrastructure-intensive research environments, where technical expertise plays a central role in enabling research quality, innovation, and operational continuity. The Inception to Impact: Seven Years of the Technician Commitment report highlights growing institutional recognition of technical staff alongside continued challenges relating to workload, progression opportunities, visibility, and retention.

The SRTP Academy, delivered through the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and St Andrews, was designed to contribute directly to these priorities by creating opportunities for

collaboration, networking, leadership development, and peer support across institutions. The lead Universities are all signatories to the Technician Commitment, signalling their intention to increase visibility, recognition, career development, and sustainability of technical professionals within higher education and research.

2.2 Research Culture and Sector Alignment

The programme also aligns closely with broader research culture and human resource development agendas across the UK higher education sector. The original *TALENT Commission* report (2022)¹ identified significant sector-wide challenges relating to technical career visibility, progression pathways, leadership development, and workforce sustainability, highlighting the need for greater institutional investment in technical professional development and cross-sector collaboration. Subsequent evaluation evidence from the *TALENT* programme's legacy report (2025)² demonstrates continued sector-wide emphasis on advancing technical careers through leadership programmes, professional development opportunities, communities of practice, and national collaboration structures delivered through the UK Institute for Technical Skills & Strategy (UK ITSS). Together, these reports reinforce the strategic importance of sustained investment in RTP career development, recognition, and collaborative professional networks as essential components of research and innovation capacity across the UK landscape.

International evidence also shows growing recognition of the importance of technical professional communities and cross-institutional collaboration. *The Global Insights: Technical Professionals in Higher Education and Research*³ initiative, developed through Universitas 21 and UK ITSS with direct contributions from the University of Glasgow, identifies global challenges relating to technical workforce visibility, sustainability, career development, and institutional recognition. The initiative highlights the increasing importance of international and cross-institutional collaboration in supporting technical skills development, professional identity, knowledge exchange, and workforce resilience within complex research environments. The report further identifies communities of practice, collaborative learning networks, and institutional partnerships as important mechanisms for strengthening technical career development and sustaining research infrastructure capacity across the global higher education sector.

The SRTP Academy responds to these gaps by facilitating and convening opportunities for inter and intra institutional collaboration, networking, and peer-to-peer connection; by promoting opportunities for recognition and visibility through their activities, and by strengthening technical career development through targeted workshop opportunities.

¹ <https://itss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/The-TALENT-Commission-Report.pdf>

² <https://itss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/TALENT-Programme-Interventions-and-Impact-Report.pdf>

³ <http://itss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Global-Insights-Technical-Professionals-in-HE-and-Research.pdf>

3. Overview of the SRTP Academy Pilot

The Scottish Research Technicians' Professional (SRTP) Academy was established as a cross-institutional pilot initiative designed to strengthen leadership capability, professional recognition, networking, and career development opportunities for Research Technical Professionals (RTPs). The programme also aimed to improve the visibility of technical expertise within research environments and contribute to a more collaborative and inclusive research culture.

The pilot was delivered collaboratively by the University of Glasgow, the University of Edinburgh, and the University of St Andrews. A total of 154 eligible participants registered across the three institutions, representing a broad range of technical disciplines, career stages, and backgrounds. Institutional participation varied, with the largest cohort from the University of Glasgow (105 participants), followed by the University of St Andrews (31 participants) and the University of Edinburgh (18 participants).

3.1 Activities Undertaken

The Academy delivered a structured programme of leadership development workshops, networking and peer-learning events, mentoring opportunities, job-shadowing activity, collaborative learning sessions, and a cross-institutional symposium. Activities were supported through online platforms, shared resources, and evaluation and engagement monitoring processes.

The programme combined professional development with opportunities for cross-disciplinary exchange and community building. Participants engaged in activities including leadership training, exchange visits, collaborative networking, and peer support initiatives. Evaluation activity was embedded throughout delivery and included participation monitoring, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and case studies to assess programme reach, impact, and sustainability. At the close of the programme, external evaluation was commissioned to provide an overview of short-term impact.

