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# Corporate Plan

# 2020-21 to 2022-23

The text "Corporate Plan" is written vertically on the right side of the page in a white, sans-serif font. The background of the entire page is a teal-tinted photograph of two women in an office setting, looking at a computer monitor. The image is overlaid with a pattern of dark blue diagonal bars.

# Contents

	page
<b>01</b> Chief Executive's Introduction	4
<b>02</b> Our role and who we are	6
<b>03</b> Strategy	7
<b>04</b> Vision and Goals	8
<b>05</b> An Outstanding Customer Experience	9
<b>06</b> Leaner, Better, Doing More for Less	12
<b>07</b> Enabler of Opportunity	15
<b>08</b> A Great Place to Work	18
<b>09</b> Trusted Delivery Partner	21
<b>10</b> Summary: Turning Challenge to Opportunity	22



# SLC is changing...

2020-21 ..... 2021-22 ..... 2022-23

It's about transforming our customers' experience...



...through technology...



and data...

...through our Evolve transformation programme...



...we're simplifying our service...



...and empowering our people...



...to build for the future...

...to be better for our customers and better for us.

# 01

## Chief Executive's Introduction



With over 8.5 million customers, SLC plays a critical role in supporting the education sector - we do this by making timely and accurate payments to learners and education providers. We have seen significant growth in our products and services, with these doubling over the last decade. We also work closely with HMRC to collect repayments. But SLC must become more efficient and deliver improved performance for students and taxpayers.

The Evolve transformation programme reflects SLC's ambition to deliver an enterprise-wide transformation that will improve the customer experience through digital technologies, data transformation, reforming policy commissioning, simplifying products and the creation of a better people proposition. At the heart of this is the imperative to ensure SLC is a sustainable business in the future.

We must remain alert to changes in the political, social and economic landscape that will inevitably impact on our business. We anticipate that significant demand from our shareholders is likely to resume post-Brexit and post-Covid. This will be driven by recent announcements from the Prime Minister on planned new adult skills and training opportunities, future consultation on post-qualification admissions and from consideration of the recommendations from the Philip Augar led Post-18 Review of Higher Education.

This Corporate Plan derives from the Corporate Strategy published last year and sets out the plans for the next three years. It underpins our unchanged central commitment – to provide a great customer experience – to help our customers to invest in their own futures and by extension to invest in the country's future economic success.

Whether applying or repaying, our customers expect us to deliver intuitive, seamless services. This year we launched our new Online Repayment Service (ORS), the first the major deliverable for customer self-service – customers can now see up-to-date information such as their loan balance and repayment options without the need to telephone us. Also, this year, the first iteration of our new Customer Engagement Management (CEM) platform will provide the foundation for an enhanced online offering for customers. CEM is a central pillar of Evolve; this plan shows how we will enhance and expand CEM with further milestones through 2021-22 and 2022-23. It will sequentially deliver self service for customers, and reduce calls, peak processing and the reliance on manual work including customer correspondence.

Other key objectives for the next three years are:

- Reforming and transforming our technology estate, making it less complex
- Implementing policy simplification delivering less complexity for customers
- Implementing our Strategic Workforce Plan, our new pay and grading structure and enabling people to develop relevant skills and experience at every stage of their career at SLC
- Implementing new learnings from COVID-19, including a rationalised estates strategy.

By providing our services efficiently and effectively we will also increase value for money to the taxpayer. Our corporate plan and business plans set out the strategic direction for the company over the next five years and how we will sustainably, based on the current scope of operation, reduce the cost of running SLC by a substantial amount.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been an important focus for the company and could continue to be so for some time to come. Our response to the Covid-19 pandemic depended on the rapid activation of business continuity plans and rollout of new technology, enabling us to deal with this year's applications for financial support for the 2020/21 academic year. We made this transition quickly and successfully. At the time of writing we have successfully paid maintenance loans to a record number of students on time. This has again strengthened my confidence in our organisation's ability to transform and achieve its objectives.

**Paula Sussex**  
**Chief Executive**



**At the time of writing we have successfully paid maintenance loans to a record number of students on time.**

# 02

## Our role and who we are

SLC is a non-profit government owned body, working with all four UK government administrations (our shareholders). We administer loans and grants to 1.5m students annually, have a total of 8.5m customers and manage a loan book worth £156.5bn (as at March 2020). We play a crucial role in supporting the UK's higher and further education sector by:

- managing the end to end 'apply, assess, pay and repay process' for student finance in England and Wales
- providing payment and repayment service in Scotland and Northern Ireland
- maintaining assessment and online portals for this service in Northern Ireland
- managing Further Education and Postgraduate services tailored to the requirements of each government administration
- providing targeted support grants
- administering bursary payments on behalf of many HE providers
- working with HRMC to collect repayments through PAYE and self-assessment
- collecting repayments for those outside the UK or near the end of their repayment term

### The Executive Leadership Team

SLC's Chief Executive leads a team of six Executive Directors each heading up a directorate with employees from across SLC's offices in Scotland, England and Wales. The directorates are:

- Product, Customer and External Relations
- Operations

- Repayments and Customer Compliance
- Technology Group
- Chief Financial Officer
- People

### The Board

SLC's Board is responsible for setting the strategic aims and objectives of SLC, consistent with the policy, resources and overall strategic direction determined by Government shareholders.

Non-Executive Directors of the Board are appointed by the Secretary of State for Education.

### Corporate Governance

SLC has arrangements in place to ensure good corporate governance and its **Framework Document** provides detail of the roles and responsibilities of executives, board members and shareholders.

