

Tay Cities Region Deal Digital Skills Project

2024/2025 **Annual Report**



Digiknow?

Key highlights

- ▶ 48 organisations from across business, public sector and education have directly benefitted from the project.
- ▶ Over 50% of participants were female.
- ▶ 19% of participants identified as having a disability or being neurodivergent.
- ▶ 16% of participants identified as BME.

Phase 1

**£1.539
million**

investment has taken place
between 2022 – 2025.

Digirealise...

880

individuals were supported through
project activity, against a target of 180.

55%

of participants were from Dundee

16%

from North East Fife

23%

from Perth and Kinross

6%

from Angus

Introduction

The Tay Cities Deal (TCD) Digital Skills Project is a £4 million investment between 2022 – 2029 to address the digital skills gap across the Tay Cities Region. It is part of the wider £20 million investment by the Scottish Government into the Tay Cities Deal Regional Skills and Employability Development Programme.

The regional programme aims to drive inclusive, sustainable economic growth across the region by equipping local people with the skills they need to succeed in the regional labour market. It aims to improve the effectiveness of the regional labour market by targeting disadvantaged groups, supporting skills needs in key sectors, and reducing barriers to accessing employment.

All activity delivered through the Digital Skills Project is designed to address the digital and data skills shortage across the Tay Cities Region and strengthen the local digital ecosystem.

The Digital Skills Project is a two-phase project. Phase 1 was a £1.539m investment which took place between 2022 – 2025. Phase 2 will start in September 2025 and end in March 2030. As we come towards the end of Phase 1 delivery, this report summarises the activity taken place.

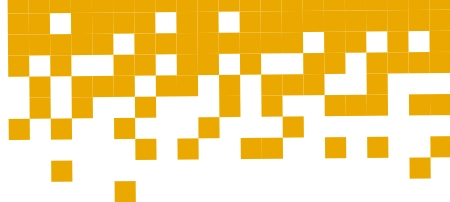
Objectives and outcomes

The objectives for the Digital Skills Project are to:

- ▶ Plug the digital skills gaps so vacancies can be filled.
- ▶ Support the non-tech sector to embrace technology.
- ▶ Create new educational pathways into the digital economy.

Through Phase 1 of the project:

- ▶ 880 individuals supported through project activity, against a target of 180.
- ▶ 19% of participants identified as having a disability or being neurodivergent.
- ▶ The involvement of 48 organisations from across business, public sector and education.
- ▶ 16% of participants identified as BME.
- ▶ Over 50% of participants were female.
- ▶ 55% of participants were from Dundee, 23% from Perth and Kinross, 16% from North East Fife and 6% from Angus.



Working with our colleges and universities

Creating new educational pathways into the digital economy is a key objective of the Digital Skills Project, and this year we have made successful progress towards achieving exactly that. The Further and Higher Education working group, including representatives from Abertay University, Dundee and Angus College, Fife College, Perth College UHI, University of Dundee and University of St Andrews, received over £300,000 to fund curriculum development. The money has enabled new courses to be developed, the upskilling of staff, and 237 fully funded spaces on courses.

Dundee and Angus College

Dundee and Angus College has taken a strategic approach to addressing the digital skills shortage in the Tay Cities Region. By aligning curriculum development with industry needs, the college has created sustainable training opportunities that support both individuals and businesses in upskilling for the digital economy.

Through the Further and Higher Education Curriculum Development Fund, the College launched an NPA in Data Science, equipping learners with in-demand digital skills. Staff also benefited from the Professional Learning Programme (PLP), enhancing their ability to deliver high-quality digital education.

The Data for All initiative, supported by UKSPF funding, provided hands-on workshops in Data Analytics, Excel, and Power BI, ensuring a clear progression route from introductory learning to higher qualifications. This coordinated approach demonstrates the impact of DigiTay's support in developing a digitally skilled workforce and driving economic growth across the region.

