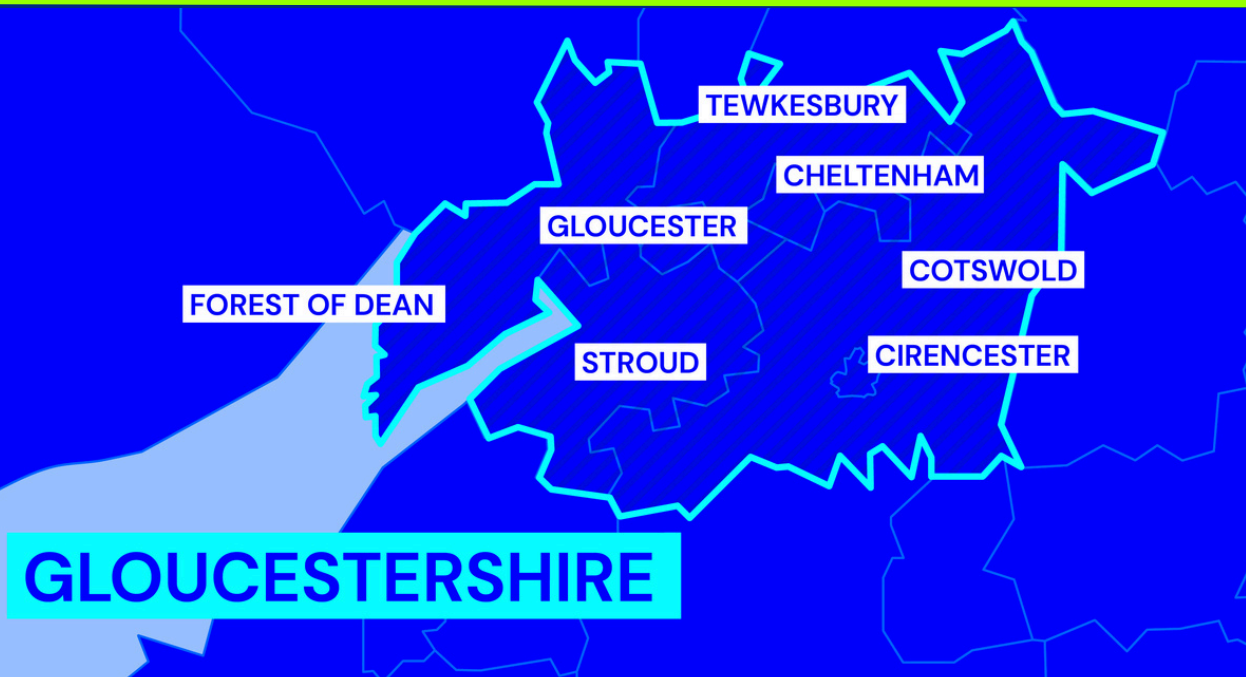


Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan 2026



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Corporation

'This Local Skills Improvement Plan has been approved by the Secretary of State in accordance with the requirements of section 1 of the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, and the relevant published statutory guidance'

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Introduction

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) are statutory, employer-led plans, introduced through the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, that set out priority skills needs and required actions over a rolling three-year cycle.

Local employers, education and training providers, and wider stakeholders contributed to this LSIP through one-to-one interviews, focus groups and survey responses. This primary data was supported with labour market intelligence and secondary research to ensure the skills needs reported are representative of the regional skills landscape.

The skills needs and actions outlined in this LSIP are designed for local employers, education and training providers, and wider stakeholders, to respond to these current and future skills needs.

In Gloucestershire, the LSIP provides a coordinated framework to respond to sector-specific demand, address geographic inequalities in access to skills, and support economic resilience and growth across both urban centres and rural communities.

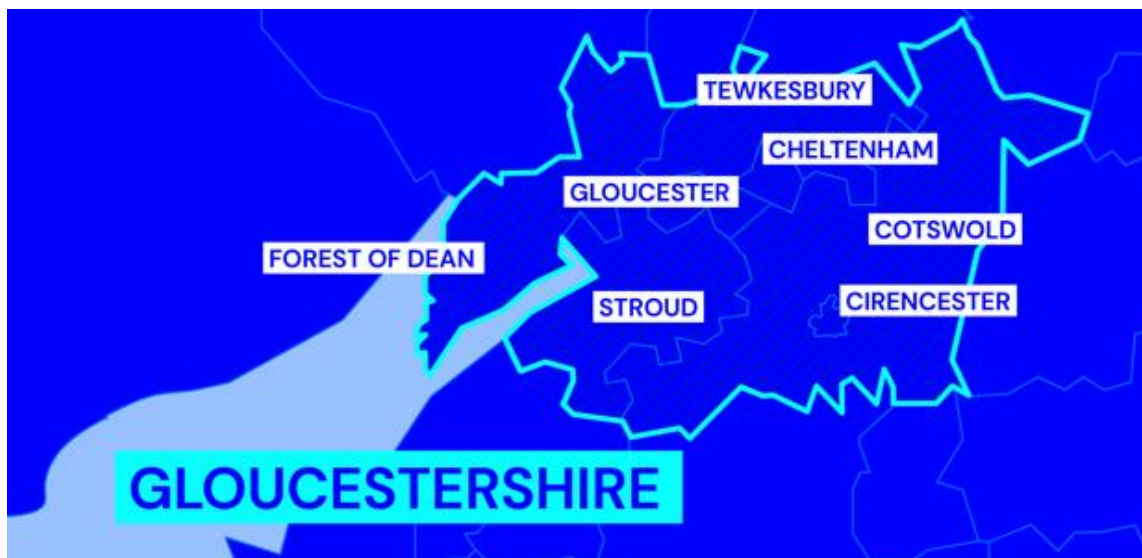
This LSIP aligns with the [Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan](#), the priority sectors identified and the Mission Statements, particularly Mission One: Talent and Future Skills, and supports a more coordinated, employer-led approach to skills planning and delivery. The detailed mapping of priority skills needs, actions and delivery partners is set out in Annex C.

This LSIP has also been developed in consideration of wider national policy frameworks, including the Government's Opportunity and Growth Missions, the Industrial Strategy, the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, the Get Britain Working Plan and the Clean Energy Jobs Plan. Collectively, these policies emphasise the need for a more responsive, employer-informed technical education and skills system, increased labour market participation, stronger higher technical pathways, and accelerated workforce development to support digitalisation, productivity and the transition to a lower-carbon economy. The Gloucestershire LSIP translates these national ambitions into locally relevant priorities and actions that reflect the county's economic strengths, workforce challenges and future growth opportunities.

"Business West are proud to deliver the Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) on behalf of businesses, education and training providers and key stakeholders in the local area. LSIPs put employers at the heart of local skills planning, aligning training with real business need and strengthening collaboration with education providers to improve options for learners, and help businesses plan ahead."