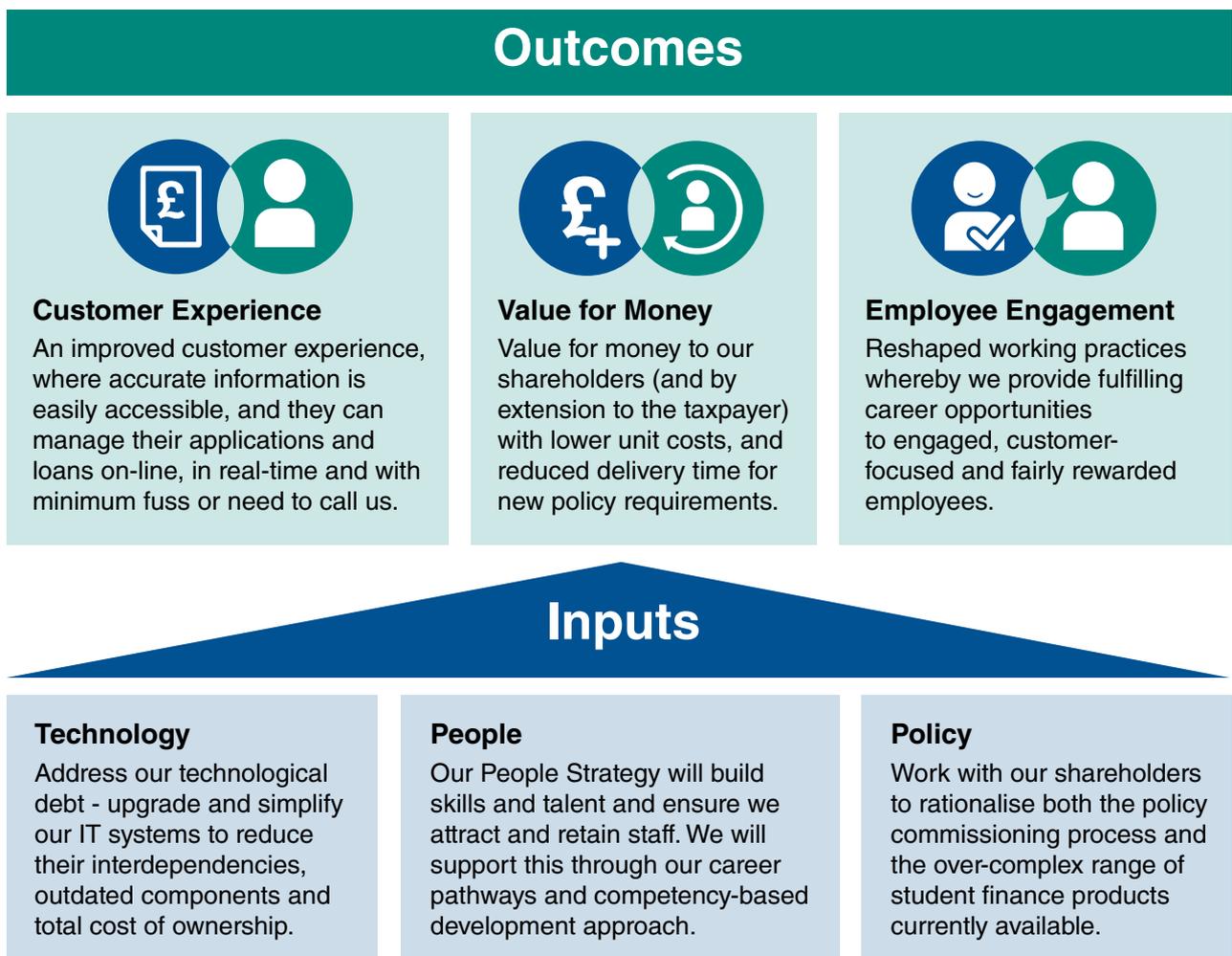
The most recent Tailored Review of SLC was published in July 2019. The aim of these regular reviews is to ensure that public bodies remain fit for purpose, are well governed and properly accountable. The **Tailored Review of SLC** is published on our GOV.UK site. The report described several technology challenges, noting that IT systems are outdated and drive complexity and cost; and an inflexible IT estate which pushes up the number of customer calls. Many of the recommendations have already been addressed, including the development of SLC's Vision and the strategic objectives that underpin this plan; the Evolve programme and other initiatives have been designed to address the remainder.

# 03 Strategy

In 2019, SLC launched its refreshed transformation programme Evolve. It has already delivered significant improvements for our repaying customers and is central to **SLC's Corporate Strategy**.

SLC must provide its services to any customer who meets the eligibility criteria of the relevant UK administration. The last decade has seen a doubling of the products and services that we provide, with a gradual divergence of policy across the four governments. Our strategy is to change how we operate, such that the

majority of our customers will be able to self-serve; in turn this will free up time and space for our staff to focus their attention and expertise on helping the many customers whose cases or circumstances are less straightforward. To achieve this, we are addressing the company's technological debt and upskilling our workforce; Evolve transformation programme works in tandem with our Technology and wider People Strategy to transform our customers' experience. This is illustrated in the chart below.



# 04

## Vision and Goals

### SLC's Vision

SLC is widely recognised as enabling student opportunity and delivering an outstanding customer experience in the efficient delivery of the four UK Governments' further and higher education finance policies.

This vision, set by the Board in 2019, is underpinned by five longer-term **strategic goals**, which form the foundation of the Corporate Strategy and this plan:

- deliver an outstanding customer experience
- be leaner, better doing more for less
- be a great place to work
- be a trusted delivery partner
- be an enabler of opportunity.

### SLC's Mission

Our mission is to enable people to invest in their futures through further and higher education by providing trusted, transparent, flexible and accessible student finance services.

