

1. Introduction

This paper outlines the LEP Network operational activity to support Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in 2017/18.

Much of the 2017/18 Operations Plan seeks to continue the activity that is currently being delivered in 2016/17, under a management board structure that has run for three years, since April 2014 when the LEP Chairs took over the direction of the LEP Network. Unsolicited feedback from LEPs about 2016/17 has been very positive about the added value support the LEP Network has provided. This paper assumes an ongoing mandate from LEPs for the LEP Network to continue, and will be the basis for ongoing sponsorship commitment and support from the 38 LEPs and government (DCLG / CLoG).

The LEP Network Management Board considered this paper on 14th December 2016, and suggestions and improvements have been included. This paper is now being shared with all the 38 LEPs, in order to capture further comments and feedback at the next Management Board meeting on 25th January 2017.

The Plan will then go back out to all 38 LEP Chairs from the LEP Network Management Board in late January 2017, seeking formal confirmation of continued sponsorship for 2017/18. The Operations Plan 2017/18 will be formally signed off at the Management Board meeting on 1st March 2017.

2. Primary Areas of Focus

The overarching principle of the LEP Network continues to be promoting the sharing of best practice, not speaking on behalf of LEPs or getting in the way of individual LEP - HMG - stakeholder conversations. The LEP Network will continue to operate as a “silent brand” working behind the scenes to support LEPs, providing a service that is “for the LEPs” managed “by the LEPs”. The LEP Network will keep on promoting collective LEP successes, always advocating the role of LEPs and highlighting LEP achievements, not with the aim of attracting attention to the LEP Network itself.

The main areas of focus for the LEP Network continue to be to:

2.1 Best Practice Sharing & Informing:

- 2.1.1 Help LEPs to share best practice, ideas and innovation, working in particular with the LEP Chief Executives/Directors group, who in turn significantly input into the operations of the LEP Network.
- 2.1.2 Following the lead from LEP Chief Executives/Directors, host and coordinate regular operational theme workshops for LEP officers on policy areas, such as Industrial Strategy, skills, communications, BREXIT, ESIF programmes, transport etc. and also LEP operational areas like Assurance Framework, Data on delivery activity and impact successes etc.
- 2.1.3 Keep all LEPs informed, with regular updates and sharing of information that comes from government, their agencies and external stakeholders.
- 2.1.4 Maintaining a LEP contact database, and responding to contact and enquiries from stakeholders, with the aim of linking them to LEPs.

2.2 Promoting LEPs:

- 2.2.1 Being a proactive and vocal advocate for LEPs, promoting LEP achievements and success through the LEP Network website, social media, e-newsletters, at events and the annual LEP Conference, and in all dialogue with government and stakeholders.

- 2.2.2 Continue working with LEPs to promote the importance and strength of business influence in local decision making.

2.3 Influencing:

- 2.3.1 Creating opportunities for LEPs to influence strategic thinking, and emerging government policy, through the co-ordinating of roundtables on strategic topics that are of interest to LEP Chairs, Board Members and Chief Executives/Directors - such as apprenticeships (linked to the Skills Funding Agency), infrastructure (linked to National Infrastructure Committee) or housing (linked to Homes & Communities Agency) - as directed by the Management Board and LEP Executives.
- 2.3.2 Only with collective LEP agreement and input, bring together a single voice on shared matters - e.g. input into Annual Budget consultations from HM Treasury and Industrial Strategy - as was done in 2016/17.

Annex 1 contains information about the detail of activity, and a table of proposed outcomes for 2017/18.

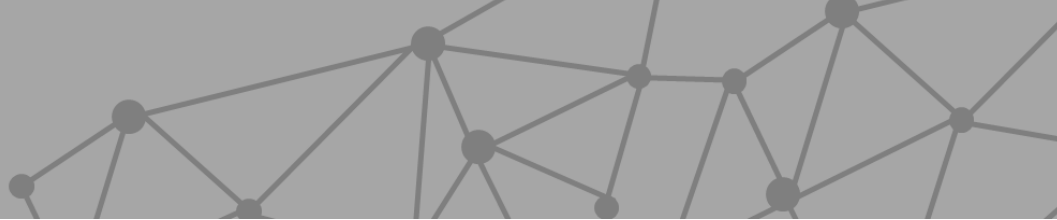
3. Resource Model and Funding

The on-going cost model for delivering this service in 2017/18 is estimated at £430,721 which includes staff costs, back office costs and events and marketing costs. Sponsorship of events and marketing is included in the funding model.

4. Management Board

The LEP Network continues to be a service **for** the LEPs, which is managed **by** the LEPs. The Management Board of nine LEP Chairs, representing self-selected groupings of the 38 LEPs, input into the strategic shape of the activity and continues to be a critical element to successful delivery.

5th January 2017



Annex 1 - 2017/18 Operations Plan Outcomes

The table below summarises the deliverable outcomes from the 2017/18 LEP Network service in the following main focus areas:

- a. Best Practice Sharing & Informing - sharing of information across LEPs to help LEPs not having to recreate local solutions
- b. Promoting - being a proactive advocate of LEP successes and achievements.
- c. Influencing - creating opportunities for LEPs to influence strategic thinking, and emerging government policy.

ACTIVITY	OUTCOME
A. Best Practice Sharing & Informing	
i. LEP CEOs/Directors	meeting 6 times a year (bi-monthly on average).
ii. Operational Workshops	for CEOs and LEP officers, in theme areas (skills; communications etc.).
iii. LEP Email Bulletins	22 internal LEP updates per year, issued fortnightly (less Aug & Dec).
iv. Management Board	meeting 7 times a year (bi-monthly on average).
v. Operational Reports	6 times a year for the Board, and shared with all LEPs.
vi. Secretariat	responding to general enquiries, including the web "contact us" page.
B. Promoting	
i. LEP Conference	1 held every March. LEPs get at least four free tickets.
ii. Annual LEP Report	1 "annual report" promoting LEP impacts, released in March to coincide with the Annual LEP Conference.
iii. External E-newsletters	up to 10 per year - aimed at external stakeholders (also sent to LEPs).
iv. Website	on-going posting of LEP news & other relevant info, incl. events diary.
v. Social Media	regular tweets, LinkedIn updates, uploading Flickr photo page from events for LEP use, and posting on YouTube - as relevant.
vi. Media	responding to requests, seeking LEPs to speak on specific areas, but never on behalf of the whole network.
C. Influencing	
i. Chairs Dinners	twice a year in October and March. Costs covered by a sponsor.
ii. Roundtables	as required on specific topic points.
iii. BRO engagement	ongoing senior engagement with the Business Representative Organisations, including regular meetings with LEP Chairs on the Management Board to keep aligned on strategic points.
iv. 3 rd Party Stakeholders	managed stakeholder engagement with the wider economic development partnership (skills organisations, transport partnerships etc.), undertaken by both the LEP Network team, and also LEP Chairs, Board Members and Executives.
v. Consultations	gathering collective LEP views to respond to important consultations, like HM Treasury Budget etc.
vi. Specific Research Reports	as required, and only with full agreement of LEPs.

Underpinning this is an ongoing seeking of sponsorship to cover the costs of the Conference and Dinners, and towards posting information on LEP Network website / e-Newsletters as relevant.