Kate, one of the attendees, said: "I am self-taught in my job which involves analytics and coding. This course has shown me more effective methods of achieving goals, safer methods of dealing with projects and provided me with an introduction to a coding language which I'd never used. I am already implementing some of the methods I have learned such as use of a data dictionary. I was already using Excel on a daily basis, including use of several formulas and chart creation. However, I have gained invaluable tips on additional formulas I didn't know were available, plus smaller tricks in excel which make my work that bit more effective. I am very grateful for the opportunity to have been a student on this course."

"This course has shown me more effective methods of achieving goals, safer methods of dealing with projects and provided me with an introduction to a coding language which I'd never used."

Another attendee, **Lojain**, added: "The NPA in Data Science has been an invaluable opportunity for me to gain a solid foundation in data analysis and its practical applications. It has helped me gain more confidence in using tools like Python and given me the opportunity to apply the data analysis skills in my current role. This course has been a crucial stepping stone in my journey towards a data science career."

University of Dundee

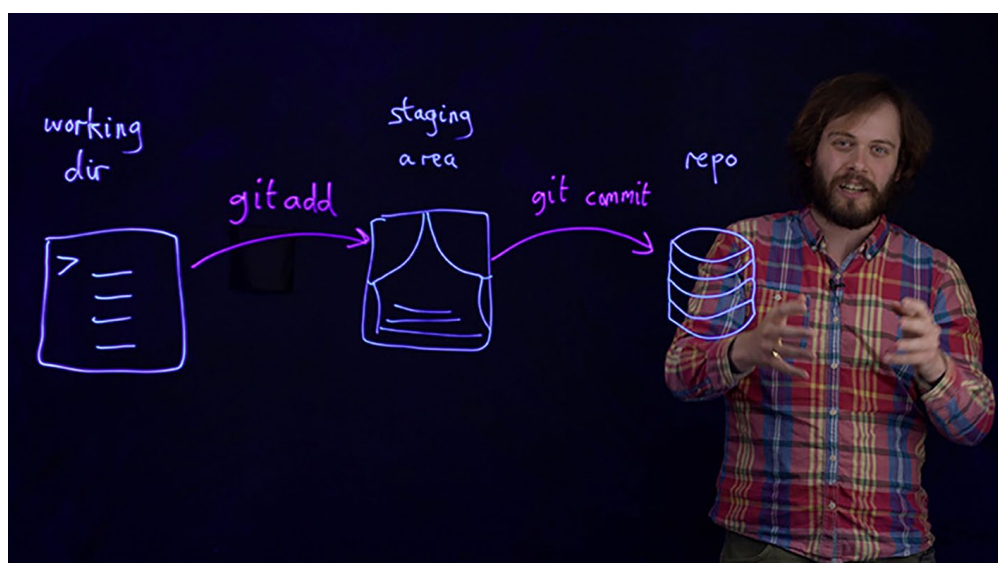
This year the University of Dundee delivered short courses in Cloud Foundations and Cloud Machine Learning Foundations, offering learners a flexible and inclusive entry point into cloud computing. These courses attracted a diverse cohort, from working professionals to students in non-technical fields, helping to bridge local skills gaps in cloud and AI. Aligned with DigiTay's mission, the university's focus on industry-recognised certifications and accessible delivery has empowered more people to upskill, contributing meaningfully to inclusive growth and digital innovation across the Tay Cities Region.

Abertay University

Abertay University has delivered a series of SCQF Level 10 micro-credentials in high-demand digital skills, including AI, Machine Learning, and Cyber Security, as part of its commitment to upskilling the region's workforce. By focusing on accessible, industry-relevant training, Abertay is helping to remove barriers for both employers and employees, ensuring that businesses can tap into the talent they need to grow, and individuals in work are equipped with future-ready skills.