# 05

## An Outstanding Customer Experience

In 2020-21, through Customer Engagement Management (CEM) - a key part of our Evolve transformation programme - we will begin to offer our customers more self-service options and reduce the need for them to telephone. As we move to an omni-channel service delivery organisation, we will increasingly focus on measuring, understanding, reporting on and improving how our customers experience and rate our services.

### Customer Engagement Management

CEM will give our frontline staff the ability to access any or all of a customer's interactions with us within a single interface, irrespective of which of SLC's underlying systems holds the relevant data. We are on course to begin implementing it before the end of 2020-21, with subsequent iterative enhancements and extensions of functionality planned across 2021-22 and into 2022-23.

CEM's goals are for online processing wherever feasible, intuitive online capability for customers, and real time data that either enables customer self-service or enables staff to provide a "right first time" service, eliminating avoidable contact. Our target experience for customers is illustrated on this page.

### Customer Interactions



#### Eliminate

**The best service is no service.**

Customers would prefer to interact directly to apply for their student finance, and have their interaction dealt with fully automatically and as close to immediately as possible.



#### Self Serve

**Help our customers to help themselves.**

Where a customer does want or need to interact with us, we will provide them with access to the information and services they need to allow them to do so easily and in their own time.



#### Optimise

**When customers contact us with an issue, we address it quickly and efficiently.**

Where a customer needs to contact us they can do so through the channel of their choice, and their issue is resolved immediately or referred to someone who can. The customer is kept informed, and advised when the issue is resolved.



#### Support

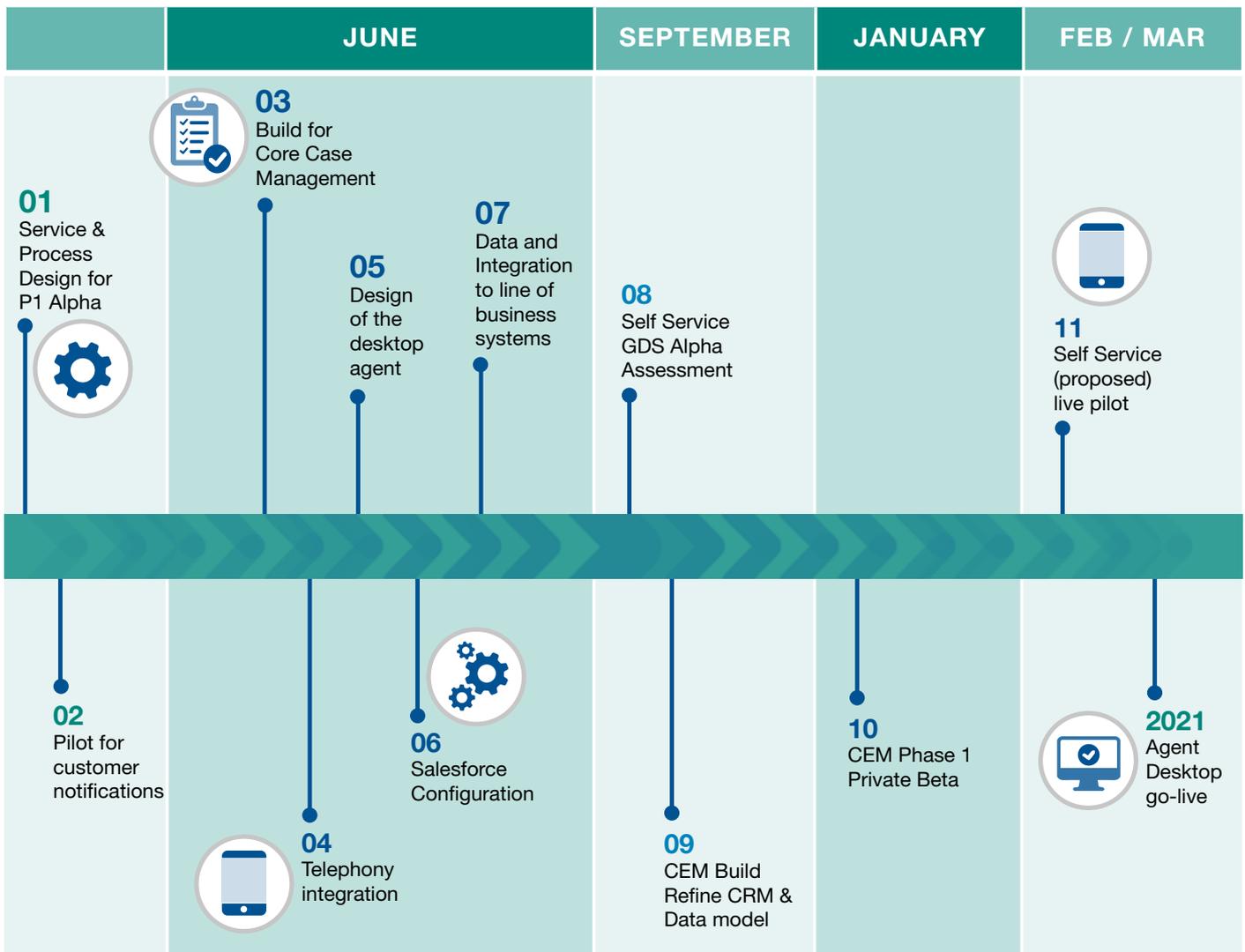
**Where our customers have more complex needs and need to navigate the process, we assign someone to guide them.**

Where we identify that a customer is facing challenges with the process, we assign a case owner to guide them efficiently and supportively.