3.2 Engagement and Emerging Outcomes

Engagement levels differed significantly across participating institutions. Approximately 54% of registered participants from the University of Glasgow and 44% from the University of Edinburgh engaged in at least one Academy activity, compared with 12.9% from the University of St Andrews.

Overall engagement was strongest within the University of Glasgow cohort, while lower participation at St Andrews highlighted potential operational or contextual barriers affecting involvement. Across the programme, participants reported high levels of perceived relevance and value, particularly in relation to networking, peer support, leadership confidence, and access to opportunities not otherwise available within their institutions.

The pilot demonstrated positive early outcomes in leadership confidence, cross-institutional collaboration, professional identity, and peer support. Participants particularly valued

opportunities for networking and collaborative learning across institutional boundaries. Evidence from surveys, interviews, and case studies indicated reduced professional isolation, increased confidence, stronger peer networks, and greater willingness to engage in peer mentoring, collaboration, and institutional leadership activity.

3.3 Key Findings / Outcomes

3.3.1 Enhanced Cross-Institutional Collaboration

One of the strongest outcomes emerging from the pilot was the development of cross-institutional collaboration and professional networking. Participants reported that the Academy created opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange that were previously unavailable within their own institutions. Fourteen survey respondents agreed that the Academy provided access to opportunities unavailable locally, while participants highlighted the value of connecting with peers across disciplines and institutions.

Case studies demonstrated tangible examples of collaboration emerging from Academy activities, including reciprocal job-shadowing visits, renewed technical partnerships, and ongoing knowledge exchange between facilities and technical teams.

Participants also described reduced feelings of professional isolation and increased confidence in engaging with wider technical communities:

It's been a really fantastic way of meeting other technicians and having cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional conversations. I feel less lonely and isolated, and more reassured in my skills and value. – Survey Participant 23

3.3.2 Improved Visibility of Technical Expertise

The Academy contributed to greater recognition and visibility of Research Technical Professionals within institutional research environments. Participants reported increased confidence in recognising the value of their expertise and greater willingness to contribute to institutional change, mentoring, and leadership activity.

Qualitative findings showed evidence of participants applying Academy learning within their institutions through mentoring, collaboration, operational leadership, and contributions to local practice. Participants in leadership-oriented technical roles and highly engaged participants demonstrated particularly strong evidence of institutional impact.

Case study participants also reflected on the broader importance of technician-focused initiatives in improving visibility and recognition for technical professionals within research culture.

3.3.3 Professional Development and Peer Learning

The Academy's strongest reported impact related to leadership confidence, professional identity, and peer learning. Thirteen of twenty-one survey respondents agreed that their

leadership capability had increased, while twelve participants reported adopting new leadership behaviours or skills through participation in Academy activities.

Participants particularly valued leadership workshops, job-shadowing activity, and peer-learning events. Qualitative findings highlighted increased confidence, reduced imposter syndrome, and greater engagement with leadership and professional development opportunities.

The programme appeared especially valuable for early-career and mid-career participants seeking professional networks, confidence-building opportunities, and clearer pathways for progression within technical careers.

3.3.4 Opportunities for Shared Practice

The Academy enabled the development of communities of practice across institutions and technical disciplines. Networking events, symposium activity, and exchange placements facilitated practical knowledge exchange and collaborative problem-solving among participants.

Examples included technicians mentoring peers in specialist areas, sharing operational approaches, and supporting implementation of technical systems and processes across laboratories and facilities. Participants described these opportunities as more accessible and meaningful than larger national initiatives and valued the ability to engage with peers facing similar operational challenges.

Participants reported increased willingness to contribute to mentoring, grant activity, collaboration, and leadership responsibilities within their institutions. Survey evidence showed that 57% of respondents had already mentored, or intended to mentor, other staff, while 52% reported plans to contribute to institutional initiatives, build collaborations, or take on new responsibilities.