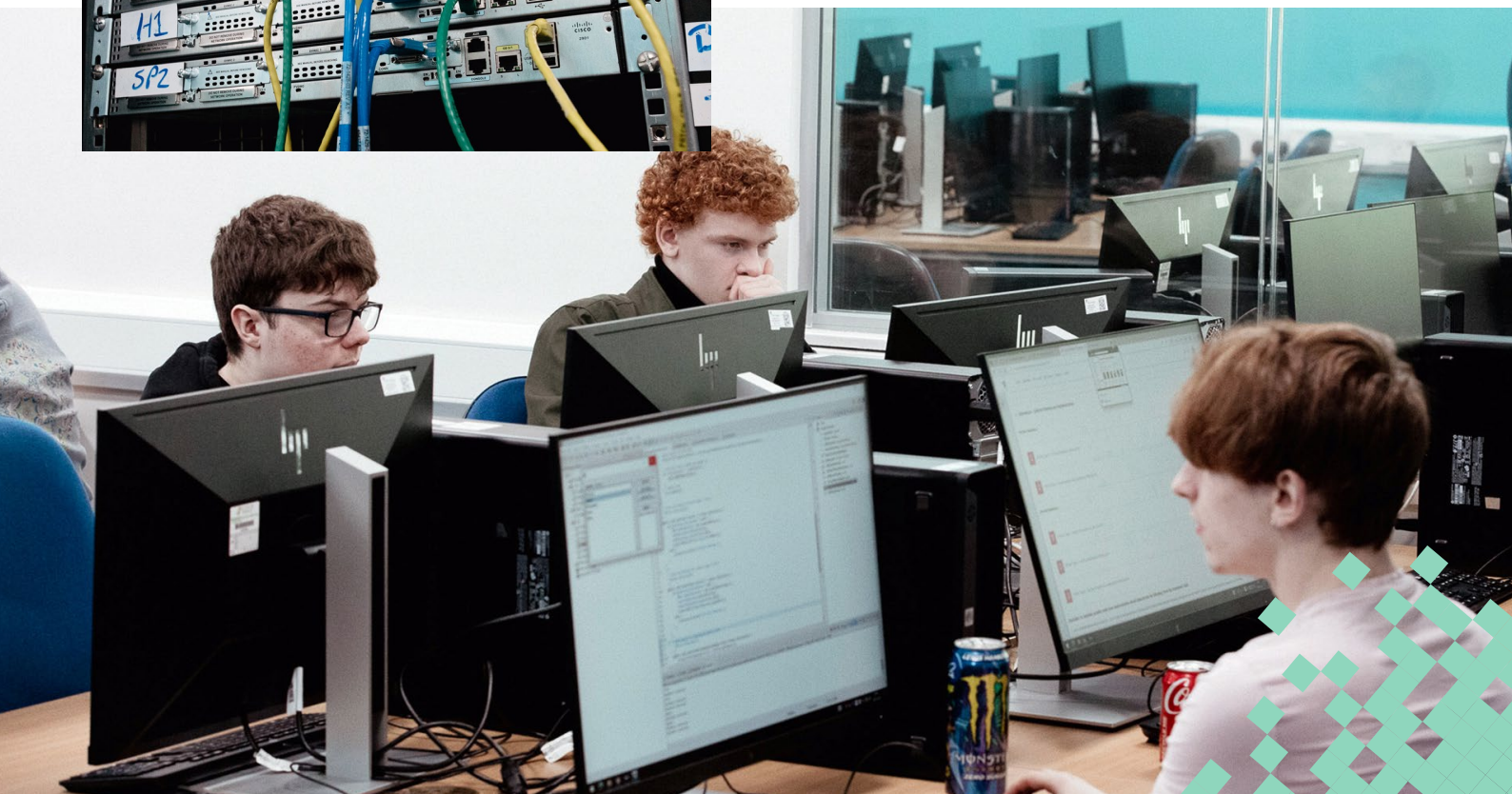
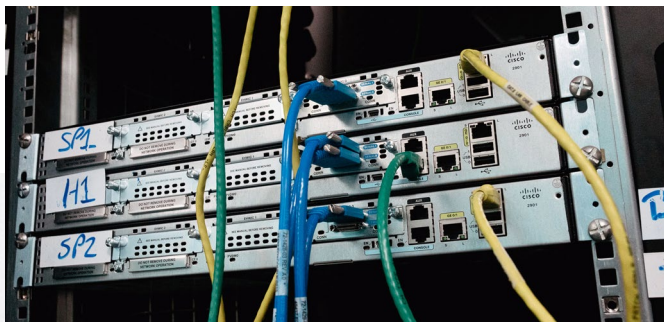
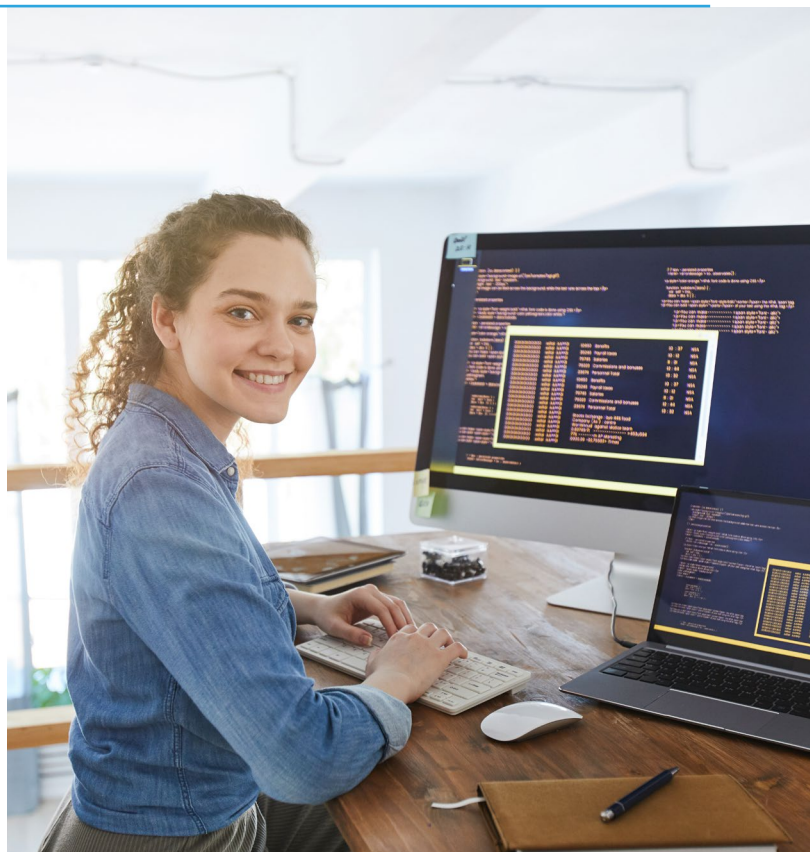
University of St Andrews

