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Business West Local Skills Improvement Plan Frequently Asked Questions

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What are the LSIPs?

What are the Local Skills Improvement Plans?

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) are 3-year research projects funded by the Department for Education to align post-16 technical education and training with the needs of local employers. Developed by Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs) like Business West, LSIPs gather research on local area business needs and set actionable priorities. These priorities aim to enhance collaboration between employers, training providers, and stakeholders to better prepare employees for the workforce.

How are the LSIPs funded?

The LSIPs are UK Government funded research projects, designed by the Department for Education to help post-16 technical education align with the needs of employers, as part of the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022.

LSIPs do not involve giving procurement, commissioning or funding powers to ERBs, nor do they remove any of the functions devolved to Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs). However, when planning provision, the Department for Education suggests that providers should consider ways to flex their mainstream funding to better meet the skills needs identified within the LSIPs. The LSIP guidance explains that MCAs should be involved in relevant geographies given their role as commissioners of adult education budget funded provision.

What do the LSIPs aim to achieve?

LSIPs strive to match the supply and demand for critical skills, making education more accessible and helping employers understand and plan for their skills needs. These plans are local, employer-led, and developed with input from employers, training providers, and stakeholders to address specific local area requirements. Business West's LSIP roadmaps identify ways to improve skills provision, raise employer awareness, and enhance the education system.

What were the Preliminary Findings?



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The preliminary findings used a standard structure to summarise priority findings by sector and geography, highlighting commonalities and differences. Themes include Critical Workplace, Core and Transferable skills; Core Digital skills; Sector Specific skills, Technological Change and Digitalisation skills needs; Decarbonisation, Sustainability and alignment to the UK's Net Zero Strategy skills needs and Systemic/Labour Market/other reported needs. Each finding linked to the [Institute of Apprenticeships occupational maps](#) and we suggested the most appropriate funding routes.

How will you share the LSIP Reports and findings?

We have refreshed our preliminary findings, and we will be refreshing and resubmitting our report and roadmap for each local area annually. We are producing the findings in different formats to make them more accessible and all our findings are published and freely available [on the LSIP website](#) and [resources page](#). The roadmaps set out specific actions for employers, providers and other stakeholders. The LSIP reports comprise of three sections:

LSIP Priorities - Outlining aims, importance, and the current climate.

Taking the LSIP Priorities Forward - Detailing key outcomes, skills, and training requirements.

Delivering the LSIP Priorities - Summarising current programmes, necessary changes, and specific actions.

Links to each local area report can be found here: [LSIP | Business West](#)

Will Business West be actioning any of the LSIPs outcomes and priorities?

Our LSIP roadmaps will identify how the whole local area can play a part in improving provision, employer awareness and the skills system. Business West will continue hosting events and activities to ensure we can support businesses and stakeholders to maintain meaningful dialogue on an ongoing basis, and we will be feeding our LSIP priorities into the local areas strategy and planning.

Regular collaboration with other ERBs and participation in Department for Education events are integral to sharing best practices and aligning methodologies.

Get Involved

We encourage everyone to participate in the LSIP process. For questions or suggestions, contact LSIP@businesswest.co.uk.

LSIP Timelines, Delivery and the Trailblazer

What was the LSIP Trailblazer?

The LSIP Trailblazers were introduced in the [Skills for Jobs White Paper](#) in January 2021, with Business West Chamber of Commerce designated as one of eight nationwide. This initiative aimed to reshape the technical skills system to better support local labour markets and the wider economy. The Trailblazer focused on sectors experiencing significant changes, exploring



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best practices to inform future business engagement and alignment of post-16 technical training through LSIPs. Business West piloted the LSIP in the West of England Plus from November 2021 to March 2022, focusing on Aerospace, Advanced Engineering, and Health and Social Care. It aimed to provide a detailed business perspective to deliver training that meets employer needs in terms of methods, timing, and cost. Covering the West of England and parts of Somerset and Gloucestershire, the project was aligned with the West of England Institute of Technology’s Strategic Development Fund’s geography to ensure a cohesive approach.

What sectors are you focusing on and why did you choose them?

Following the Trailblazers, the Department for Education rolled out LSIPs in 38 areas across England. Each LSIP focuses on one unique sector (only researching that sector for one local area), two baseline sectors (sectors we are researching across all three local areas), one to two comparator sectors (sectors we are looking at in two local areas), and three cross-cutting themes (core themes and topics that are relevant to all industry sectors including Net Zero, digital and core skills).