The findings indicate that the Academy was most effective as a leadership, networking, and community-building intervention, strengthening professional confidence and collaborative capacity among RTPs across the participating institutions.

3.4 Key Impact Measures

The SRTP Academy evaluation established the following key impact measures:

- Participants rated the SRTP Academy highly, with an average recommendation and value score of 8.19/10;
- 57% of respondents reported increased mentoring, leadership, or peer-support activity following participation;
- Around two-thirds of respondents reported a stronger sense of professional community and cross-institutional connection;
- 52% of respondents reported intentions to contribute to institutional change, new collaborations, or wider leadership responsibilities; and

- Participants consistently reported increased leadership confidence, stronger professional identity, and reduced feelings of isolation.

4. Strategic Relevance

University of Edinburgh

The SRTP Academy pilot demonstrates strong strategic alignment with the University of Edinburgh's Strategy 203 ambitions relating to research culture, people, collaboration, and institutional resilience. Evidence from the pilot indicates positive impacts on leadership confidence, mentoring activity, institutional engagement, and willingness to contribute to organisational development. Participants consistently reported strong perceived value in technician-focused development and networking opportunities, particularly where these enabled collaboration across institutional and disciplinary boundaries. The programme created opportunities for RTPs to connect across universities, share expertise, develop leadership confidence, and contribute more actively to research and institutional communities. In doing so, the pilot directly supported the University's commitment to valuing the contribution of every individual, supporting career development and progression, and building mutually beneficial and long-lasting partnerships across the sector. Continued investment in collaborative technical development initiatives would therefore contribute directly to institutional resilience, succession planning, and retention of highly skilled staff essential to research and teaching delivery.

The pilot also reflects the University's strategic emphasis on inclusive and collaborative research culture. By bringing together technical staff from diverse career stages, disciplines, and institutional contexts, the Academy strengthened professional belonging and reduced isolation often experienced within specialist technical environments. The programme fostered peer support, mentoring, knowledge exchange, and communities of practice that extended beyond institutional boundaries, supporting a more connected and sustainable Scottish research ecosystem. This collaborative approach aligns closely with the University's commitment to supporting learning, research, and partnership working with external organisations, neighbours, and sector partners.

The pilot additionally supports the University's wider commitments under the Technician Commitment and broader research culture agenda by improving visibility and recognition of technical expertise within research environments. Participants reported increased confidence in the value of their contribution and greater engagement with institutional leadership, mentoring, and collaborative activity following participation in the Academy. These outcomes demonstrate the potential of cross-sector technical networks to strengthen innovation capacity, interdisciplinary exchange, and organisational learning across Scottish higher education.

The SRTP Academy also provides a practical mechanism through which institutions can evidence progress towards REF 2029 expectations relating to research culture and the wider research environment. The programme generates measurable indicators of participation, leadership development, collaboration, and professional recognition, alongside qualitative evidence of cultural change and staff experience.

Importantly, the pilot demonstrated the value of a collaborative Scottish approach to technical workforce development. By enabling shared practice, interdisciplinary exchange, and professional connection across institutions, the Academy contributed to a more resilient and connected technical support ecosystem for research and teaching. It also supported wider sector priorities relating to the Technician Commitment, research culture, and recognition of technical expertise within research environments.

This paper therefore recommends continued institutional support for a collaborative Scottish technical professionals network and proposes development of a sustainable cross-sector structure aligned with the University's Strategy 203 priorities for people, partnership, research culture, and inclusive professional development.

University of St Andrews

The SRTP Academy pilot aligns strongly with the University of St Andrews Strategy 2022–2027 through its focus on collaboration, staff development, inclusion, and partnership working. Participants in the Academy consistently reported strong value in technician-focused development and networking opportunities, particularly where these enabled collaboration across institutional and disciplinary boundaries. The programme created opportunities for RTPs to build relationships, exchange expertise, and engage in professional development activity that was often unavailable within their home institutions.