Through the support of DigiTay, the University of St Andrews has finalised the development of three data-focused short courses: Introduction to Programming in Python, Python for Data Analysis and Visualisation, and Practical Data Visualisation. These courses offer a flexible, asynchronous, and interactive learning experience, underpinned by the academic rigour the university is known for. By combining funded places with a focus on upskilling and accessibility, the university has successfully opened up new learning pathways for a diverse range of learners across the Tay Cities region, many of whom may not have previously accessed traditional university education.



Fife College

Fife College has developed and delivered a new Professional Development Award (PDA) in Software Development and upskilled staff in Power BI, laying the foundation for a curriculum that meets real industry needs. This targeted investment ensures students gain practical, job-ready skills in software and data, while staff are equipped to deliver high-quality, relevant training. The result is a future-focused learning environment that creates clear pathways from education into digital careers, strengthening the region's talent pipeline.



Third Sector Challenge Fund

DigiTay's Third Sector Challenge Fund, launched in 2024, aims to support third sector organisations, such as charities, voluntary groups, and social enterprises, in delivering digital skills training and initiatives in the Tay Cities Region. Funding was available for third sector organisations from £5,000 up to a value of £45,000 to deliver digital skills training between April 2024 and April 2025. Seven organisations were successful in gaining funding; their stories are as follows.

Perth Autism Support

Perth Autism Support joined forces with Perth UHI to deliver tailored IT training and support to neurodiverse young people.