– **Douglas Ure**, CEO, Business West

Executive Summary



Gloucestershire has a diverse and evolving economy, with strengths in advanced manufacturing and engineering, construction, health and social care, and a rapidly growing cyber and digital sector centred around Cheltenham and the Golden Valley development. At the same time, the county's geography presents distinct challenges, with variation in economic activity and access to opportunity across urban and rural areas.

Through collaboration with local authorities and education and training providers, and reviewing supporting documents such as the Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan and the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, the following priority sectors were selected for inclusion in this LSIP:

Security, Cyber and Digital Technologies	Green Energy Generation
Agri-Tech and Agriculture	Creative Industries
Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering	Cultural and Visitor Economy (including Sustainable Tourism)

Employer engagement has also identified a consistent set of priority skills needs. These include increasing:

- Demand for sustainability and net zero capabilities
- Widespread gaps in critical and transferable skills
- Growing requirements for digital and AI literacy
- Persistent recruitment challenges, particularly in mid-level and supervisory roles

Employers also reported difficulties navigating a complex and fragmented skills system, alongside challenges in attracting and developing new entrants to the workforce.

In response, this LSIP outlines a series of actions focused on improving the clarity and accessibility of training provision, embedding core and transferable skills across the system, strengthening workforce pipelines, and enabling more flexible and responsive approaches to upskilling and reskilling. Particular emphasis is placed on improving coordination between employers, providers and stakeholders, and ensuring that provision reflects both sector-specific needs and the diversity of local economies across the county.

These skills needs are broken down further in Annex A sectorally and thematically. The Gloucestershire LSIP builds upon engagement, evidence and partnerships developed through the previous LSIP cycle, ensuring continuity of employer voice and sector collaboration across the county. This has included ongoing engagement with employers, providers and representative organisations across Gloucestershire's priority sectors, including continued collaboration with Hartpury University and Hartpury College, the Royal Agricultural University and wider land-based sector stakeholders, the aerospace and advanced engineering & manufacture cluster and partner organisations in digital industries. Previous and ongoing engagement activity has helped strengthen understanding of Gloucestershire's agri-tech, rural economy and land-based skills needs, alongside the increasing role of digital technology, sustainability and innovation within the future workforce landscape.

Actions (Section 2) and activities (Annex B) developed respond directly to these priorities, focusing on stronger employer-provider collaboration, improved access to and navigation of training, and more flexible, relevant provision. Delivery will be coordinated through governance structures, enabling ongoing co-design and alignment with employer demand. In a period of significant reform to the post-16 system, the LSIP can and will play a critical role in ensuring that employers are able to understand and engage with emerging opportunities and changing provision.

This LSIP will continue to be delivered through a programme of targeted activity, developed collaboratively with employers, providers and stakeholders across the county. Full details of delivery activity is provided in Annex B, including responsibilities, partnerships and intended outcomes. Activity design and prioritisation is continuing through engagement with the Gloucestershire Business Board, ensuring that actions remain aligned with employer demand, local growth priorities and evolving delivery capability.

Delivery of the LSIP will continue to involve collaboration between employers, further education providers, higher education institutions, independent training providers, local authorities and wider sector stakeholders. Higher education institutions will play a particularly important role within priority sectors requiring higher-level technical capability, applied research and professional upskilling, including cyber and digital technologies, advanced manufacturing, agri-tech, sustainability and low carbon innovation.

Strategic and Economic Context

ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND GROWTH AMBITIONS

Gloucestershire’s economic strategy is framed through the Local Growth Plan (2025–2035), which sets out a long-term vision to enhance prosperity, environmental sustainability and wellbeing across the county. The plan positions Gloucestershire as a “forward-thinking, pro-business region” with a clear ambition to unlock its economic potential through sustainable and inclusive growth (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.4–5*).¹ The LSIP will work alongside the Local Growth Plan, the Get Gloucestershire Working Plan and other local initiatives to ensure these needs are met.

The county benefits from a strong combination of economic and environmental assets. It is recognised for its innovative businesses, cultural vitality, and high-quality natural environment, which together contribute to its attractiveness as a place to live, work and invest. Its strategic location, within close proximity to major economic centres including Bristol, Birmingham and London, provides further connectivity advantages and supports access to wider labour and product markets (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.44*).²

The Growth Plan highlights a broadly positive economic base, underpinned by competitive salaries, strong business activity and a diverse sectoral mix. However, it also identifies a number of structural challenges. These include the need to raise productivity, address deprivation, deliver affordable housing, respond to climate change and close persistent skills gaps (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.6*).³

The strategic context is therefore one of opportunity alongside constraint, where economic growth must be carefully managed to ensure that it is both sustainable and inclusive. The Growth Plan emphasises that development should improve outcomes for disadvantaged groups and ensure that the benefits of growth are shared across communities (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.4*).⁴

PRIORITY SECTORS AND DRIVERS OF GROWTH

The Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan identifies a set of high-growth sectors that underpin the county’s economic strategy and align with national industrial priorities. These include advanced engineering and aerospace, energy transition and low carbon innovation, secure technologies and digital, and agri-tech, alongside a wider rural and visitor economy (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.2; p.6*).⁵

Advanced manufacturing and aerospace are key components of the county’s economic base, supported by a strong industrial heritage and the presence of major employers and supply chains. These sectors contribute to high-value production and underpin productivity growth.

¹ Gloucestershire Council (2026): [Gloucestershire’s Local Growth Plan](#) (hereafter “LGP”).

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The secure technologies and digital sector, particularly cyber, is identified as a national strength. Gloucestershire is described as a leader in cyber and digital innovation, supported by a strong cluster of businesses, research institutions and innovation assets.

The Growth Plan also highlights the transformative impact of digital technologies, artificial intelligence and data across the economy, noting both the opportunities for innovation and the implications for skills demand (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.48–49*).⁶ Gloucestershire’s cyber ecosystem continues to demonstrate significant national strength, supported by the presence of GCHQ, the Golden Valley development, CyNam, Hub8, higher education partnerships and an established network of cyber and technology businesses. However, stakeholders highlighted that despite strong ecosystem growth and increasing national recognition, the county has not yet consistently translated these assets into large-scale home-grown cyber scale-ups rooted within Gloucestershire. Emerging activity focused on venture creation, innovation support and early-stage business growth aims to strengthen the county’s ability to retain talent, attract investment and support the development of high-growth cyber and digital businesses locally. Forecasts linked to recent cyber ecosystem development activity suggest the potential creation of around 300 high-skilled jobs and over £31 million in regional GVA through targeted support for cyber, defence and national security innovation activity⁷.

Low carbon energy and green growth form another central pillar of the local economy. The county’s ambitions around environmental sustainability, net zero and nature recovery are closely linked to economic development, with opportunities in green industries, infrastructure and land use (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.6; p.46–47*).⁸

The rural economy is also a defining feature, supporting sectors such as agriculture, agri-tech, tourism and land-based industries. These sectors are closely tied to Gloucestershire’s natural environment and play an important role in both economic activity and community resilience (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.6*).⁹

Alongside these high-growth sectors, the plan highlights the importance of the foundational economy, including health, education, retail, construction and public services, which underpin employment and everyday economic functioning.