We worked closely with stakeholders to identify our sectoral foci using a combination of factors, including where is there the most need and where could we have the most impact. Additionally, as the LSIPs are primarily focused on post-16 technical and further education, we ensured that the initial sectors chosen aligned with provision in the local area.

Region	Gloucestershire	Swindon and Wiltshire	West of England
Cross Cutting Drivers of Change	Digitalisation, Technological Change, Core Digital Net Zero, Sustainability, Decarbonisation, Climate Change Core and Transferable Skills		
Comparator Sectors	Agriculture Agri-Tech Land Management	Health, Social Care, Life Sciences Agriculture, Agri-Tech Land Management	Health Social Care Life Sciences
Baseline Sectors	Construction Advanced Manufacturing Advanced Engineering		
Unique Sectors	Digital Industries	Automotive, Transport, Logistics and Infrastructure	Creative Industries

What did the LSIP Stage One / Year One 2022-2023 focus on?

Stage one focused on 121 business engagement and events to understand business needs and began to translate those needs. By the end of this stage, we developed our local area



roadmaps.

Timeline:

- ◀ October 2022 – April 2023:
 - ◀ **Business Engagement** (1-2-1s and Events)
- ◀ January 2023 – March 2023:
 - ◀ **Translating Business Needs** (Events)
- ◀ February 2023 – May 2023:
 - ◀ **Developing a Regional Road Map** (Events and Meetings)

What did the LSIP Stage Two / Year Two 2023-2024 involve?

Stage two focused on business needs and actions. This stage involved sector-specific deep dives and ongoing updates to ensure the research addressed industry-reported needs. The sector-specific deep dives were 40-minute 1-2-1 interviews conducted with businesses on granular topics within our key sectors, we also ran small focus groups on specific topics and themes within our sectoral foci, as well as larger business forum style events where we cover wider topics and themes in our sectors. We embedded the LSIP process within the local skills system by facilitating collaborative action among employers, providers, and stakeholders.

Timeline:

- ◀ May 2023 – February 2024:
 - ◀ **Business Engagement** (1-2-1s and Focus Groups)
- ◀ February 2024 – April 2024:
 - ◀ **CoDesign and Partner engagement** (Events)
- ◀ February 2024 – present:
 - ◀ **Skills Clinics** (1-2-1s)

What is the focus for LSIP Stage Two / Year Three 2024-2025?

For year three of the LSIPs we are moving away from information gathering and moving toward putting knowledge into action. Our objectives are engaging employers with the Skills System, ensuring information and resources are accessible and useful to all relevant parties and showing the impact of the LSIPs so far.

The project will move from research attainment to impact as we focus on specific sub-sprints into topics such as Green Skills, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Apprenticeships, plus increasing signposting and awareness of local provision via skills clinics, Signposting Local Provision (SLP) 121s, Meet the Expert events and forums.



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Our LSIP research will continue in the West of England and North Somerset, Gloucestershire, and Swindon & Wiltshire until 2025, when our progress report is due to be published.

Timeline:

- ◀ June 2024 – November 2024:
 - ◀ **Sector specific sprints**
- ◀ May 2024 – March 2025:
 - ◀ **Testimonials and Case Studies**
- ◀ September 2024:
 - ◀ **Impact Dashboard**

Who are the LSIPs for?

The core principle of the Business West LSIPs is to provide our granular and current intelligence to all who could benefit, and ensure it is made freely available. We aim to add value to the existing understanding of the skills system and not replace it, nor 'reinvent the wheel'. We are open to discussing how we can align our activities with others looking at skills needs too.

Who can get involved in the LSIPs?

We want to speak with everyone who is involved in and impacted by the skills system, such as employers and providers. Our focus is ensuring our findings are representative of the widest business communities needs including engaging the unengaged. We are working with Small to Medium Enterprises (SME) audiences as much as we can but are also happy to talk to any sized business, from sole traders to multinationals and enterprise.

Anyone interested in the focused sectors and themes, including businesses, education, training, and service providers in Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire, and the West of England and North Somerset. Contact us at LSIP@businesswest.co.uk.

How will LSIPs help learners?

LSIPs ensure training aligns with industry needs, bridging the gap between education and employment. This helps learners and workers acquire relevant skills, making them better prepared for work.

How will LSIPs help businesses?

LSIPs help businesses identify necessary skills and address labour market challenges. They also offer networking opportunities, promoting a collaborative local business community.

Will engaging with the LSIPs provide extra support for my business?