One inspiring story is that of a 16-year-old autistic young adult who had not attended school since starting secondary education. This young person had previously struggled with anxiety and social interactions, making traditional education environments challenging. However, a shared interest in IT presented a promising opportunity. With encouragement from Perth Autism support staff, the young person enrolled in the Digital Skills Programme.

The programme's tailored approach, which was adapted to each participant's skill level, allowed this young person to engage positively and build confidence. The welcoming environment, combined

with structured support, helped them overcome initial hesitations and fully participate in the sessions. Over time, the young person's social skills improved, and they began to look forward to each weekly session, forming friendships and building a sense of belonging.

This young person's dedication and knowledge in IT led UHI lecturers to recommend progression to the Level 6 NQ Applied Computing or Level 7 HNC Computing programme, pathways that were previously out of reach. This achievement not only enhances their educational prospects but also underscores the power of personalised support in opening doors to new futures.



Options in Life

Options in Life is a charity, based in Fife, which supports young adults who have learning disabilities and additional support needs, and their families and carers. The charity has transformed the future of 40 young people with learning disabilities through 'Access to Digital Skills for Employment'. By providing training in diverse digital disciplines, this initiative has opened new doors to employability, helping participants tap into a world of possibilities.

After experiencing an online scamming incident, a 24-year-old participant joined the Options in Life digital skills course to regain confidence and enhance her online safety awareness. Prior to this, the participant was a confident individual managing her learning difficulties well. However, the isolation caused by COVID-19 led her to online interactions, where she became a victim of fraud.

Concerned for her well-being, this participant's family reached out to Options in Life for support. Recognising her potential, the charity enrolled her in their digital skills course. She quickly embraced the learning, gaining essential knowledge in online security, safe data sharing, and digital banking. Her confidence grew, and she soon advanced to the employability-focused group, where she explored how digital skills could enhance career opportunities.

Rob Burns, Projects Coordinator at Options in Life, said, "The participant has always been a capable individual, but this experience highlighted the need for fundamental digital skills. Watching her progress has been remarkable. She not only regained confidence but is now passionate about helping others stay safe online."



Today, this participant aspires to work in an organisation that promotes online safety, transforming her experience into a mission to educate others. The 'Access to Digital Skills for Employment' programme has been life-changing for her, demonstrating the power of digital literacy in unlocking new opportunities.

3D Novations

In partnership with Autus, 3D Novations, a small tech company based in Dunkeld comprised of autistic and non-autistic individuals committed to making a difference, successfully delivered an innovative programme designed to support neurodiverse individuals in the Tay Cities Region. The project worked with 25 participants, helping them develop creative and digital competencies through three Level 2 OCN creative/digital learning units, laying the groundwork for micro-certification accredited qualifications. In collaboration with Perth Autism, three learners and their parents/carers were recruited at a dedicated showcase event. Four regional showcase events engaged neurodiverse individuals in employment or volunteering, offering them opportunities to upskill.

Learners gained structured work experience through local partnerships, applying their new skills in data visualisation, digital economy leadership, and meta-skills at four community engagement events. They also created virtual worlds and digital portfolios, demonstrating their creativity and technical proficiency.

The programme culminated in a final showcase at Perth Museum, where participants presented their work and connected with industry professionals.

Archaeology Scotland

Archaeology Scotland provided 11 women from migrant, asylum-seeking, and refugee backgrounds in Dundee with a unique opportunity to develop digital and data skills. Partnering with consultant Amina Okhai and the Dundee International Women's Centre, participants combined English language learning with hands-on archaeological research at Balgray Park. They employed digital surveying techniques, 3D modelling, and GIS mapping to record and analyse historical sites, while training in Power BI enhanced their data analysis capabilities. This initiative not only upskilled learners but also fostered confidence in digital tools, broadening their educational and career prospects.