Higher education institutions also play a distinct role in supporting higher-level technical skills development, professional upskilling and innovation-led workforce development across Gloucestershire. Through Levels 4–7 provision, applied research, employer collaboration and knowledge exchange activity, universities contribute not only to workforce supply, but also to business innovation, productivity and the adoption of

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<https://gloucestershire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/b25262/Supporting%20the%20Growth%20of%20the%20Cyber%20Eco%20System%20-%20Sidekick%20Thursday%2012-Feb-2026%2014.00%20Gloucestershir.pdf?T=9>

⁸ LGP

⁹ LGP

emerging technologies. This is particularly important within sectors such as cyber and digital, advanced manufacturing, agri-tech and low carbon industries, where skills requirements are evolving rapidly in response to AI, digitalisation and sustainability challenges.

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of strengthening progression pathways between further education, higher education and employment, ensuring that learners and existing workers can progress flexibly through technical, professional and academic routes aligned to local labour market demand. This includes clearer pathways into higher technical qualifications, degree apprenticeships, modular professional learning and employer-responsive upskilling provision.

Higher education institutions were also identified as important partners in supporting graduate retention and talent attraction within Gloucestershire. Strengthening collaboration between employers, FE providers and HEIs can help retain skilled graduates within the county, support local innovation and improve alignment between higher-level provision and the evolving needs of Gloucestershire's priority sectors.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND ECONOMIC MISSIONS

The Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan provides a comprehensive strategic framework through five cross-cutting economic missions. These are:

- Talent and future skills
- Supporting employment opportunities for all
- Thriving communities and culture
- Environment, housing and infrastructure
- Innovation, investment and enterprise (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.8–9*)¹⁰

These missions collectively define the county's approach to economic development, emphasising inclusivity, sustainability and collaboration. They are designed to act as enabling conditions for growth, ensuring that economic development is aligned with wider social and environmental objectives (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.4–5*).¹¹

Skills are positioned as a central component of this framework. The "talent and future skills" mission explicitly recognises the need to invest in the workforce to support long-term productivity and resilience, including attracting and retaining working-age residents and strengthening education and training pathways (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.14*).¹²

The Growth Plan also highlights the importance of aligning skills provision with economic demand, strengthening collaboration between employers and education providers, and

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supporting reskilling and upskilling in response to technological and sectoral change (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.18*).¹³

LABOUR MARKET DYNAMICS AND KEY CHALLENGES

Gloucestershire's labour market is characterised by relatively strong overall performance, supported by a skilled population and high levels of employment. However, the Growth Plan identifies significant disparities in outcomes across communities, reflecting wider social and economic inequalities (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.26*).¹⁴

Deprivation remains a challenge in both urban and rural areas. The plan notes that some neighbourhoods fall within the most deprived nationally, with issues relating to income, employment, education and health acting as interconnected barriers to opportunity (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.24–25*).¹⁵

Economic inactivity is linked to a range of factors, including health conditions, caring responsibilities and structural barriers to employment. The Growth Plan emphasises that removing these barriers is essential to achieving inclusive growth and improving labour market participation (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.22–23*).¹⁶

Skills challenges are also evident. While Gloucestershire has a strong skills base overall, disparities in educational attainment persist, limiting access to employment and progression for some groups. The increasing role of digital technologies and artificial intelligence is expected to further reshape labour demand, requiring ongoing adaptation of the skills system (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.48*).¹⁷

Infrastructure and access also play a role in shaping labour market outcomes. Transport connectivity, digital access and housing affordability are identified as key enabling factors influencing access to employment and economic participation (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.42–44*).¹⁸

Alongside these wider labour market challenges, Gloucestershire is also developing targeted employment support activity through the emerging Connect to Work programme, delivered via the Gloucestershire Employment and Skills Hub. The programme supports individuals facing barriers to employment, including those experiencing health-related or wider economic inactivity, while also working with employers to strengthen inclusive recruitment and progression opportunities. This aligns closely with the LSIP's focus on workforce participation, accessible skills pathways and supporting employers to address recruitment and retention challenges across the county.

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GLOUCESTERSHIRE'S DISTINCTIVE ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Gloucestershire's economy contains several distinctive characteristics which shape local skills demand and differentiate the county from neighbouring economies. Most notably, Gloucestershire is home to one of the UK's most significant cyber and secure technology clusters, centred around Cheltenham, GCHQ and the emerging Golden Valley development. This creates demand not only for specialist cyber and digital occupations, but also for wider supporting roles across professional services, administration, project management, infrastructure and supply chains.

The county also contains significant rural and semi-rural geographies, creating differing labour market conditions and access challenges between districts. Rurality influences transport connectivity, access to training provision, workforce mobility and employer recruitment patterns, particularly within sectors such as agri-tech, visitor economy, construction and health and social care.

The LSIP has therefore adopted a place-sensitive approach, recognising that skills priorities vary across Gloucestershire's districts and local economies. This aligns closely with Mission One: Talent and Future Skills within the Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, alongside the wider ambition to ensure inclusive and sustainable economic growth across all parts of the county.

The strategic landscape is also evolving in response to Local Government Reorganisation and the broader devolution agenda. The LSIP has been developed in recognition of these changes and is intended to provide continuity and alignment between employer-led skills priorities, economic planning and emerging governance structures across Gloucestershire.

ALIGNMENT WITH WIDER STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND DELIVERY FRAMEWORKS

The Gloucestershire LSIP has been developed in consideration of relevant national skills, employment and economic policy, including the Government's Opportunity and Growth Missions, the Get Britain Working Plan, the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper and the Clean Energy Jobs Plan. These policy frameworks collectively emphasise productivity growth, employer-responsive technical skills provision, labour market participation, progression pathways and support for the transition to a lower-carbon economy.

The priorities identified through employer engagement in Gloucestershire strongly align with these national ambitions, particularly in relation to digitalisation, emerging technologies, workforce participation, technical skills, sustainability and inclusive access to opportunity.

The LSIP sits within and supports the strategic framework established by the Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan. It contributes directly to the delivery of the plan's economic missions, particularly those relating to talent and skills, employment opportunities and inclusive growth.

In relation to sector development, the LSIP supports the Growth Plan’s ambition to strengthen high-growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing, cyber and digital, low carbon industries and agri-tech, by aligning skills provision with employer demand and supporting workforce development in these areas.

The LSIP also aligns closely with the “talent and future skills” mission, which emphasises the importance of developing a robust skills pipeline, strengthening education and training systems, and ensuring that residents can access opportunities to improve their employment prospects (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.14–15*).¹⁹

In addition, the LSIP supports the “supporting employment opportunities for all” mission by contributing to efforts to reduce economic inactivity and remove barriers to participation. The Growth Plan highlights the importance of inclusive pathways into work, targeted support for disadvantaged groups, and stronger links between skills provision and employment opportunities (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.22–23*).²⁰

The plan also makes explicit reference to “Get Gloucestershire Working” as a supporting strategy within this wider framework (*Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, p.18; p.28*).²¹ While detailed documentation for this programme is not set out within the available evidence, its inclusion indicates an intended alignment between employment, skills and labour market participation initiatives. The LSIP complements this by ensuring that skills provision supports both entry into employment and progression within the labour market.

