

# Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

## Planning your LSIP: a Six-Step Guide

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LOCAL SKILLS  
IMPROVEMENT  
PARTNERSHIP

**This briefing summarises the key aspects of planning and delivering a successful Local Skills Improvement Plan.**

### What is an LSIP?

A **Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)** is a three-year, employer-led plan for a specific local area in England. Its primary goal is to align post-16 technical education and training with the current and future skills needs of local employers and the wider economy.

### Key Qualities of LSIPs

- **Employer-led:** Driven by local businesses, typically led by an Employer Representative Body (ERB) like a Chamber of Commerce.
- **Evidence-based:** Relies on robust research and engagement with employers to identify specific skills, capabilities, and expertise needed.
- **Action-oriented:** Outlines clear priorities and changes required in local training provision to address identified gaps.
- **Strategic focus:** Addresses the most pressing skills issues aligned with local economic strategies.
- **Collaborative:** Involves employers, education and training providers (FE colleges, universities, independent training providers), local authorities, and other stakeholders.
- **Dynamic and up-to-date:** Intended to be a "living document" reviewed and updated regularly to remain relevant.

## Why Should an Employer Representative Body Lead an LSIP?

1. **Improve the local skills system:** Address skills shortages and recruitment difficulties to benefit employers and employees.
2. **Expand reach and impact:** ERBs can provide insights into the local economy and engage employers in emerging sectors.
3. **Boost member engagement:** Directly address members' skills needs, leading to increased confidence in the responsiveness of the skills system.
4. **Unite stakeholders:** ERBs are uniquely positioned to bring together all local skills system stakeholders for evidence-based change.
5. **Leadership for employer-led training:** ERBs are impartial, objective, and trusted to lead the development of skills plans that meet employer needs.

## Benefits of a Successful LSIP:

- ✓ A more skilled workforce.
- ✓ A stronger local economy.
- ✓ Enhanced influence for the leading organisation.
- ✓ Improved productivity and quality of jobs.

## SUPERCARGE YOUR LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN



# Planning Your LSIP: The 6-Step Guide

**The goal:** Improve the local skills system so that employers and employees get the skills they need to succeed.

## Step 1: Stakeholder Involvement and Governance

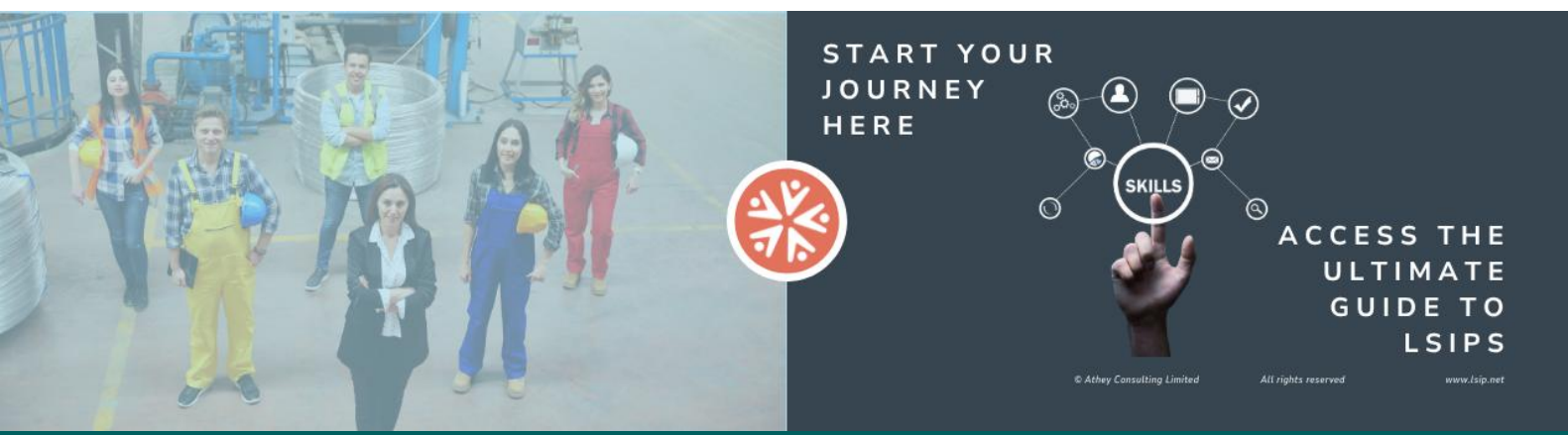
### Advisory Boards and Steering Groups

Form a group with employer representatives, major employers, education institutions, training providers, third sector organisations, and local government. Use them for feedback, progress review, access to employers, and advocacy.

