Steering Committee workshop two

Outputs of workshop held on 27 November 2019

January 2020

This document reports on the outputs from the second workshop held with the Steering Committee for Scotland's AI strategy, held on 27 November at Computershare in Edinburgh.

The second workshop was designed to build on the findings of the first, where the Steering Committee agreed that:

- Scotland's AI strategy needs to be focused and not try to do everything for everyone;

- the vision for Scotland is for 'socially just' AI that is embraced by society, reflecting the ambitions in the National Performance Framework (NPF);

- Scotland has the scope to be a global leader for AI, in the top five in the world; and

- Scotland has the capacity to succeed and its diverse interest groups can be aligned.

Aim of the second workshop

The aim of the second Steering Committee meeting was to focus on creating the backbone of the AI strategy 'product' that can be explored, tested and developed in the remainder of the strategy development process.

Scotland's AI ecosystem and emerging strategic ambitions

An emerging model of Scotland's AI ecosystem is shown in Figure 1. The model is designed to encompass and summarise the key areas of interest, challenge and opportunity raised by Steering Committee members in the stages prior to the second workshop. The model describes the key enabling features of a productive AI ecosystem that need to be aligned if Scotland is to achieve its emerging ambitions for AI.

Following presentation and discussion of the model, there was broad agreement that it is a strong platform to start from and build on in the strategic process that is to follow.

The emerging ambitions are:

- A productive Scottish ecosystem should be people-centred and be developed and applied in such a way to allow the key beneficiaries on the right-hand side of the model – Scotland's people and organisations - to thrive and to prosper.

- The primary strategic focus should be on realising the value of AI as a tool to achieve positive change, rather than be on the development of the AI sector itself.

- AI in Scotland should be trusted, responsible and ethical. Critically, success in the ethical sphere of AI development and application could be Scotland's USP.

- Scotland does not and cannot operate in a Scottish AI bubble. Recognising and engaging with the international elements in the Scottish AI ecosystem – in the supply chain, the systems of governance and the supply of resources – is vital for success.

- Scotland's strengths in the ecosystem currently lie on the left-hand side of the model, particularly in R&D, and these strengths must be maintained and built upon.

- Scotland must improve systems that bring universities, the public sector and the private sector together to generate mutual benefit and support the ambitions for AI in Scotland and the ambitions of the NPF.
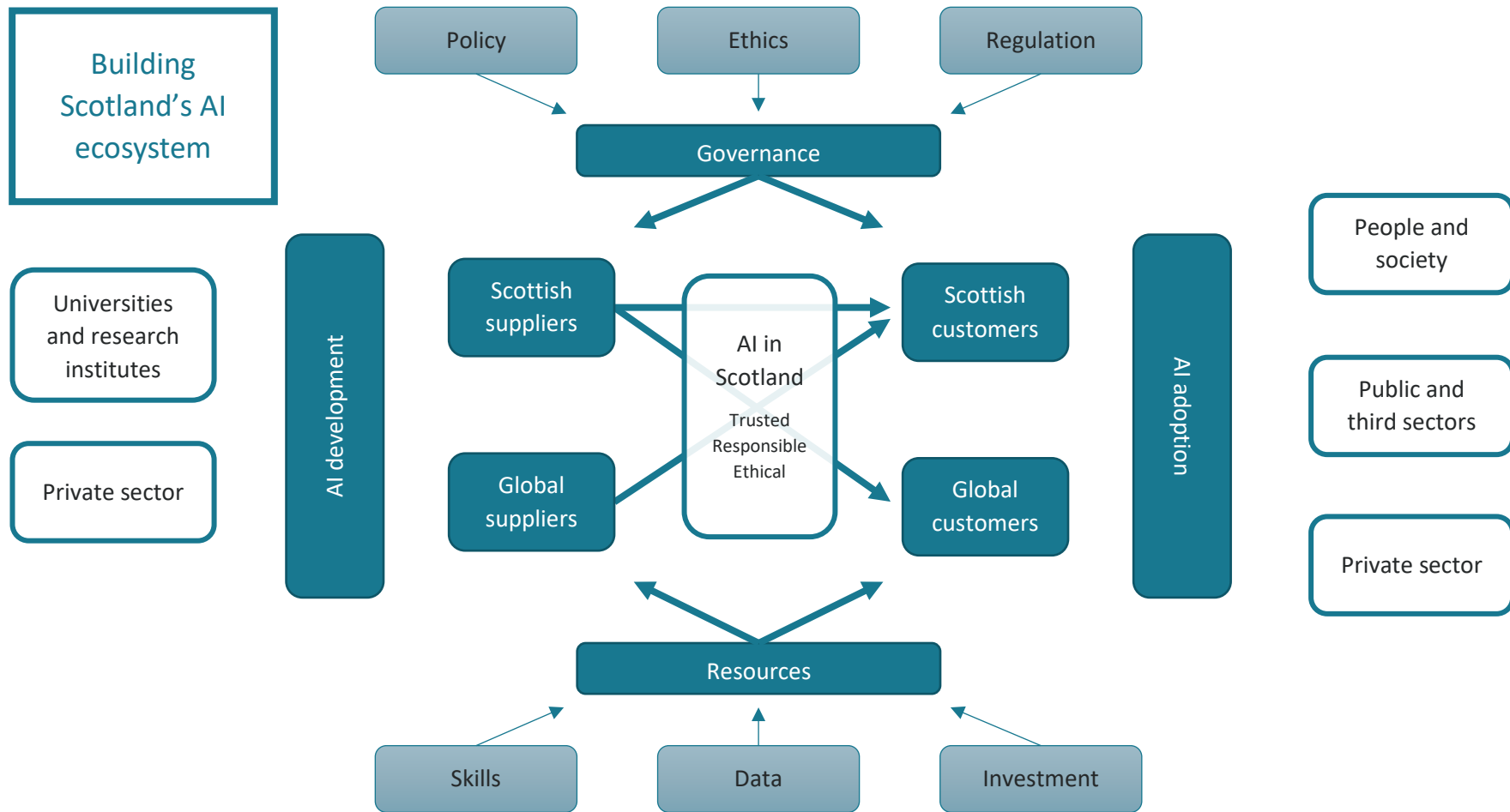
Strategic themes

Three strategic themes emerged strongly from the discussion, these were skills and education, data and ethics. The discussions also recognised business development and growth as a key focus for the strategy.

Next steps

A scoping document will be produced for use in the consultation and engagement processes for the strategy, which commence in January 2020. It is anticipated that the scoping document will build on the discussions so far, including the AI ecosystem model, and reflect the issues discussed in the steering committee workshops. In particular, members reinforced points made in the first workshop on the need to:

- focus on creating guidelines/principles for AI in Scotland;

- focus on the outcomes, not AI per se, AI is just a tool;

- focus on creating the incentives to make it happen;

- ensure that activity meets objectives i.e. activity is equalizing and inclusive; and

- balance economic and societal benefit.

Figure 1: Scotland's AI ecosystem

Building Scotland's AI ecosystem

Policy → Ethics → Regulation → Governance

Universities and research institutes

Private sector

AI development

Scottish suppliers

AI in Scotland
Trusted Responsible Ethical

Scottish customers

Global suppliers

Global customers

AI adoption

People and society

Public and third sectors

Private sector

Resources

Skills — Data — Investment