CEM will constitute a major shift in how SLC organises its processes and workload. Specifically, there will be significant change for SLC’s Operations Directorate from work organised by “tasks” to work organised by “cases”. Currently the configuration of our IT systems mean that teams perform discrete sets of tasks related to a single process or type of application. This can lead to a poor customer experience. In future “caseworkers” will take on personal ownership for resolving any issue with an individual customer’s application. A significant organisational redesign of the directorate will be implemented for 2021-22 alongside the creation of a new single flexible role for service delivery.

CEM is designed to greatly reduce incoming contact both by telephone and mail. Customers made 5.5 million calls to us in 2019-20, and our key performance indicators (KPIs) will target a reduction in projected call volumes for 2021-22 and 2022-23. We have established KPIs that target the number of applications completed without a need to call and the average number of calls per application.

A detailed view of the delivery timeline for 2020-21 is shown below.



**Online Repayment Service (ORS)**

ORS is the first the major deliverable for customer self-service: its first iteration launched in July 2020, to very positive feedback from borrowers. Customers can now see up-to-date information such as their loan balance, interest rate and repayment options without the need to telephone us. ORS has been made possible by the success of the SLC and HMRC's More Frequent Data Sharing project. Further development of and improvements to this service are now planned including: extending self-service options to include claiming a refund and joining the direct debit scheme.

**Customer Experience**

Our focus on improving the customer experience will cover every interaction that customers have with SLC - from their initial awareness or discovery of our products or services, right through the end-to-end 'apply, assess, pay and repay' processes. This will be led by our Chief Customer Officer who leads the Product, Customer and External Relations directorate.

We have previously laid foundations for this work using Enterprise Design Thinking tools to build understanding of various "customer personas", their associated journeys and pain points, which has enabled us to build intuitive online services. Through CEM, we will soon be able to capture detailed customer experience feedback in real time and use that to plan for future improvements. We will also capture real time customer sentiment analysis from our social media platform, again providing invaluable feedback on what and where to make things better. We will ensure that everyone in SLC understands that what they do and how they do it directly contributes to our customers' experience.

We will improve access to clear and accessible information on our online application, payment and repayment interfaces, allowing customers to interact with us and self-serve in a fully informed way. More intelligent use of IVR technology is already directing customers to more extensive support on social media, and this will continue to develop.

We will engage more closely with our partners – for example universities and colleges, the Office for Students (OfS) and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) – to work together to provide customers with trusted student finance expertise and clear, comprehensive and easily accessible information.

**Excellence in Data**

SLC's Excellence in Data project is a key strand in Evolve; the success of our customer service and our collections efforts relies on the quality of our data, and it is vital that this is accurate and consistent. The project focuses primarily on building quality, governance, integrity and accuracy in our data to deliver better customer experience, better user experience and enhanced collections.

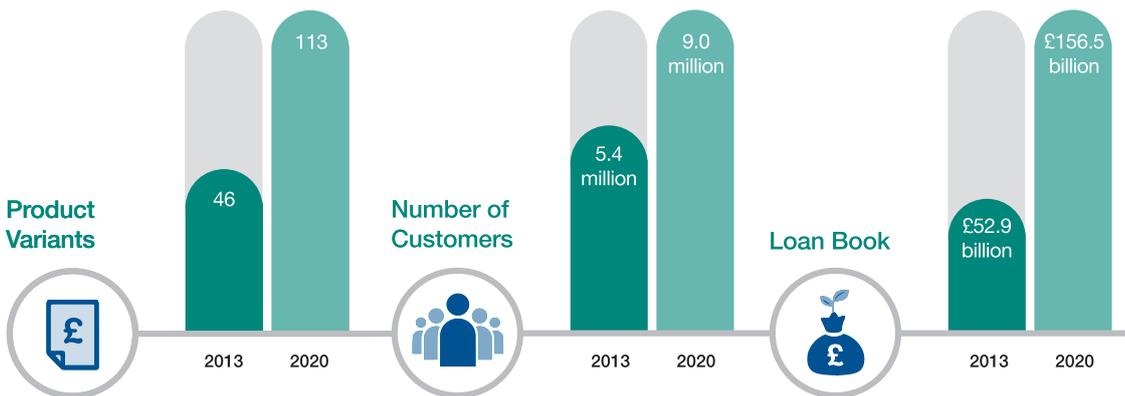
Better data management with embedded cyber security at the beginning of the customer journey – in the application process – will lead to improvements later in the journey for former students entering repayment. Higher data quality and automated fraud checks will also increase the core value of the loan book and increase repayments compliance. Some 90% of borrowers were fully compliant with their repayment obligations during 2019-20, and we expect that our data management initiatives will allow this to rise still further.