More broadly, the LSIP contributes to a coordinated approach to economic development in Gloucestershire, linking sector growth, workforce development and inclusive outcomes. By strengthening employer engagement, improving the responsiveness of the skills system, and supporting progression pathways, it helps to translate the strategic ambitions of the Growth Plan into practical, deliverable actions.

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Part 1: Local Skills Needs

The following priority skills needs have been identified through extensive engagement with business, stakeholders and education and training providers across Gloucestershire. This engagement has been supported by analysis of labour market intelligence and alignment with regional strategic priorities, including the Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan.

While several of the identified skills priorities are interconnected, our discussions with stakeholders and partners advised against consolidating these into broader thematic groupings, as doing so risked obscuring distinct employer pressures, delivery requirements and intervention needs. The LSIP therefore retains a deliberately granular structure to ensure that actions remain locally relevant, measurable and operationally actionable across Gloucestershire's economy.

The LSIP also recognises an important distinction between digital and cyber as priority sectors in their own right, and digital capability as a cross-cutting workforce requirement across the wider economy. While Gloucestershire's cyber and secure technology cluster requires specialist technical skills linked to software development, cyber security, data and advanced digital systems, employers across all sectors also identified the need for stronger baseline digital confidence, digital communication skills and the effective adoption of digital tools and AI-enabled technologies within operational roles. The LSIP therefore addresses both sector-specific technical capability and broader workforce digitalisation needs through separate, but complementary, priority areas.

These priorities align with the Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan ambitions to strengthen sectoral strengths whilst addressing wider systemic and thematic needs [advanced manufacturing/cyber and digital/inclusive growth/productivity/low carbon transition etc.] by ensuring the workforce and skills system can respond to identified employer demand.

The skills needs identified through employer and stakeholder engagement reflect a combination of immediate workforce pressures [red], medium-term transition requirements [amber] and longer-term structural changes [green] within Gloucestershire's economy. Immediate concerns were most commonly linked to recruitment challenges, workforce retention, access to training and enabling skills gaps, while medium-term priorities focused on areas such as digitalisation, emerging technologies, net zero transition and workforce pipeline development over the three-year LSIP period. Employers and stakeholders also highlighted longer-term challenges associated with demographic change, automation, changing occupational demand and the future technical capability required to support economic growth, innovation and resilience across the county.

Time Horizon	RAG rating	Illustrative Themes
Immediate workforce pressures		Recruitment challenges, enabling skills, access to training
Medium-term (3 year) priorities		AI adoption, net zero transition, sector pipeline development, work opportunity provision
Longer-term future needs		Automation impacts, demographic pressures, future technical capability

Employers across Gloucestershire consistently highlighted demand for flexible adult upskilling, modular learning and workforce development opportunities to support career progression, productivity improvement and adaptation to technological and sectoral change. Providers also expressed strong commitment to supporting these needs where possible. However, stakeholders recognised that the wider funding and policy landscape for adult skills provision continues to evolve, including changes to eligibility, funding priorities and support for certain types of higher-level and professional learning. As a result, delivery of some workforce development activity may increasingly require a combination of public investment, employer co-investment and more targeted prioritisation of provision. Continued dialogue between employers, providers and strategic partners will therefore be important to ensure that workforce development priorities remain achievable, sustainable and aligned to both employer demand and available delivery mechanisms.

Stakeholders identified current examples of good practice in responding to these challenges, including delivery of flexible agri-tech and agri-digital professional development activity designed to support adult workforce upskilling within Gloucestershire’s agricultural sector. Engagement highlighted growing employer demand for practical technology, data and sustainability-related skills, alongside continued interest in apprenticeships, technical progression pathways and flexible workforce development opportunities linked to rural and land-based industries.

	Urgency	Economic Impact/Scale	Feasibility
Maximising the Development of the Cyber and Digital Cluster’s Potential	Medium	High	High
Addressing & Meeting Diverse Regional Priorities	Medium	Medium	High
Emerging Technologies, Digitalisation and AI	Medium	High	High
Meeting Net Zero and Sustainability Needs	Medium	Medium	Medium
Critical and Enabling Skills	High	Medium	High
Access and Understanding Training Provision	High	Medium	Medium
Working with Young People and New Entrants to the Workforce	High	Medium	High
Recruitment Challenges	High	High	High

The local skills needs were selected as they were represented in all the key priority sectors for Gloucestershire. While timescales on these priorities vary, all were deemed to be of medium or high importance when looking at the current and future needs of the local area and were recurring themes within primary research from employers, education and training providers and local stakeholders.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE LOCAL SKILLS NEEDS STATEMENTS:

1. Maximising the Development of the Cyber and Digital Cluster's Potential

Expand specialist digital, cyber and security skills to support Gloucestershire's cyber ecosystem, building on assets such as GCHQ and the Golden Valley development and recognise the roles in this sector outside of technically aligned roles. This priority directly supports the Local Growth Plan's ambitions around Talent and Future Skills and Innovation, Investment and Enterprise by strengthening Gloucestershire's position as a nationally significant cyber, digital and secure technologies cluster.

2. Addressing & Meeting Diverse Regional Priorities

Respond to sub-regional disparities in skills needs and access to opportunity, including rural challenges and place-specific sector demands across Gloucestershire. This priority supports the Local Growth Plan's commitment to inclusive economic growth by recognising the distinct opportunities, challenges and sector strengths that exist across Gloucestershire's diverse local economies and communities.

3. Emerging Technologies, Digitalisation and AI

Address gaps in both foundational digital skills and the adoption of emerging technologies, including AI, digitalisation and automation, with a need for capability in safe, ethical and effective AI use. This priority aligns with the Local Growth Plan's focus on innovation, productivity and future workforce readiness by supporting the adoption of emerging technologies, digital capability and AI across Gloucestershire's economy.

4. Meeting Net Zero and Sustainability Needs

Strengthen employer understanding and practical application of net zero and sustainability, including demand for technical skills in retrofit, solar PV, battery systems and ESG reporting, alongside clearer business-focused guidance. This priority directly contributes to the Local Growth Plan's mission of building in balance with nature by supporting the skills, workforce and innovation needed for the transition to a low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economy.

5. Critical and Enabling Skills

Close persistent gaps in critical and transferable skills across the workforce, alongside a shortage of leadership and management capability, particularly at supervisory and mid-level roles. This priority supports the Local Growth Plan's Talent and Future Skills mission by improving access to the transferable, employability and foundational skills required to support productivity, progression and workforce resilience.

6. Accessing and Understanding Training Provision

Simplify and improve employer navigation of the skills system, addressing low awareness and understanding of training provision, pathways, funding and available support. This priority supports the Local Growth Plan's ambition for supporting employment opportunities for all by improving awareness, accessibility and coordination of local skills and training pathways across Gloucestershire.