The pilot directly reflects the University's strategic commitment to valuing the contribution of all staff and supporting career development and progression. Evidence from the evaluation demonstrated increased leadership confidence, mentoring activity, peer support, and engagement in collaborative and institutional initiatives among participants. The Academy also strengthened research culture by reducing professional isolation and fostering communities of practice across Scottish universities. Participants highlighted the value of cross-institutional networking, knowledge exchange, and shared learning opportunities that supported both individual development and wider organisational collaboration. In this respect, the programme reflects the University's commitment to building long-term, constructive partnerships, and supporting collaborative learning and research with external partners and institutions.

The SRTP Academy also provides a practical mechanism through which institutions can evidence progress towards REF 2029 expectations relating to research culture and the wider research environment. The programme generates measurable indicators of participation, leadership development, collaboration, and professional recognition, alongside qualitative evidence of cultural change and staff experience.

Importantly, the pilot demonstrated the value of a collaborative Scottish approach to technical workforce development. By enabling shared practice, interdisciplinary exchange, and professional connection across institutions, the Academy contributed to a more resilient and connected technical support ecosystem for research and teaching. It also supported wider sector priorities relating to the Technician Commitment, research culture, and recognition of technical expertise within research environments.

Continued institutional support for a collaborative Scottish technical professionals network would therefore represent a strategic investment in people, partnership, and sustainable research capability. Development of a longer-term cross-sector model would align closely

with the University of St Andrews Strategy 2022–2027 by supporting inclusive professional development, collaborative innovation, and the long-term resilience of technical expertise across the sector.

University of Glasgow

The SRTP Academy pilot aligns strongly with the University of Glasgow's *World Changers Together* strategy through its emphasis on collaboration, research culture, staff development, and partnership working. The University's strategy identifies the importance of a "people centred, globally engaged" culture and recognises that world-changing research depends on collaborative communities where staff feel valued, supported, and connected.

Participants consistently reported strong value in technician-focused development and networking opportunities, particularly where these enabled collaboration across institutional and disciplinary boundaries. The Academy strengthened professional networks both internally and externally, increased leadership confidence, and created opportunities for mentoring, peer support, and shared practice across Scottish universities. These outcomes directly support the University's strategic priorities around collaboration, connectivity, and creating a research culture in which people and careers can thrive.

The pilot also addressed wider institutional priorities relating to workforce development and research sustainability. Evaluation findings demonstrated increased engagement in leadership activity, collaboration, and institutional contribution among participants, alongside stronger professional identity and visibility for RTPs. This aligns with the University's commitment to improving career development, recognising diverse contributions to research, and supporting collegial and inclusive working environments.

The Academy demonstrated the strategic value of inter-institutional and intra-institutional collaboration in strengthening technical capability and institutional resilience. By enabling knowledge exchange and communities of practice across institutions, the programme contributed to a more connected technical support ecosystem for research and innovation. This reflects the University's wider strategic emphasis on partnership-led approaches, interdisciplinary collaboration, and collective solutions to shared challenges.

The SRTP Academy also provides a practical mechanism through which institutions can evidence progress towards REF 2029 expectations relating to research culture and the wider research environment. The programme generates measurable indicators of participation, leadership development, collaboration, and professional recognition, alongside qualitative evidence of cultural change and staff experience.

Importantly, the pilot demonstrated the value of a collaborative Scottish approach to technical workforce development. By enabling shared practice, interdisciplinary exchange, and professional connection across institutions, the Academy contributed to a more resilient and connected technical support ecosystem for research and teaching. It also supported wider sector priorities relating to the Technician Commitment, research culture, and recognition of technical expertise within research environments.