### Choose the right stakeholders

Initially you may want to review what organisations you need to participate in the LSIP process, and what kind of knowledge, experience, networks or decision-making capacity they have. You will want to achieve a balance between public and private sectors, and between employers and education and training institutions. You should also distinguish between:

- **Decision-makers and influencers:** these are the leaders of key organisations, and the ones you want to help steer the priorities on the work programme; sign off and approve the LSIP; and importantly unlock access to any key people that need to input and also help to push the key messages. Key governance structures - LSIP advisory board, LSIP main board
- **Informed practitioners:** the people with the actual insight on recruitment, education and skills in practice who can tell you what works, and how to improve what doesn't. Key structures - LSIP task and finish groups; specialist thematic groups
- **Influencers and funders:** the people who can help with access to resources; or with unblocking policies and legislation to make your LSIP a success
- **Employers:** some key employers, with significant recruitment levels and a well-informed HR department or management are really helpful to involve in the advisory group or task and finish groups



## Have a focused agenda and invite list for early meetings

Have some clear objectives regarding what you know, and what you need to find out. Identify key questions to inform the research program. Scope out who needs to attend these early meetings to make them productive and useful.

- A 2-page summary of key research findings to date will reduce the need to repeat discussions that have already occurred
- In particular reporting on achievements or improvements over the past 12-24 months can create a positive momentum for discussions
- A focused set of 3-4 issues, with a call for decision or action is advised
- Have a strong chair who can move the discussion forward, and a knowledgeable officer who knows the LSIP, local labour market, economy and skills system inside out is also invaluable
- The next step may be to discuss how to action / deliver on research findings - e.g. "We know a lot of employers report a lack of work readiness amongst young people - how can they work with colleges, schools and other institutions to address this?"
- Remember that there will be other forums for stakeholder and employer voices. If they raise an important issue - it's worth discussion and planning how to set up a separate focus group or discussion to gather views, and then move through the meeting / workshop agenda

## Step 2: Planning the Delivery and Research Phase

### Review the previous LSIP and existing other skills strategies

Ask how they are performing? are they still relevant? what's successful about them or has proved to be challenging - and how can we build on this?

### Focused objectives

Set clear goals and aspirations due to limited staff, resources, and time. Develop a task plan with a timetable, milestones, and a budget.

### Focused questions

Sharpen research questions by setting focused LSIP objectives (e.g., addressing specific industries, skills shortages, or recruitment challenges).

### Actionable insights

Prioritise research questions by asking why you need the answer and what benefits it will lead to. If it substantially improves business performance, it's a priority.

### Capability assessment

Identify internal capacities, partner contributions, and elements that will require external consultants. Skills needed include project management, stakeholder management, statistics and analysis, survey design, interpretation, strategy design, policy analysis, and delivery knowledge.

## Step 3: Hire the Right Consultants

### Scope out actions

Determine which LSIP elements will be done internally and which will be outsourced.

### Experienced professionals

Assess consultants based on track record, examples of work, client testimonials, comprehensive knowledge of data and analytical techniques, and experienced personnel.

### Key personnel

Do the consultants with the most time allocated to your LSIP have sufficient / the right experience?

### Specialism

A communications consultancy can't do economic analysis or action planning for skills; an economic analyst can't write speeches for CEOs – when a consultancy firm says they can “do it all” some specialism might be out-sourced. Just ensure you know who this work is being outsourced to and that you are satisfied that they have the experience.

### Quality assurance

Inquire about quality assurance processes and payment schedules tied to satisfactory milestone completion.

### Ongoing support

Emphasise the importance of continuous consultancy beyond the initial report. This includes in-depth labour market reports, horizon scans, regular employer engagement, employer guides, and policy briefings. Trusted consultants act as an extension of your team, providing quick expertise and an understanding of the local context.

## Step 4: Undertaking the Research

### Focused objectives for buy-in

Ensure clear, focused objectives for the LSIP to gain greater stakeholder buy-in and traction.

### Utilise existing research

Build checklists of what you have learnt, where it is relevant or how it applies to your locality, and whether these findings are still current, or need updated. Appraise key gaps that need addressed as part of your LSIP.