# 06

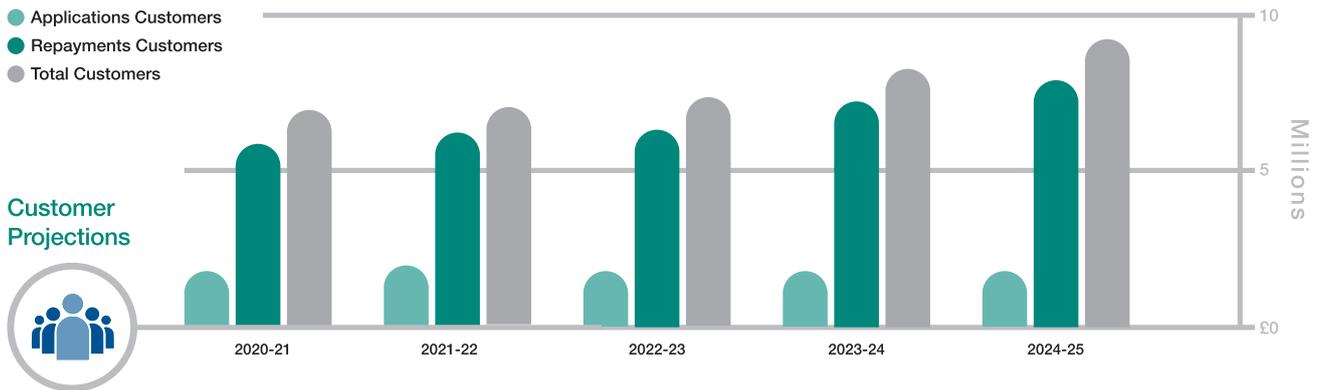
## Leaner, Better, Doing More for Less

SLC has experienced significant growth over the last seven years. Customer numbers have increased by 67% and the value of the loan book has nearly tripled. A significant increase in policy commissions from DfE and the Devolved Administrations, along with a growing divergence across these domiciles, has also more than doubled the number of product variants we offer. This has resulted in complexity, for example, at the time of writing there are:

- 19 distinct eligible residence categories
- 11 variants of previous study rules
- 6 variants of compelling personal reasons rules
- 7 income assessment variants across products, and 21 calculations of entitlement variants
- 6 variants for repayment rules
- 19 variants for intensity rules
- 5 different Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) variants
- 19 variants of support affected by other sources of funding.



Our forecast on customer and application volumes is set out below with application customers numbers projected to increase by 7.4% over the next four years, from 1.69m today to 1.83m in 2024/25.



A large range of products with variability and complexity, processed on IT systems that were not designed for this complexity, has led to negative impacts on customer experience and cost to serve. There has been long term underinvestment in many of SLC’s legacy systems, often because the organisation has needed to prioritise the delivery of each year’s new policy changes. Systems have often evolved in a tactical piecemeal manner, with multiple interdependencies that increasingly complicate the process of developing new products and services and of maintaining the existing estate.

Despite this increase in both volume and complexity, our goal is to be ‘leaner’. This will be achieved from the delivery of Evolve through programmes such as CEM and ORS, modernisation of our technology, policy simplification and from a culture of continuous improvement using Lean principles.

The increase in self-service and the reduction in incoming telephone contact will free up resources in frontline services, allowing staff to focus on higher-value, more rewarding work. This will allow us to improve the quality of service to customers who need more than self-service such as vulnerable students or applicants with complex circumstances.

**The Strategic Partner Procurement Programme**

SLC’s Strategic Partner Procurement (SPP) for our technology services will also contribute, by moving increasingly towards more outcome-based contracts, over longer-periods, with a smaller number of strategic partners. SLC currently engages over 400 third-party software developers and other related contractors on site costing some £60m per annum; in the current situation SLC owns all the cost, overhead and risk.

The SPP will rationalise this from 92 vendors to three or four main partners across technology. This will reduce SLC effort on contract renewal and procurement activity, transfer risk from the company to partners and drive greater accountability for outcomes. We intend that this generates significant savings.

SLC commenced the competition for Lot 1 (covering the Customer Portal, the Assess Platform, the CMS register of courses and Digital Repayments) in February 2020 and awarded the contract in September 2020. Lot 2 (covering platform delivery and technical services) is on track for mobilisation in January 2021. Two further contract lots, covering the rest of our IT estate, are currently under development.

**Financial Planning and control**

SLC’s medium term financial planning sets out the company’s strategic direction over the next five years and how we will reduce our running costs, on SLC’s current scope of activity, by some 15%.

SLC has a one-year funding envelope agreed through the Annual Performance and Resource Agreement letter from DfE for 2020-21. While SLC is cognisant that the Government cannot commit to a multi-year funding settlement, the company

has drawn up detailed financial plans for the medium-term, underpinned by this Corporate Plan and the Evolve programme. For the years beyond 2020-21, SLC has developed a five-year financial model which includes assumptions on customer volumes, benefits projections from the Evolve programme, and assumptions regarding the cost of delivering a steady state policy change and other SLC-led change programmes.

SLC’s capital investment in 2021-22, mainly on technology costs in Evolve, that will put in place the foundations for savings from 2022-23 onwards.

SLC will continue to strengthen financial management and commercial skills alongside internal assurance, control and compliance arrangements. The company will continue to deliver training to ensure that the company’s staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to meet their responsibilities. Our Enterprise Risk and Compliance team will maintain assurance and oversight of directorates’ responsibilities in this area – educating and raising awareness of risk, and of areas where SLC is required to comply with financial and commercial controls.

Customer growth is largely driven by the annual cohort of former students entering repayment (rather than a significant increase in applicants for funding) and unit costs are decreasing because the cost to serve applicants is higher than that of serving borrowers. Nevertheless, Evolve will drive an additional decrease in unit costs over and above the natural trend, as illustrated in the chart below, which shows the blended average cost per Apply to Repay customer based on SLC’s operating budget (running costs):



# 07

## Enabler of Opportunity

To continue to provide student finance reliably and securely, SLC needs to significantly modernise its IT systems. Although the Evolve programme is implementing a number of critical technologies there is much to be done to simplify and modify the architecture through the Technology Strategy. As well as making it easier to deliver well-functioning online services, this Technology Strategy will also allow the company to quickly respond to shareholders' new policy requirements and provide a lower cost to serve.

The Technology Strategy will be delivered through four primary pillars of activities. These are **Transform**, **Simplify**, **Remediate** and **Enable**. The strategy will be implemented and governed through our refreshed Enterprise Architecture and Business Design Authority governance, which is also a key input into our annual planning cycle to ensure that technology investment across the portfolio supports the strategic technology direction.