Continued support for a collaborative Scottish technical professionals network would therefore represent a strategic investment in people, research culture, innovation, and sustainable research capability, closely aligned with the University of Glasgow's strategic

priorities and research culture agenda.

5. Recommendations

The findings from the SRTP Academy pilot demonstrate clear value in cross-institutional networking, leadership development, peer support, and professional recognition for Research Technical Professionals (RTPs). To sustain and build upon these outcomes, the following recommendations are proposed for institutions and research culture leaders to strengthen technical careers and professional recognition.

In the longer term, the Academy has the potential to become a nationally recognised framework for technical professional development and leadership within Scotland's research ecosystem. Such an approach would position Scotland as a sector leader in technical workforce development while creating a sustainable pipeline of connected, visible, and empowered technical professionals.

The evaluation findings point to three priority actions for institutional leaders: embedding RTP development within institutional strategy, protecting time for participation, and sustaining a cross-institutional Academy model. The recommendations below set out how these priorities can be implemented.

5.1 Embed technician leadership and professional development within institutional research culture strategies

The findings suggest that structured leadership and professional development opportunities for RTPs should be embedded more consistently within institutional workforce, research culture, and Technician Commitment strategies.

The evaluation of the SRTP Academy demonstrated that participants frequently described limited access to leadership development opportunities within their home institutions prior to engaging with the Academy. The programme appeared to strengthen participants' confidence in contributing to collaborations, mentoring activity, institutional engagement, and wider professional opportunities. Several participants also reported increased willingness to take on visible professional responsibilities following participation.

Institutions should therefore:

- recognise leadership and development activity within technical career pathways and workload allocation;
- integrate RTP development within wider research culture and workforce strategies; and
- ensure RTPs are included within institutional leadership, innovation, and change initiatives.

5.2 Sustain investment in cross-institutional networking and communities of practice

The evaluation identified cross-institutional networking, peer support, and community-building as some of the Academy's strongest areas of impact. Participants consistently described reduced feelings of professional isolation, stronger professional networks, and increased collaboration across institutional and disciplinary boundaries.

The programme achieved particularly strong outcomes in relation to peer connection and perceived value. Participants rated the overall value of programmes such as the SRTP Academy at an average of 8.19 out of 10, while many participants described networking and peer interaction as opportunities that were not otherwise available within their institutions.

The findings suggest that cross-institutional communities of practice and technician networks should be viewed as important infrastructure for technical professional development, particularly for early-career RTPs and staff working in isolated specialist roles.

Institutions should therefore:

- support networking, mentoring, job shadowing, and collaborative learning opportunities for technical staff;
- recognise peer-support and community-building as contributors to technician retention, confidence, and professional visibility; and
- provide practical support, including protected time and modest resourcing, to enable participation in cross-institutional development activity.

5.3 Protect time and institutional support for participation

While the Academy was generally perceived as accessible, relevant, and highly valuable, workload and time pressures represented the most significant barrier to participation. Institutions should also recognise participation in cross-institutional technical development initiatives as a legitimate and valuable component of professional development activity for technical staff. This includes supporting attendance at networking events, leadership programmes, mentoring activities, and collaborative learning opportunities through appropriate workload recognition and managerial support.

Twelve participants identified time constraints as a barrier to engagement, despite otherwise positive perceptions of programme relevance and accessibility. This suggests that sustained impact is likely to depend not only on programme quality, but also on institutional support structures that enable participation.

Institutions should therefore:

- provide protected time for technician professional development and networking activity;
- ensure line managers actively support participation; and
- recognise participation in development activity as a legitimate and valuable component of technical roles.

5.4 Sustain and formalise cross-institutional collaboration through a Scottish Technical Professionals Academy

The findings suggest there is value in sustaining and formalising the collaborative approaches piloted through the SRTP Academy, rather than treating the programme as a time-limited intervention. Participants consistently identified cross-institutional networking, leadership development, and collaborative learning as some of the programme's most valuable elements.