7. Working with Young People and New Entrants to the Workforce

Improve work-readiness of young people and new entrants to the workforce, particularly employability skills, workplace behaviours, and awareness of sector pathways and progression opportunities. This priority aligns with the Local Growth Plan's ambition to retain and develop local talent by strengthening pathways from education into employment and supporting young people to build careers within Gloucestershire.

8. Recruitment Challenges

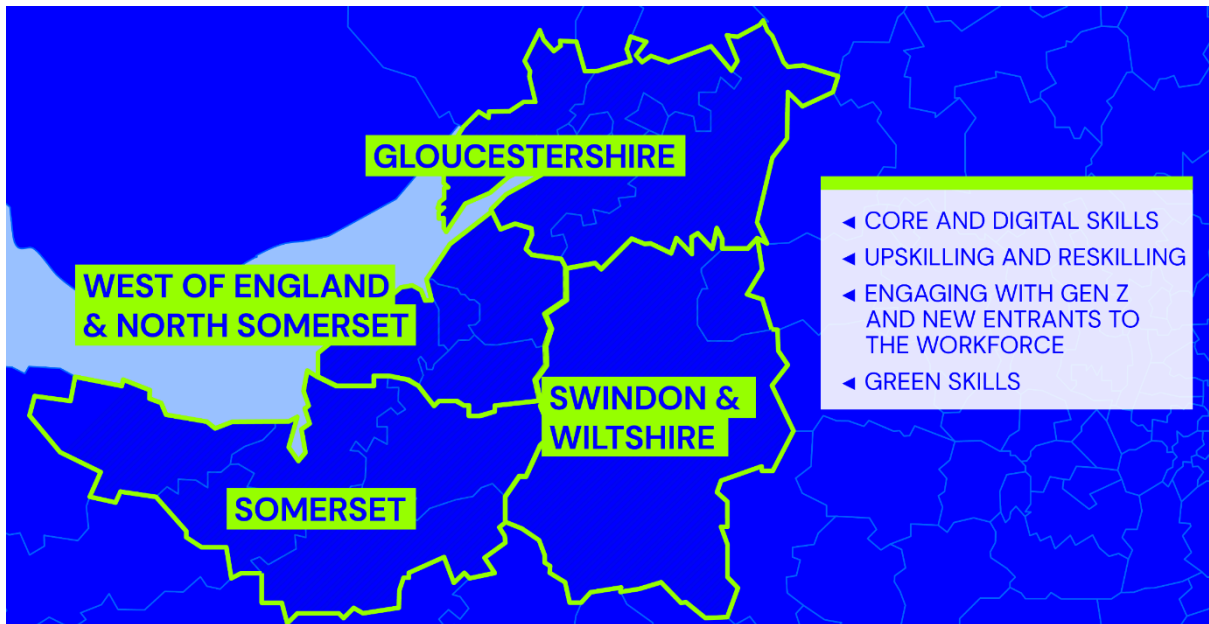
Address ongoing recruitment and retention challenges, including difficulties attracting talent, an ageing workforce in key sectors, and limited progression pathways impacting workforce stability. This priority supports the Local Growth Plan's ambitions around inclusive growth and economic resilience by helping employers address workforce shortages, improve retention and widen participation across key sectors.

In line with LSIP guidance, the report identifies a focused set of headline priority skills needs statements, to clearly articulate the most significant and actionable challenges facing the Gloucestershire economy. These have been developed by distilling the core themes emerging from our employer engagement methodology alongside regional priorities and gathered evidence into concise, outcome-focused statements that provide a clear basis for prioritisation and coordinated action.

Employers and stakeholders highlighted skills needs spanning the full learner and workforce pipeline, from early careers engagement and entry-level employability through to higher technical and specialist skills at Levels 4–8. The LSIP therefore recognises the importance of coherent progression pathways between schools, further education, higher education, apprenticeships and workforce upskilling routes.

Particular emphasis was placed on improving progression into priority sectors, including advanced manufacturing, cyber and digital, construction, health and social care, and net zero-related occupations, alongside strengthening modular, flexible and work-based learning opportunities that support both new entrants and the existing workforce to progress and adapt as labour market needs evolve.

Qualification/Skills Level	Typical Pipeline/Progression Route	Key Gloucestershire Needs & Themes
Pre-entry / Community Learning	Outreach, community learning, employability support, adult re-engagement, careers	Tackling inactivity, understanding pathways, accessibility barriers, confidence, digital inclusion and widening participation
Entry Level – Level 2	Schools, traineeships, supported internships, apprenticeships, FE entry provision	Core employability, enabling skills, literacy/numeracy, digital basics, work readiness and sector awareness
Level 3	T Levels, apprenticeships, technical diplomas, bootcamps, FE full-time provision	Increased employer-aligned technical provision, placements, industry-standard equipment and clearer pathways into priority sectors
Levels 4–5	Higher technical qualifications, higher apprenticeships, modular and flexible provision	Expansion of higher technical skills aligned to cyber, digital, engineering, construction, green technologies and health
Levels 6–8	Degrees, degree apprenticeships, postgraduate and specialist technical provision	Retention and attraction of high-level talent, innovation capability, leadership, advanced technical and research-linked skills
Workforce Upskilling & Reskilling	CPD, modular learning, short courses, employer-led training	Flexible delivery, rapid response provision, digitalisation, AI adoption, net zero transition and management capability
Cross-cutting Progression Needs	Careers education, transitions between providers and employers	Clearer progression pathways, stronger FE/HE collaboration, employer engagement and improved understanding of opportunities
Employer Engagement & Applied Learning	Industry placements, work experience, T Levels, employer projects, knowledge exchange	Stronger employer-provider collaboration, improved work-readiness, applied technical capability and clearer transition into employment



The findings in this report represent the 1172 engagements that took place from October 2025 until June 2026. Following these engagements with businesses, stakeholders, Further Education Colleges, Independent Training providers, Higher Education Institutions and in collaboration with local authorities in the area, the following themes were identified as the priority skills needs for Gloucestershire. Collated from one-to-one interviews, sector skills discussions, survey responses and wider skills discussions, as well as incorporating labour market intelligence and Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan.

This engagement activity included one-to-one employer interviews, sector roundtables, stakeholder workshops, provider discussions, advisory meetings, surveys and wider business engagement activity. Engagement was undertaken with employers of varying sizes across Gloucestershire's priority sectors, alongside further education providers, higher education institutions, independent training providers, local authorities, sector bodies and wider stakeholder organisations. This mixed-method approach enabled both detailed qualitative insight and broader triangulation of emerging themes.

In addition to direct and survey-based engagement, the LSIP evidence base has been further informed by one-to-many engagement delivered through a programme of general business events and partner-led sessions, as well as the incorporation of LSIP content into general business surveying mechanisms. These engagements enabled the inclusion of a wider employer audience, including those not reached through structured interviews or surveys. In some cases, detailed attendee data was not available to enable full sectoral or geographic classification. However, where events had a defined sectoral focus, contributions have been incorporated and attributed accordingly within the relevant sector evidence base.