The integrated approach to delivery ensures that the Technology Strategy does not sit to the side of our change portfolio but is a guiding principle in solution selection and design for all initiatives; a discipline that has not been strong over recent years. Projects funded within Evolve, business-as-usual maintenance and the ongoing change programme set out in the

annual planning cycle (known as the Annual Performance and Resource) letter from the DfE all contribute to the delivery of the technology strategy. While aligning ongoing initiatives with the technology strategy ensures convergence is maintained across the portfolio it is not enough to secure the modern, simplified technology estate that delivers policy change more quickly and produces a significantly reduced Total Cost of Ownership. This requires a series of initiatives following on from our CEM and wider Evolve programme successes, that will specifically target the **Simplify** and **Transform** pillars of the Technology Strategy.

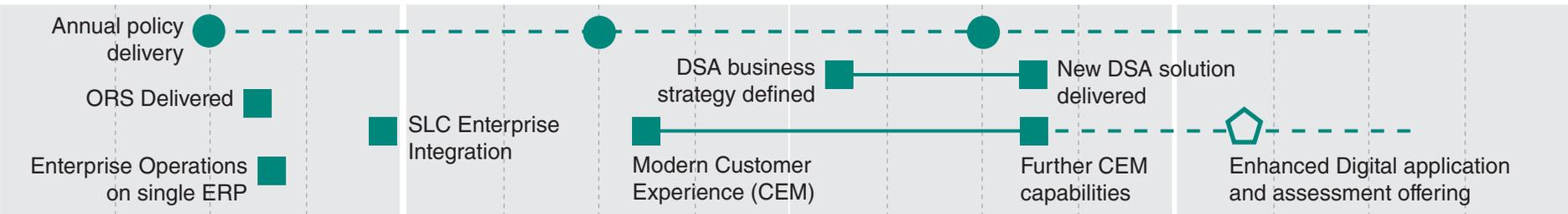
These initiatives are being scoped and developed based on four key principles:

- Create detailed plans to execute the refreshed Technology Strategy
- Provide maximum reuse of Evolve investments in new technology and refreshed architecture
- Deliver benefits incrementally, not relying on multi-year delivery projects
- Initiatives will focus on business releasing benefits (Digitisation, Self-serve, etc.) in addition to delivering simplified, modern and resilient technology systems

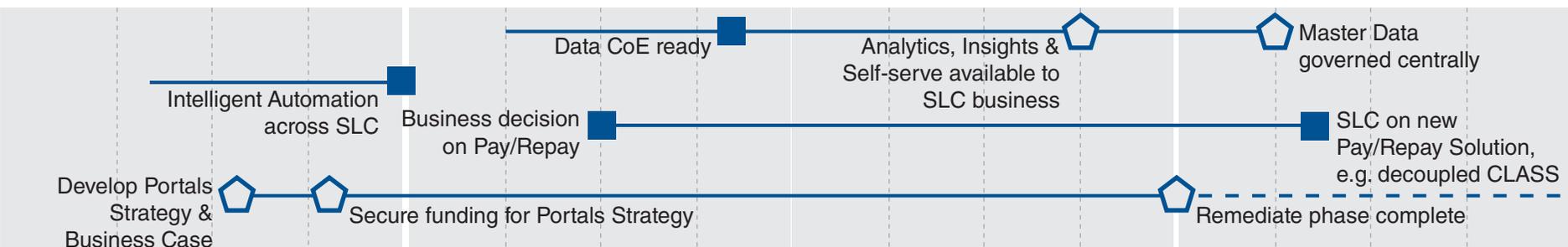
# TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION

	2020	2021	2022	2023
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## TRANSFORM



## SIMPLIFY



## REMEDiate



## ENABLE



Taken together, this further investment and the projects already delivered or underway across the portfolio, will deliver the transformation in our technology capabilities, cost base and responsiveness detailed in the Corporate Strategy and our strategic goals.

 <p><b>TRANSFORM</b> Enable SLC's transformation through delivery of strategic technology capabilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are creating an Enterprise Integration Centre for Enablement that will create a services-based architecture and roadmap, iteratively removing complex/duplicate functions across the estate.</li> <li>• Building on the principle of CEM-first for all customer engagement, we will continue the transformation journey by digitising more of the customer journey and migrating functionality from our legacy portals where an appropriate use case exists. Over time the legacy portals are reduced to the point we can replace remaining functionality, preferably with commercial software packages.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>SIMPLIFY</b> Simplify and consolidate our existing platforms; decouple the architecture to reduce TCO and enable long term sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building on our developing Enterprise Integration capability, we will deliver a set of initiatives that break the close-coupling between our systems, allowing them to be changed in isolation. This reduces the cost of change by limiting testing and allowing specific pieces of functionality to be delivered by strategic partners or migrated to commercial packaged solutions.</li> <li>• We will develop an Applications &amp; Portals Strategy to address the inherent complexity of the existing application architecture. This will provide an approach for deconstructing the monolithic applications in the estate with a view to refactoring as simpler, stand alone components or preferably as easily maintained commercial software packages.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>REMEDiate</b> De-risk our platforms by improving supportability, increasing security and disaster recovery, and protect SLC's information assets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will complete the Disaster Recovery activities by uplifting the data centre back-up, recovery and processing capabilities in both sites, embedding an enduring DR capability within SLC and demonstrably testing DR regularly.</li> <li>• While we transform our technology capabilities we continue to maintain a large and complex estate. An ongoing programme of technology maintenance initiatives will bring our critical business systems back into support and enhance our security and resilience.</li> <li>• Continued investment in our Security programme, alongside continued technology maintenance ensures the overall Information Security risk profile of the organisation remains stable.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>ENABLE</b> Redefine the Technology Group operating model through Strategic Partner Strategy and shift to agile ways of working underpinned by modern engineering and automation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moving from our Covid-19 response, the focus shifts towards embedding long-term operating model changes to address capability challenges across the function. Utilising the DDaT framework to develop internal capability in our strategic technologies, and completing the selection and embedding of our new Strategic Partners to ensure we have ongoing, deep relationships to compliment and augment our team.</li> <li>• We have now built core capabilities, framework and tools to deliver successful application migrations to the Cloud. CMS has already transitioned to a PaaS/ Serverless model, and the Assess platform is due to transition in the coming months. Further initiatives will be identified based on risk and cost based benefits cases. We continue to maintain a clear Cloud and SaaS first principle for all new technology selections.</li> </ul>