A coordinated Scottish approach could strengthen collaboration, reduce duplication of effort, and support wider sector priorities relating to research culture, technician visibility, workforce sustainability, and interdisciplinary research environments.

Institutions should therefore:

- explore the establishment of a sustainable, collaborative Scottish Technical Professionals Academy aligned with commitments to research culture, workforce development, and implementation of the Technician Commitment;
- embed successful approaches from the pilot within institutional strategies and professional development structures; and
- identify institutional representatives or local champions to support coordination, communication, and alignment with local priorities.

The findings further suggest that maintaining a coordinated Scottish approach could strengthen collaboration, reduce duplication of effort, and support wider sector priorities relating to research culture, technician visibility, workforce sustainability, and interdisciplinary research environments.

6. Resource Implications

The SRTP Academy pilot demonstrated that cross-institutional technical professional development activity can be delivered through a relatively low-cost, collaborative model while generating meaningful professional, institutional, and research culture benefits. The full programme, including delivery and evaluation activity, was delivered with a total funding allocation of £49,291, with potential opportunities for further efficiencies where elements of delivery could be embedded within existing institutional professional development and research culture structures.

The pilot also demonstrated a highly scalable model for RTP professional development. Several of the most impactful activities, including job-shadowing exchanges, peer networking, mentoring, and symposium events, require relatively modest contributions of staff time and coordination while delivering significant benefits in professional development, collaboration, and research culture. Expansion of online delivery can be achieved with minimal additional cost, allowing increased participation across institutions without proportionate increases in resource requirements. Where activities such as in-person training events, cohort building opportunities or evaluation incur additional financial contributions, there may be opportunities for shared-resource and co-funded approaches across participating institutions, enabling wider reach while maintaining value for money.

Additional scaling of the programme, and expansion beyond the pilot audience, is also convenient. The Scottish Technical Network already provides an established foundation spanning 13 universities and 3 research institutions, representing hundreds of technical professionals. Building on existing partnerships and communication channels creates a significant opportunity to scale the Academy efficiently and sustainably across Scotland. The long-term ambition would be to build upon the pilot model to meet the reach of the existing Scottish Technical Network, creating a nationally connected community that strengthens collaboration, capability, and research culture across Scotland. By leveraging existing relationships and infrastructure, expansion can be achieved in a highly cost-effective manner while substantially increasing impact at both institutional and sector levels.

The period leading to REF 2029 presents an important opportunity for institutions to demonstrate clear progress in research culture, staff development, collaboration, and inclusive research environments. Beyond its direct benefits to participants, the Academy represents a cost-effective means of generating evidence of institutional activity and impact in advance of REF 2029. The SRTP Academy offers a practical and measurable mechanism through which institutions can contribute to these objectives. The pilot has already demonstrated positive outcomes in leadership development, mentoring, networking, collaboration, visibility, and professional recognition for RTPs. The programme generates both quantitative indicators and qualitative evidence of cultural change, providing institutions with evidence of Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE) activity and impact. At the same time, the collaborative Scottish model supports environmental and financial sustainability by reducing duplication of provision, maximising shared expertise, and enabling efficient use of institutional resources.

7. Key Actions and Endorsements

The evidence from the pilot points to three strategic priorities for institutions:

1. Embed RTP development within institutional research culture, workforce and Technician Commitment strategies;
2. Protect participation time through workload allocation and active managerial support; and
3. Establish a sustainable Scottish Technical Professionals Academy to provide shared leadership development, networking and communities of practice across institutions.

The paper seeks endorsement for:

- recognition of the SRTP Academy as a strategic contribution to research culture and technical workforce development, aligned with institutional priorities;
- continued institutional participation in a coordinated Scottish cross-institutional technical professionals network, including ongoing collaboration between participating institutions; and
- exploration of sustainable governance and resourcing arrangements to support the continued delivery of cross-institutional technical professional development activity in Scotland.