Code Division

Code Division's 'Empowering Neurodiverse Women in Data Science' initiative enrolled 16 neurodiverse women in the Tay Cities Region with industry-relevant data skills. Participants worked towards SQA-accredited Data Science units at Level 8, building a portfolio of projects that showcase their expertise. Designed in collaboration with neurodiverse experts and third-sector partners, the holistic programme ensured an inclusive learning experience. A showcase event connected learners with potential employers, reinforcing pathways to employment and helping to bridge the local digital skills gap.

Elevator

Elevator's 'Digital Skills for a Future-Ready Tay Cities Workforce' project supported SMEs and individuals with vital digital skills.

A masterclass with entrepreneur Cally Russell in October 2024 entitled 'Finding a way: A masterclass on entrepreneurship' engaged 82 attendees, while 20 SME businesses each received one day's worth of tailored one-to-one digital support through in-person and virtual sessions. Additionally, 16 individuals benefited from an intensive 12-week programme of input two days a week, learning new digital skills and techniques from expert-led sessions.

The Workshop Aberfeldy

The Workshop Aberfeldy worked with young people in Highland Perthshire to gain essential digital and employability skills. As a result of DigiTay's Third Sector Challenge fund, eight participants trained in graphic design, 3D modelling, website management, and digital marketing, gaining hands-on experience in their workshop. Following the training, six participants secured employment and two progressed onto further education. By combining practical learning with industry-relevant digital skills, this project has created new pathways for young people to thrive in the digital economy.





