

PRESS RELEASE



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ETHOS launches £1.3m collaborative solution to skills shortages

SkillsPlanner, an Ethos initiative to solve construction skills shortages, has been awarded £827,000 development funding from Innovate UK, the UK's innovation agency. SkillsPlanner is a data platform that will allow stakeholders to share current and future employment needs, facilitating collaborative planning, training and brokerage to meet the industry's requirements.

Ethos and project partners secured the funding through the 'Solving Urban Challenges with Data' competition. SkillsPlanner is based on a powerful Linked Open Data platform, created by technology leader and project partner Seme4. The two-year R&D project will focus on the London construction industry which needs an estimated 180,000 new skilled entrants to deliver construction projects in the capital and the South East by 2019. Ethos and its project partners will invest a total of £1.3m in this development phase.

Key projects such as HS2, Tideway and Crossrail, planning authorities including Westminster and Islington, main contractors, supply chains, training providers and industry bodies will share skills supply and demand data. The data will be integrated and linked to create a platform that enables:

- skills providers to define existing provision and develop demand-led training
- businesses to benefit from more sustainable procurement of local labour, reduced resource and HR costs
- local authorities to collaborate on the design and delivery of local skills provision; and
- local job brokerage initiatives to operate more efficiently and effectively.

Key industry figures have pledged their support for the project

In a joint statement, SkillsPlanner partners Louise Townsend, Sustainable Business Director at Morgan Sindall and Trudy Langton-Freeman, HR Business Partner at Costain, set out the case for a collaborative initiative:

'The skills shortage in the sector is rapidly becoming a serious impediment to the industry's ability to deliver above and beyond what is expected of it. We must work together as an industry to define and predict the timely provision of these industry-critical skills. SkillsPlanner provides a collaborative opportunity to do this.'

Chris Dransfield of Crossrail sees great potential for SkillsPlanner to, ***'reduce brokerage costs and improve outcomes for all our stakeholders.'***

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'Mastering data sources and being able to analyse this data in a timely manner will be essential for colleges to understand labour market needs and reconcile them with student demand,' says Martin Doel of the Association of Colleges.

Highlighting the importance of understanding skills needs in the longer term, Alex MacLaren of BIM2050 said, ***'the collaborative premise of this new platform, harnessing available data to improve efficiency, awareness and reduce waste, is exactly the innovation we want to see in the future construction industry.'***

SkillsPlanner project director Rebecca Lovelace says: ***'SkillsPlanner is an Ethos 'perfect storm'. It demonstrates how a genuinely collaborative approach can create an economically viable solution to a complex urban challenge, resulting in a positive social outcome.'***

The core SkillsPlanner project partners are: Ethos (lead partner), Association of Colleges, Camden Council, Good People, Islington Council, Plymouth University, Seme4, Tideway, and Westminster Council.

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For more information

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Editor's notes

SkillsPlanner is an inclusive and collaborative project. To find out more and get involved go to skillsplanner.net

EthosVO Ltd (ethosvo.org) creates sustainable solutions to society's complex challenges. Ethos draws together social entrepreneurs, specialists, innovators and thought leaders to collaborate on projects that create positive social, environmental and economic outcomes.

Innovate UK (www.innovateuk.org) is the new name for the Technology Strategy Board – the UK's innovation agency. Taking a new idea to market is a challenge. Innovate UK funds, supports and connects innovative businesses through a unique mix of people and programmes to accelerate sustainable economic growth.