Business West Chambers of Commerce has chamber locations in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and the West of England. By engaging with us, we can help you find the right support for your



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business by connecting you with our network of staff and partners working across a variety of services from access to funding and financial support, export documentation to resilience skills.

How will the LSIPs help colleges and training providers?

Our LSIP research highlights local skills needs and partnership opportunities with local employers. Findings are freely shared, ensuring education and training providers benefit from industry insights, enhancing their reputation and competitiveness contributing to the long-term growth of the local economy.

The LSIPs input into the Local Skills Improvement Fund, providers' Accountability Statements and the curriculum. We also have been meeting with Ofsted to feed into providers' reviews.

Education and independent training providers can engage throughout the project to provide their perspectives. If you have something to contribute, please contact us at LSIP@businesswest.co.uk.

How will the LSIPs bring businesses and education providers together?

We host co-design events and forums for direct discussions on the local area skills needs and solutions. Activities include focus groups, meet the expert events, webinar series, business forums, and local area roadmap events to plan and track actionable priorities.

Are there any planned events I can attend?

We host various events, including workshops, webinars, networking events, focus groups, skills clinics and business forums. Check for updates and event details [here](#).

How can I provide feedback on the LSIPs?

We value collaboration and welcome feedback. To discuss our findings, provide feedback or suggestions, contact any of [the team](#), at LSIP@businesswest.co.uk.

LSIP Impact and Outcomes

How do you monitor the impact of the LSIPs?

We continuously engage with businesses, providers, and stakeholders to gather input and ensure the LSIP is industry-led. Regular meetings, events, and co-design sessions help us monitor progress and align skills supply with demand. We also stay updated and input into the Local Skills Improvement Fund, providers' Accountability Statements and the curriculum plus collaborate with Ofsted and contribute to providers' reviews.

How will the LSIPs aim to help skills provision become more accessible?

Our roadmaps include priorities to simplify the system and ensure employers can easily access relevant information. We work with providers and stakeholders on a collaborative plan to streamline access to existing resources. We are also actioning sub-sprint projects, and task



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and finish groups to support with Green Skills, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Apprenticeships and Career Pathways provision and demand mapping.

How will the LSIPs improve demand for skills?

Through our annual report, roadmap, and ongoing employer engagement, we highlight skills needs and solutions. Our awareness events and partnerships aim to inform employers on identified needs and potential solutions for addressing them. We are also running Skills Clinics across all 3 local areas to provide local employers opportunities for 121 support for their business skills needs.

What is the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF)?

The LSIF provides investment in the technical skills system to better support the needs of the local labour market and wider economy and supports further education providers to respond collectively to the LSIPs. The LSIF acts as a catalyst for change and should be used alongside mainstream programme funding. Examples include new facilities and equipment, the delivery and development of new courses and curriculum and building upon governance and teaching expertise.

The LSIF directly responds to LSIP findings, shaping proposals based on our research. Business West collaborates with LSIF partners to refine, raise awareness, and drive further change through these projects.

How will the LSIPs relate to and support Net Zero, climate change and green skills?

Green skills and the UK's Net Zero strategy are integral to the LSIPs. We consistently gather and report on business insights related to these themes, including decarbonisation and climate change, throughout our engagements and we are running local area sprints into Green Skills to understand provision and demand further. Click for our latest [Green Skills Report for the West of England](#).

What will I start to see happening as the result of LSIP findings in my local area?

Colleges and Independent Training Providers (ITPs) will respond to LSIP findings via the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) and reflect these needs in their provision. For instance, our West of England Plus LSIP Trailblazer helped establish Hydrogen South West and identified other priority areas.

In the West of England and North Somerset, we have recently run a series of webinars with Access Creative College on the Impact of Creative Education and Opportunities in Creative Employment, aimed at parents, care-givers and students as a response to our research. In Swindon and Wiltshire projects having included the development of an Eco House at Wiltshire College's Lackham Campus and a digital skills centre at the Trowbridge Campus. Additionally, Hartpury College and University in Gloucestershire have utilised the fund to run Agri-Tech Short Courses for Professionals, delivered through the Hartpury Agri-Tech Centre. They have also launched a comprehensive web-based app and interactive platform that now serves as a valuable tool for individuals, businesses and educational institutions to assess, track and



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enhance digital skills in Agriculture, Agri-Tech and Land Management. This is just a snapshot of some of the exciting projects taking place across the local areas.

We have received some brilliant testimonials from key stakeholders and local businesses to help showcase the impact the LSIPs have had so far, [click here to watch](#).

For further information or to get involved, please contact LSIP@businesswest.co.uk.