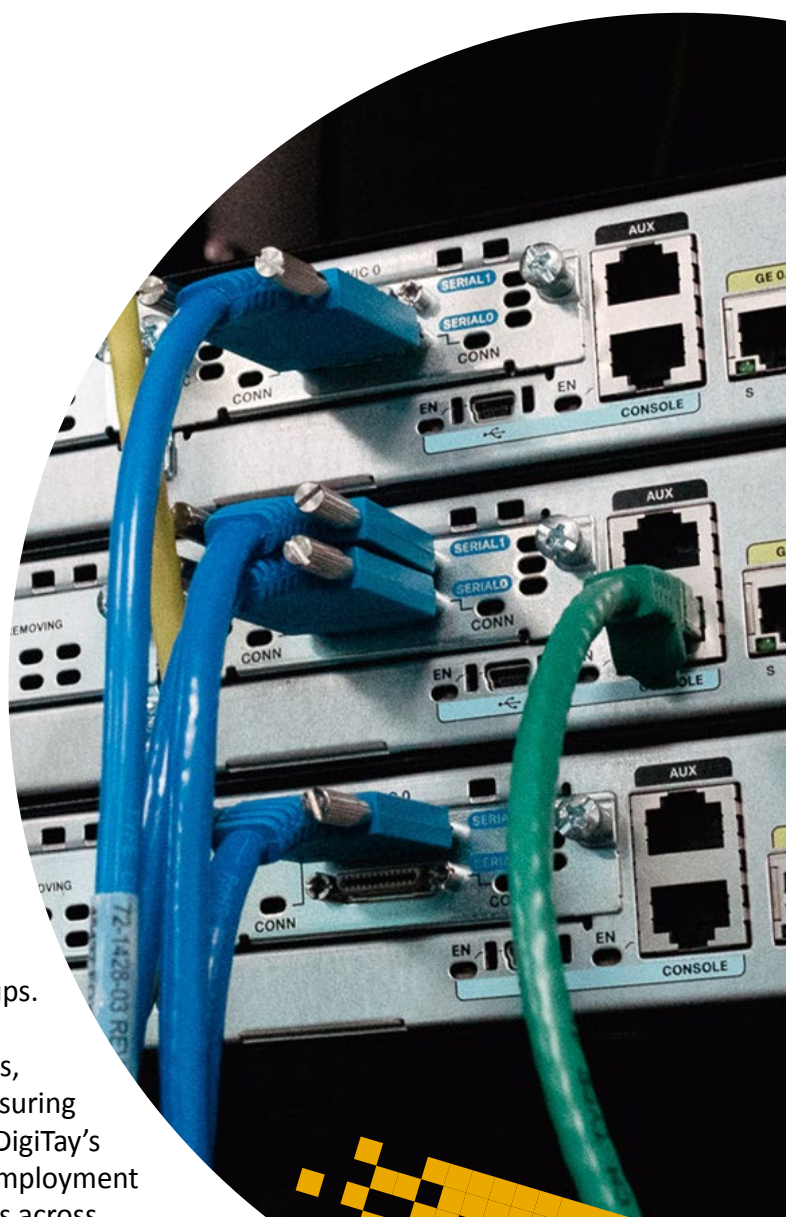
The DataLab Skills for Work Programme

Through its ongoing partnership with The Data Lab Scotland, DigiTay has continued to expand the reach of the Data Skills for Work programme across the Tay Cities Region in 2024/25, benefiting over 200 learners since the programme was rolled out in the region in 2023. Key subjects included Machine Learning, Data Analysis, Data Literacy, Project Design and Appraisal, Data Engineering, and AI & Automation, skills that are increasingly essential in today's digital-first economy.



The programme plays a vital role in supporting workers to adapt to the demands of a data-driven, automated world, with a particular focus on underrepresented groups. Courses are specifically designed to benefit women, neurodivergent individuals, those from lower SMID areas, and people who are unemployed or underemployed, ensuring inclusive access to opportunity and skills development. DigiTay's strategic investment is helping break down barriers to employment while supporting the digital transformation of businesses across the region.

To date, DigiTay has committed over £180,000 to the initiative, funding four successful rounds and empowering 215 learners to build future-ready digital and data capabilities. A fifth round of funding will support course delivery between April and September 2025. These continued investments are central to DigiTay's mission of building a skilled, inclusive, and digitally confident workforce across Tayside.



The Tay Cities Digital Ecosystem Group

Established in November 2022, the Tay Cities Digital Ecosystem Group was formed to strengthen and accelerate the region's digital economy by connecting key stakeholders and fostering collaborative digital innovation across Tayside. The group's vision is to grow the number of scaling digital tech companies and increase investment

stakeholders through events, and showcasing the region's digital success to attract new talent and investment. This strategic approach ensures that activity is aligned, impactful, and inclusive, key ingredients for a thriving digital ecosystem.

In October 2024, the group officially launched its Digital Roadmap, structured around six focused



in the sector, particularly outside the central belt, by developing a strategic roadmap and sharing knowledge, opportunities, and success stories.

Over the past year, the group has brought together partners from across industry, academia, and government, providing a platform to shape the region's digital future. Its objectives include developing and delivering a roadmap for digital growth, catalysing collaborative projects, connecting

workstreams. DigiTay is proud to jointly lead the Skills and Talent workstream, with the mission to "grow and retain a digital talent pipeline that realises the needs of the region." This aligns directly with DigiTay's broader ambition to plug digital skills gaps and create meaningful pathways into the digital economy, ensuring the region not only keeps pace with the future of work but helps shape it.

[Tay Cities Digital Ecosystem Road Map](#)



Scotland's future cyber leaders

For the second year running, DigiTay sponsored the UK edition of the Cyber 9/12 Strategy Challenge, an innovative competition hosted virtually by Abertay cyberQuarter in November. This unique event brought together university and college students from across Scotland to simulate high stakes cyberattack scenarios, assuming the roles of senior government policy advisors. Teams were assessed by expert judges from leading global organisations including Microsoft, Evalian Limited, Europol, and Adobe.

Dundee and Angus College's team, NULLSEC, emerged as the overall winners, with strong competition from the University of Glasgow teams who placed second and third. NULLSEC team lead Ollie Killeen said: "It introduced us to how politics

and cybersecurity interact and allowed us to connect with professionals shaping policy and the cybersecurity industry. I hope our win shows other colleges that this event is well worth attending."

NULLSEC's success earned them an invite to the global Cyber 9/12 finals in Washington DC, where they competed in the semi-finals against 21 other top international teams.