# 08

# A Great Place to Work

SLC's People Strategy will support the underlying organisational change and capability build for Evolve. Working through People@SLC, we will build transparency and consistency in pay, total reward and targeted learning. The four key strands of the strategy are: Reward, Skills, Workforce and Brand.

**Our Brand: We will build on our vision and mission statements and embed this in all that we do for our customers, our employees and our responsibilities to the UK taxpayer.**

**Brand Projects:**

- Employer of Choice
- SLC Values
- Consolidation of Job Descriptions
- People Portal

**Our Reward: We will properly recognise and reward our people for their contributions and achievements.**

**Reward Projects:**

- Reward Plus
- Operational Incentivisation Scheme
- Flex Plus
- Pay & Reward Framework
- Rationalisation of Financial Compensation Policies

**Our Workforce: We will recognise and encourage the strengths of a multi-generational workforce.**

**Multi-generational Workforce Projects:**

- Strategic Workforce Planning
- Emerging Talent
- Returners to Work
- Establishment Oversight Committee
- Performance Management & Development
- Brexit - Skilled Worker Route

**Our Skills: We will develop targeted and tailored learning and talent programmes to promote a positive learning culture.**

**Skills & Capability Projects:**

- Leadership Development Programme
- Role of the Manager (MDP)
- Career Pathways
- Induction & Onboarding Programme
- Succession Planning
- Workday Learning



## Reward

Fair pay and reward are fundamental to attracting and retaining valued employees. Salary is key, but other factors are also important to employees. SLC aims to have:

- market-linked salary ranges
- transparency around pay positioning which reflects competency and capability
- clarity around promotion and progression.

The associated costs and benefits of implementing a new pay and grading structure have been included in our projected funding requirement, which will need to be agreed with the DfE, Devolved Administrations and Cabinet Office/HMT Ministers.

SLC needs to recruit and retain permanent staff in key roles across its Technology Group - something that has not always been easy in recent years – and therefore we seek to implement the Government’s Digital Data and Technology (DDaT) professional capability framework for 2021-22, subject to HMT approval. DDaT provides a standard set of definitions for technical roles and a clear understanding of what skills and competencies are required for each role and level, alongside defined reward principles and pathways for development and progression.

## Skills

The company will continue to develop targeted and tailored programmes to promote a positive learning culture, enabling people to develop relevant skills and experience at every stage of their career with SLC. Key aspects of this approach are:

- structured career pathways
- leadership and management programmes
- emerging talent programmes for apprentices, interns and graduates.

## Workforce

SLC’s Strategic Workforce Plan sets out how, post COVID, we will move permanently to different working patterns (“blended working” - whereby colleagues split their working time between the home and the office), a different skills composition and how we will become a leaner and sustainable workforce. Further investment will enable colleagues to upskill and reskill to adapt to new ways of working and meet our future skill needs. We will support this through our career pathways and competency based development approach. Due to the UK withdrawal from the EU, the SLC will also need to amend some of its recruitment practices in respect of EU citizens.