As with the supplementary survey data, insights gathered through these channels have been used to triangulate and strengthen the overall findings, rather than as standalone determinants of priority skills needs.

SUPPLEMENTARY EMPLOYER SURVEYS, PAN-REGIONAL (*OTHER UNCLASSIFIED MAJORITY RESPONSES)

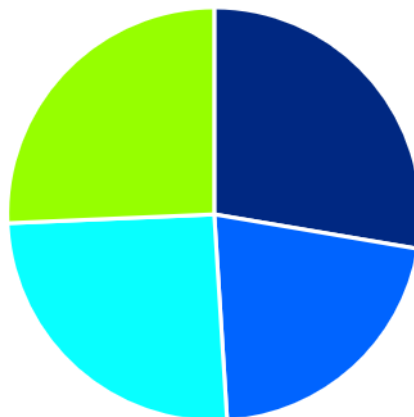
In addition to targeted LSIP engagement activity, a broad dataset of employer insight was incorporated through general business surveying activity undertaken across Business West activities. This included a total of 553 responses where LSIP-related questions were embedded, enabling the capture of wider employer perspectives beyond sector-specific or place-based engagement.

Due to the structure of this dataset, responses cannot be fully disaggregated by individual LSIP geography or priority sector. As such, the findings have been treated as supplementary, pan-regional evidence to inform overall trends and triangulate key themes emerging from primary LSIP engagement.

Respondents have been aligned at a high level using Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) groupings and indicative geography. On this basis, the distribution of responses is as follows:

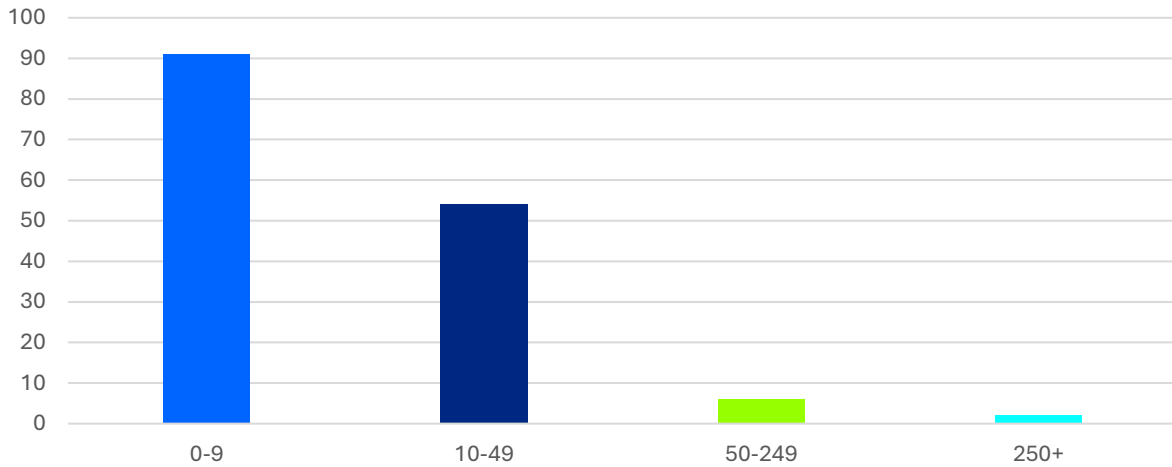
- 28% aligned to Gloucestershire
- 21% aligned to Swindon and Wiltshire
- 26% aligned to Somerset
- 25% aligned to West of England and North Somerset

Wider employer insight survey responses by region (from supplementary evidence)



Reported engagement from within Business West membership represents less than 3% of total engagements within the LSIP, ensuring a broad representation of employer sentiment across Gloucestershire.

Organisation size for Gloucestershire (from supplementary evidence)



This dataset provides additional context on employer sentiment, workforce challenges, and skills needs across the wider business base. While not used in isolation to determine priority actions, it has been used to validate and reinforce patterns identified through targeted engagement, particularly in relation to crosscutting themes such as recruitment challenges, skills gaps, and training accessibility.

The skills needs presented below represent the key themes emerging from this engagement. This is not an exhaustive list of needs, rather highlights of the key themes structuring the skills landscape in the local area, for both new recruits and the current workforce.

Which of the following skill areas are currently important to your business?



In addition, the diversity of Gloucestershire's local economy means that skills needs vary across different parts of the county. This LSIP recognises the importance of reflecting sub-regional priorities, ensuring that localised challenges and opportunities, such as those in rural areas, growth hubs and sector clusters, are captured alongside county-wide trends.

Each of the following priority areas is supported by employer insight and evidence and is accompanied by an assessment of its impact on workforce development, productivity and economic growth. These findings directly inform the agreed actions set out in the subsequent section and are mapped in detail within Annex C.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE LOCAL SKILLS NEEDS:

Maximising the Development of the Cyber and Digital Cluster's Potential

Employers highlighted a growing need for specialist digital, cyber and security skills to support the continued expansion of Gloucestershire's cyber ecosystem, alongside demand for stronger foundational digital capability across the wider workforce. This includes skills in cyber resilience, data handling and systems integration, as well as the ability to apply digital tools effectively within operational roles.

There is also a need to develop skills aligned to emerging technologies within the cyber and digital sector, including AI and advanced digital applications, while ensuring a sustainable talent pipeline to support growth linked to assets such as GCHQ and the Golden Valley development. Employers and stakeholders also highlighted the importance of strengthening higher-level digital and technical pathways within Gloucestershire, including clearer progression routes into Level 4–8 provision, higher and degree apprenticeships, and specialist technical training linked to emerging technologies and innovation activity. Universities and higher education providers were recognised as important contributors to the development of advanced digital capability, graduate retention and industry collaboration, particularly within cyber, AI, digital engineering and professional services-related occupations.

Addressing & Meeting Diverse Regional Priorities

Skills needs across Gloucestershire vary significantly between districts, reflecting differences in sector specialisms, workforce demand and local labour market conditions. Employers identified a need for skills provision to better reflect place-specific sector requirements, including construction skills in the Forest of Dean and advanced digital and cyber skills linked to the cluster in Cheltenham.

There is also a clear need to address geographical disparities in access to training and employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas, and to ensure that provision is aligned to local employer demand rather than a standardised county-wide approach, requiring more locally responsive skills planning and delivery.

Emerging Technologies, Digitalisation and AI

There was significant variation in the perception of the digital capabilities of the workforce of the area reported by employers, with some reporting a lack of *fundamental digital skills* in addition to gaps in technical skills. Employers raised concerns about varying productivity levels between organisations with higher digital abilities compared to those who were more hesitant and less confident with embracing emerging technologies. This slower pace of digital adoption compared to larger organisations was, in part, linked to concerns with gaps in fundamental digital skills, particularly Microsoft Office and email communications.