The event's impact extended beyond student success. Hosted by vFairs, it won multiple accolades at the 2024 Eventeer Awards, including Best University Event and Best Event Professional for Leon Chan. Recognised for strengthening cyber resilience and bridging digital skills gaps through strategic partnerships, Cyber 9/12 exemplifies DigiTay's mission to support inclusive, cutting-edge digital learning opportunities. The initiative also contributed to DigiTay, in partnership with Abertay University and Abertay cyberQuarter, being a finalist at the Scottish Cyber Awards.

Digital boost for tourism in Tayside

The Tay Cities TravelTech initiative, led by TravelTech Scotland, provided a digital boost to travel and tourism businesses. This two year programme proved to be a valuable learning opportunity, shaping future approaches and deepening understanding of what hospitality and tourism businesses in the Tay Cities Region need most from digital support. In partnership with local technology experts, the programme provided hands-on assistance and grants of up to £3,000 to help 15 businesses identify and implement tailored tech solutions.



Scottish Cyber Awards

We were delighted to learn in February that DigiTay, in partnership with Abertay University and Abertay cyberQuarter, had been named a finalist in the Public Sector Cyber Impact Award category at the 2025 Scottish Cyber Awards.

This award celebrates an outstanding cybersecurity initiative or project within Scotland's public sector, including government or educational institutions. Our submission highlighted the incredible power of public sector collaboration in driving systemic change in cybersecurity education and workforce development.



These improvements ranged from streamlining operations to enhancing customer experiences, all contributing to a more resilient and digitally confident tourism sector.

A standout success of the programme was the AI for Tourism Workshop held in March 2025 at the AK Bell Library in Perth. The event gathered tourism professionals from across the region, eager to explore AI, automation, and the Traveltech Playbook. With a practical focus, the session offered attendees new tools and ideas to future-proof their businesses while maintaining the warmth of Scottish hospitality. The enthusiastic response highlighted the sector's appetite for innovation and its commitment to embracing technology as a route to long-term growth and improved visitor experiences.

Next steps for 2025/2026

DigiTay will continue to work with its partners across the public sector, education, third sector and business to address the digital skills needs for employers and individuals in the region.

Phase 2 of the Digital Skills Project is currently in development and is set to launch in September 2025. The next phase builds upon earlier successes, strengthening collaboration across the region and supporting the region's technology sector to attract, retain and upskill people in essential digital skills.

- ▶ Develop flexible educational pathways to improve access into digital careers.
- ▶ Continue to support the travel and tourism sector to digitise.
- ▶ Create a regional work experience programme connecting students with local businesses.
- ▶ Develop a rapid tech upskilling programme to meet the growing demand for a highly skilled digital workforce.
- ▶ Develop the DigiTay website into an interactive hub where individuals, businesses, and education providers can connect, learn, and share information.



www.digitay.scot



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

DigiTay is part of the Tay Cities Region Deal, Skills and Employability Programme, funded by the Scottish Government.



Thank you and partnerships

The DigiTay team would like to thank all our partners and stakeholders who have supported with the development and delivery of DigiTay, the Tay Cities Region Digital Skills Project.

Abertay Cyber Quarter
Abertay University
Angus Council
Archaeology Scotland
Business Gateway Fife
Business Gateway Tayside
Code Division
Data for Colleges Programme
Data Lab Scotland
Data Understood
Developing the Young Workforce
Digital Technology Ecosystem Group
Dundee and Angus College
Dundee Chambers of Commerce
Dundee Council
Dundee International Women's Centre
Elevator
Fife Chambers of Commerce
Fife College
Fife Council
James Hutton Institute
Options in Life
Perth Autism Support
Perth College UHI
Perth and Kinross Council
Perth Chambers of Commerce
Scotland IS
Scottish Enterprise
Scottish Government Service Design Academy
Skills Development Scotland
Tech Scaler
Technology Coaching
Tay Cities Region Deal Skills and Employability Programme
The Data Lab Scotland
The Workshop Aberfeldy
TravelTech Scotland
University of Dundee
University of St Andrews
3D Novations