## Brand

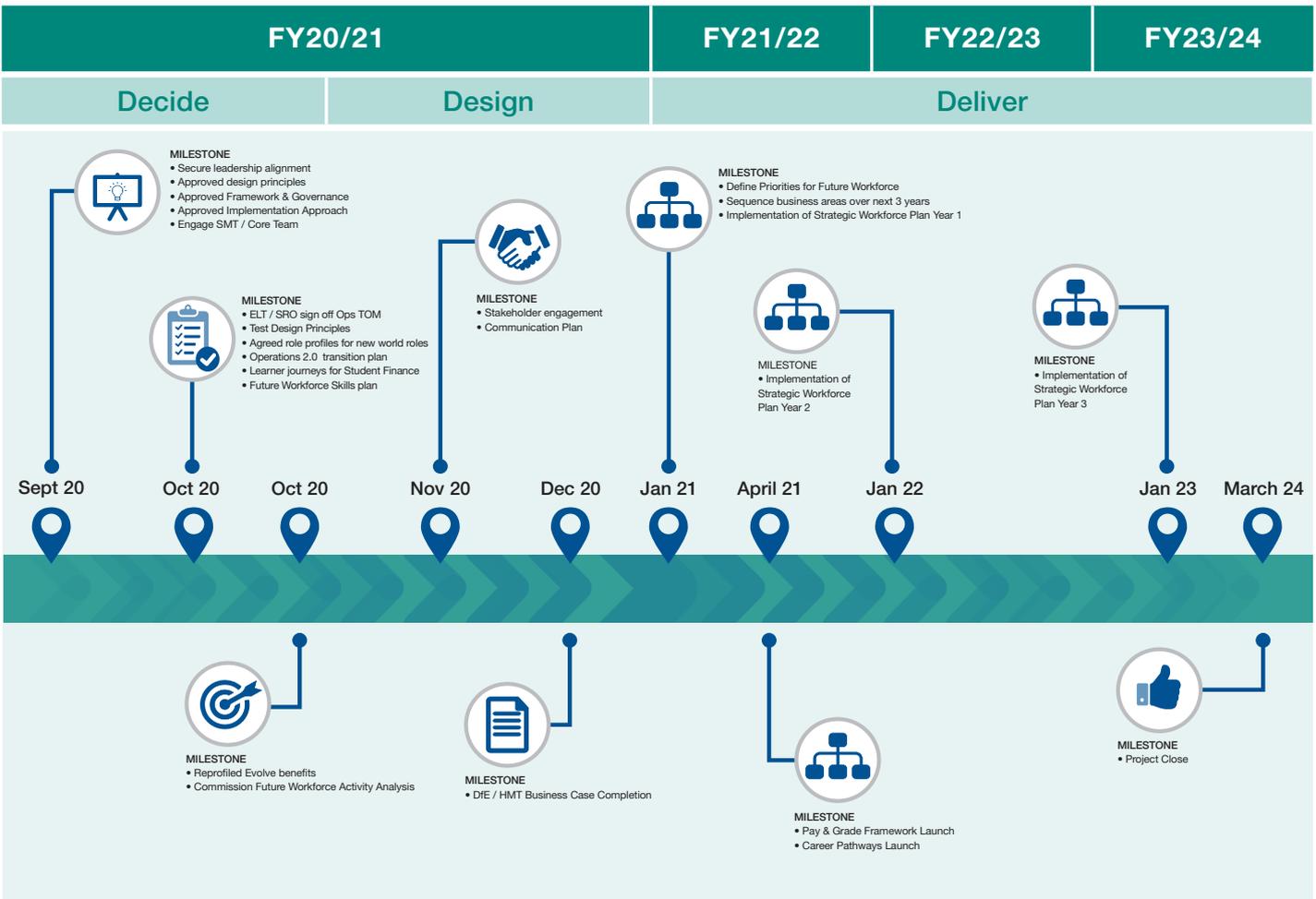
SLC is aiming to be positively endorsed as an employer. This is evidenced both by internal research, with encouraging results from our recent Covid-19 Wellbeing Surveys, but also externally with accreditations such as our recent achievement in gaining the National Centre for Diversity’s “Investors in Diversity Award”. From a recruitment perspective, we are receiving significant numbers in applications for roles right across the organisation.

Work on our employer brand will focus on building the profile of Technology roles over the course of 2020-21 as we still require a high level of technical expertise to deliver our strategic goals.

We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in our workplace and our EDI Annual Report, alongside the statutory gender pay gap report; can be found at [www.gov.uk/slc](http://www.gov.uk/slc).

**Timeline for People Strategy**

Our People Strategy will align with and adjust to the progress we make in our Evolve and Technology Strategies. Milestones for the next few years are illustrated below.



**Estates**

The company’s experience of 90% of its staff working from home during the pandemic has prompted the question about SLC’s configuration post-Covid. Although a totally home-based workforce is neither desirable nor sustainable in the longer-term, we had already previously been moving towards more flexible patterns of working. Our most recent employee engagement survey has indicated clear interest in blended working and we expect this to become standard practice. The consequent reduction in our requirement for office accommodation has been factored into our financial planning.

SLC will exit one of the Glasgow city centre buildings (Europa) by the end of 2020-21 and SLC’s use of remaining office space will change over the next two financial years. While we will require fewer fixed desks there will be a demand for different spaces, for example for meetings, team collaborations or project inceptions. SLC’s estate is already cost-effective when benchmarked against the Cabinet Office’s State of the Estate report, with cost per person and cost per square foot significantly lower than both the UK government and the private sector.

# 09

## Trusted Delivery Partner

It matters that shareholders continue to see SLC as a trusted partner in the delivery of Government policy, and we are committed to engaging more closely with policy teams across Government.

A major role for SLC is to turn policy intent from its four shareholders into deliverable products. Although new product demand has slowed a little recently, we anticipate that significant demand is likely to resume post-Brexit and post-Covid.

### **Policy Simplification**

Student finance is complex. So complex that it is confusing for our customers. Likewise, this complexity makes it very expensive to train SLC colleagues in understanding the idiosyncrasies of the policy landscape. Furthermore, the levels of subjectivity in many aspects of the policy landscape is such that it is very difficult to build logical, technology led systems that allow us to process student finance applications efficiently and effectively. SLC will therefore work with shareholders to:

- simplify existing products wherever possible; and
- redesign the policy commissioning process in order to be able to plan more cost-effectively and to budget more accurately.

In 2020-21, we are working with shareholders to simplify products, such as:

- Disabled Student Allowance – align the eligibility and entitlement rules for undergraduate and postgraduate students; and
- Allow re-use of identity and residency checks from previous years of study.

### **Policy Commissioning Process**

The Tailored Review made several recommendations to enable a faster engagement and delivery model that would allow product development to take place with greater clarity about timescale and budget and at the same time provide ‘space’ for SLC to deliver Evolve. A key imperative is to bring the Discovery and Inception phases of projects into alignment with the financial year, and thus with SLC’s annual budget cycle. To facilitate this, we have agreed with shareholders to move the policy commissioning process forward by two months – initially by one month in 2020-21 and a further month in 2021-22.



# 10

## Summary: Turning Challenge to Opportunity

SLC is an organisation that enables student opportunity and which will strive to deliver an outstanding customer experience. Our aim is to become an organisation that will thrive on the new challenges and opportunities of future years – one that will consistently deliver quality and value to all of our stakeholders, customers, shareholders and staff.

SLC's five strategic goals will enable us to do this by acting as guiding principles to which everyone in the organisation can relate their day-to-day activities and will help inform our decisions and priorities over the years ahead.