While basic digital competency is now a cross-cutting theme across all industries, employers in Gloucestershire also highlighted themes regarding specialist skills and AI.

'Skills for AI' were highlighted by employers of all sizes and sectors in the local area with concerns raised about the safe and ethical use of AI, as well as further exploration needed into possible wider industry limitations, with those working in the digital sector highlighting that the AI platforms they use are based in the United States of America and they are aware of the currently uneasy political climate which may impact their operations.

Employers were keen to investigate how AI can be embedded into their organisational structure to support with day-to-day tasks and improve productivity and efficiencies. However, this was highlighted alongside the need for additional guidance around prompt literacy, interpreting and understanding outputs and embracing critical thinking when reviewing data produced by AI.

As well as basic AI usage and understanding, some employers stated a desire to utilise it further in the digital transformation of their organisations and are investigating AI-enabled systems integration, in addition to highlighting a need for support around other digitalisation that could help to streamline processes and ease the administrative burden. Small and medium employers in particular were keen to explore digital marketing automation processes, with a sole trader working in the digital sector stating that they have opted out of recruiting for marketing resource due to AI's capabilities to meet their marketing needs.

With the growth of GCHQ and Golden Valley, Gloucestershire has many opportunities to cement its position as a national leader in the digital security field and employers from across all of the LSIP priority sectors highlighted security and cyber resilience as a key priority.

Meeting Net Zero and Sustainability Needs

Employers in Gloucestershire have all expressed interest in net zero and sustainability, however the level of their knowledge and involvement varies. Employers from the Sustainable Tourism sector were more engaged and concluded that sustainability needs to be looked at from both operational and reputational perspectives within their industry, while there was a general sense of wariness, among small and medium sized

employers, particularly of “doing sustainability wrong”. Peer networking and best practice sharing was highlighted as a particularly useful tool for navigating sustainability across sectors including visitor economy. This is further compounded by inconsistent understanding of sustainability terminology and a lack of clear, practical guidance on how to take action, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses. Employers also highlighted a need for clearer, business-focused guidance on sustainability, including where to start, what actions to prioritise, and how sustainability aligns with business performance, compliance requirements and wider organisational goals.

Particular sustainability skills gaps highlighted include a demand for solar PV, battery usage and retrofit competence – specifically a “whole-house” approach to retrofit knowledge rather than piecemeal installation. It was noted that sustainability reporting capability is driven by procurement requirements, as well as Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) expectations within organisations, however it was acknowledged that there is a difficulty measuring impact across complex geographies such as Gloucestershire.

While employers in the region were keen to engage with sustainability reskilling and upskilling opportunities, they cited stop-start funding pipelines as a barrier to engagement and concluded that sustainability investment does not always translate into competitive advantage and this inconsistent funding risks a loss of capable staff when funding, and therefore training, opportunities cannot be integrated into business development plans.

Critical and Enabling Skills

Building on the findings of the previous LSIP, critical and enabling skills continue to be the priority with the majority of employers in Gloucestershire, regardless of size or sector.

While the priority sectors in the local area are diverse, the critical and enabling skills they value in their workforce are aligned. Construction and the Built Environment, Visitor Economy, Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, Digital and Health and Social Care all cite teamwork, adaptability, client facing professionalism, written and verbal communication, problem solving and initiative as key transferable skills needed within their workforce.

Employers also highlighted a need for supervisory, *leadership and management* capabilities – with middle managers, who can bridge the gap between strategic oversight and operational delivery – being a particular skills gap. This was expanded upon by an employer from a large Construction and the Built Environment organisation who highlighted a training need for ‘accidental managers’, who have progressed due to their technical abilities but lack management skills. However, it was also noted by some employers in the local area, that there is a lack of progression from entry levels positions into supervisory and leadership roles and some industries, notably Health and Social Care, reported a higher turnover of staff where these opportunities were not available.

Accessing and Understanding Training Provision

Employers in Gloucestershire continue to describe the skills system as *complex, fragmented and difficult to navigate*. From the initial point of engagement and understanding the training available, through to determining which programme is best suited to their needs and navigating the eligibility criteria, many employers reported difficulty in accessing appropriate training for themselves and their employees, with employers in the Visitor Economy sector who attended a focus group in agreement that more awareness of the existing training and initiatives in place is needed.

While they acknowledged many different methods of training that are currently available including apprenticeships, skills bootcamps and modular courses, there was confusion about what each of these options provided and the differences between them, which results in disengagement of the skills system and a lack of uptake in available training solutions. Many employers reported preferring to undertake ad hoc learning, on-the-job training and internal knowledge and skills sharing as a priority due to confidence that this will fulfil their current skills gap.

The message regarding upskilling and reskilling of employees is clear – there is a demand, but simplification of the skills systems and clarity of the offering is key to ensuring organisations in the local area engage with the available training provision.

Working with Young People and New Entrants to the Workforce

An overwhelming majority of employers who engaged with the LSIP reported employability skills as a key skills gap with the future workforce. While there is an understanding across all sectors that these knowledge, skills and behaviours can be strengthened in the workplace, prospective employers in the local area highlighted the importance of new entrants to the workforce being early career ready. Particular skills highlighted by employers in Gloucestershire include professional communication skills and confidence in workplace settings, as well as reliability, punctuality and basic digital literacy.

In addition to engaging with a workforce that embodies these core skills, there was also a clear appetite amongst employers for showcasing clearer sector pathways – ensuring young people and those new to the industry have an awareness of the sector, expectations and realities of working in the industry and the potential progression opportunities.

Recruitment Challenges

Many employers of all sizes highlighted barriers in recruitment including for those that are economically inactive and returners to the workforce and, while encouragingly, many employers reported participating in initiatives such as work placement opportunities, there remains a disconnect between those looking for work and the organisations that are recruiting.

Concerns about an aging workforce creating skills gaps were raised across sectors, most notably in Health and Social Care where there was a reported “low appetite” for

apprenticeships, with employers preferring to recruit older, more experienced staff while simultaneously acknowledging that approximately a quarter of their workforce is aged over 55, compared to 8% under 25.

Small and medium employers in the local area highlighted a trend in losing staff in more generalised roles including broad IT roles such as Cyber Security to larger organisations who can offer higher salaries, while roles that feature more specialised, technical digital skills were easier to retain due to fewer opportunities.

Part 2: Actions & Changes Needed

This section sets out the changes and actions required to address the priority skills needs identified through LSIP employer engagement and analysis across Gloucestershire. These actions have been developed collaboratively with employers, providers and local stakeholders and are aligned with strategic priorities set out in the Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, particularly Mission One: Talent and Future Skills. Delivery of the LSIP will also align, where appropriate, with wider employment and workforce participation initiatives across Gloucestershire, including the emerging Connect to Work programme delivered through the Gloucestershire Employment and Skills Hub. This reflects the shared focus on reducing barriers to employment, supporting workforce participation and improving progression pathways into sustainable employment across the county.