## Robust surveys and consultations

Be aware of statistical validity and robustness:

- *Representative Sample & Error Margins:* Understand required sample sizes for statistical validity (e.g., 370 businesses for a 10,000 population with 5% error margin).
- *Sample Representativeness:* Aim for quotas reflective of the business population (size, sector, age). Address under-representation in online surveys through weighting.
- *Optimism Bias:* Be aware that businesses may overestimate growth/recruitment.
- *Perceptions vs. Facts:* Distinguish between verifiable facts and perceptions. Acknowledge when survey findings clash with established facts.

## Step 5: How to Get Great Survey and Consultation Response Rates

**Emphasise relevance:** Clearly communicate why the research matters and how it will impact issues relevant to target participants (e.g., improving skills, addressing shortages, better planning provision).

Tips for engagement:

- Clear, relevant questions tailored to different groups.
- Piggy-back on existing meetings, events, or forums.
- Secure slots at regular meetings to outline the LSIP and invite feedback.
- Highlight links to online surveys or workshops at these meetings.
- Design short, sharp engagement modes (e.g., 2-3 minute online surveys, 15-minute phone calls, 20-minute online focus groups).
- Use online registration and calendar booking.
- Consider buying business samples from marketing databases to supplement member lists.
- Telephone surveys are costly but can provide guaranteed samples.

Use digital and mobile technology:

- Apps for voice/video feedback.
- Automated transcription services (with permission).
- Online surveys are cheap and provide instant data, but response rates can be low.

**Scalable qualitative research:** Create short (e.g., 30-minute) online focus groups/workshops and repeat them multiple times for higher participation.

**Regular review:** Monitor survey returns and workshop participation weekly to adjust strategies and boost responses.

**Employer-friendly language:** Engage employers in formats and language they understand and can contribute to (surveys, focus groups, 1-to-1 consultations, panels, mobile/app quizzes).

## Step 6: Analysis and Interpretation – What Does the Data and Consultation Evidence Mean?

### Start with key questions

After gathering data, ask yourself, your team, and stakeholders:

- What does the data tell us about our locality?
- How reliable is the data (caveats, risks)?
- How does it complement/conflict with existing knowledge?
- Can we explain why the data appears this way (causal factors)?
- Does it reveal insights about specific segments or the general population?
- Do local employers and providers corroborate the data?
- Are issues consistent and widely reported, or isolated?
- Are there myths or stereotypes that don't match the evidence?
- What actions do we currently do that are still justified in terms or rationale and objectives, in the light of current evidence?
- What should we do differently as a result?

### Admit what you don't know and make plans to address this where it is critical

There will be some issues that are raised, and have become priorities, but your information or evidence might still be sketchy. You can't plan for everything, but the best approach is to be transparent and also start to plan how you might address this in follow up studies or the next LSIP.

### Use the insight and collateral further

How else might you use the insights in the report, and build on the community that you have developed? For example:

- Can you further explain the implications for different sectors, such as the further education sector? Perhaps follow-up workshops or focus groups might help?
- Are there positive messages for the locality or region that may help to improve perceptions or help with marketing – e.g. for FDI or investment?
- Does the evidence and analysis help make the case for further advocacy, campaigning or lobbying for changes to national policies or resource allocations?
- Are there examples of employer good practice that could be used to develop collateral or guidance for other employers?
- Could the findings be developed into social media content to widen the audience and broadcast the key messages

**We hope you found this quick guide useful. We are happy to provide informal advice and guidance over summer - please see the back page for contact details!**





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# WE ARE THE LOCAL SKILLS EXPERTS

**OUR SENIOR-LED TEAM  
DELIVERS ROBUST, CUTTING-  
EDGE ANALYSIS AND  
STRATEGIC REPORTS,  
ENSURING EXCEPTIONAL,  
COST-EFFECTIVE RESULTS  
READY TO HAND TO A  
MINISTER OR MAYOR**

## ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

## STRATEGIES & ACTION PLANS

## POLICY



## GLENN ATHEY

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- Senior roles at Futureskills Scotland, London Development Agency, Centre for Cities, The East of England Development Agency, Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP
- BA Economics and Geography, MA European Political Economy, Ph.D. Regional Economic Development



**MIKE SPICER**

- 24 years of experience as an economist, business policy expert, and economic development specialist
- Founded PolicyDepartment after a decade at the British Chambers of Commerce working as Director of Economics, Policy and Research, building strong UK business connections
- BSc Economics, MSc Economics



## HANNAH LAZARUS

- 22 years of experience as a labour market economist specialising in skills strategies
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