Detailed sectoral evidence, occupational interpretation and thematic skills needs identified through employer engagement are set out in Annex A. This includes analysis of Gloucestershire's priority sectors, including Security, Cyber and Digital Technologies; Agri-Tech; Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering; Green Energy Generation; and Creative Industries, Culture and Sustainable Tourism, alongside cross-cutting themes such as digital and AI capability, sustainability, leadership and enabling skills. The actions outlined within this section respond to these identified needs through a series of system-wide priorities intended to strengthen workforce development, improve employer engagement and support a more responsive and connected local skills system.

The actions and changes identified within this LSIP reflect a shared understanding between employers, providers and local stakeholders regarding the priorities and interventions required across Gloucestershire's skills system. Findings and proposed actions have been tested through ongoing engagement with further education providers, higher education institutions, local authorities, sector stakeholders, business representative organisations and employer networks throughout the LSIP development process. Delivery of these priorities will therefore require continued collective ownership and collaboration across the county, rather than action by any single organisation in isolation.

The actions below focus on improving the responsiveness, accessibility and coordination of the skills system, with particular emphasis on strengthening foundational and technical skills, enabling clearer pathways into and within employment, and addressing structural barriers to engagement. They also reflect the need for a more locally responsive approach, recognising the variation in skills demand across different parts of the county and the opportunities presented through Gloucestershire's growing cyber and digital cluster.

Collectively, these actions are intended to support improved workforce readiness, increased productivity and stronger alignment between skills provision and employer demand. We anticipate that delivery will lead to increased employer engagement with training, improved access to relevant and flexible provision, clearer progression pathways, and a more resilient and adaptable workforce. Progress against these

outcomes will be monitored through ongoing employer engagement, data tracking and agreed performance measures (see Annex B), with further detail on delivery set out in Annex C. Gloucestershire's emerging Connect to Work activity further supports LSIP ambitions around workforce participation, employer connectivity and access to employment pathways for underrepresented groups.

Delivery of these priorities will require continued collaboration between further education providers, higher education institutions, employers and local stakeholders to strengthen progression pathways and respond to identified higher-level technical skills needs. Higher education providers will play an important role in supporting delivery of the Gloucestershire LSIP, particularly in relation to Levels 4–8 provision, higher technical skills, graduate retention, applied research, innovation activity and progression pathways into priority sectors. Universities and higher education institutions have contributed to the development of the LSIP through engagement activity and stakeholder discussion and will continue to support delivery through collaboration with employers, further education providers and wider partners. This includes supporting progression routes into higher-level technical learning, degree apprenticeships, specialist digital and cyber capability, advanced manufacturing and engineering skills, and emerging low-carbon technologies.

Gloucestershire has strengthened its technical skills infrastructure through the successful designation of a Digital Technical Excellence College (TEC) led by Gloucestershire College. This development supports the county's wider ambitions around cyber, digital and emerging technology capability, while strengthening higher-level technical pathways aligned to employer demand and regional growth priorities.

Employers and providers highlighted the value of continuing to build on existing collaborative delivery models already emerging across Gloucestershire, including employer-informed professional development workshops, outreach activity, apprenticeship growth and investment in specialist technical facilities linked to agri-tech and digital capability. Stakeholders noted that these types of collaborative approaches can support workforce participation, improve accessibility of training opportunities and strengthen responsiveness to evolving sector needs.

Higher education providers have a critical role in supporting the delivery of Gloucestershire's skills and economic priorities, particularly in relation to talent retention, research and innovation, graduate progression, workforce development and alignment to emerging sector demand. Through continued collaboration with employers, local authorities, further education providers and sector partners, Gloucestershire's universities and higher education institutions will support the development of responsive provision, technical and professional pathways, applied research activity and stronger transitions into local employment. This includes supporting growth in key sectors identified through both the LSIP and Local Growth Plan, including cyber and secure technologies, advanced engineering and manufacturing, agri-tech, health and care, green industries and digital innovation.

Partners recognised the importance of ensuring that higher education engagement remains connected to employer need and local economic priorities, while also

supporting wider ambitions around inclusive growth, innovation, productivity and workforce participation. Existing partnerships across the county, including collaborative work linked to the Golden Valley development, CyNam, Growth Hubs, Innovation Village, Berkeley Green and employer-led curriculum development, provide strong foundations to strengthen accountability, collaboration and local impact across the higher education landscape.

KEY PRIORITY SKILLS NEEDS FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE:

1. Maximising the Development of the Cyber and Digital Cluster’s Potential
2. Addressing and Meeting Diverse Regional Priorities
3. Emerging Technologies, Digitalisation and AI
4. Meeting Net Zero and Sustainability Needs
5. Critical and Enabling Skills
6. Accessing and Understanding Training Provision
7. Working with Young People and New Entrants to the Workforce
8. Recruitment Challenges

MAXIMISING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CYBER AND DIGITAL CLUSTER’S POTENTIAL

Need Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers report growing demand for specialist digital, cyber and security skills, alongside the need to strengthen broader digital capability to support the expansion of Gloucestershire’s cyber ecosystem
Actions/Changes Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist Cyber & Digital Skills Development • Strengthened Digital Capability Across Workforce • Clear Digital & Cyber Career Pathways
Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth of Cyber & Digital Cluster • Improved Talent Retention • Enhanced Regional Competitiveness • Number of employers engaged in cyber and digital skills activity • Growth in Level 4–6 digital and cyber provision participation • Number of digital/cyber employer–provider collaborations established
Longer-term future needs	

To support the continued growth of Gloucestershire’s cyber and digital cluster, there is a need to strengthen both specialist technical capability and baseline digital skills across the wider workforce. Employers highlighted increasing demand for advanced cyber and digital skills, alongside the need for broader digital confidence to enable effective

adoption of technologies across all sectors. Addressing these needs will be critical to ensuring the region can fully realise the opportunities associated with its growing cyber ecosystem. Stakeholders also identified the importance of strengthening Gloucestershire's capacity to support the growth and retention of high-growth cyber and secure technology businesses, ensuring that innovation, investment and high-value employment opportunities are increasingly rooted within the county.

The development of the Digital TEC provides an opportunity to further strengthen employer-responsive technical provision linked to Gloucestershire's cyber ecosystem, supporting progression pathways into priority occupations and enhancing collaboration between employers, providers and innovation partners. The LSIP will compare previous FE engagement with digital training to uptake through the development of the Digital TEC to monitor engagement numbers and determine trends in training selection.

Specialist Cyber & Digital Skills Development

There is a need to expand the availability and accessibility of specialist cyber and digital training provision to meet employer demand. This includes skills in cyber security, data handling, systems integration and advanced digital applications. Strengthening collaboration between employers, further education providers and independent training providers will ensure that provision remains aligned to industry requirements and keeps pace with technological change. Developing this specialist capability will support both the growth of the sector and the retention of high-value roles within the region.

Stakeholders also highlighted examples of continued investment in industry-specific digital capability across Gloucestershire's education and training system and in line with Gloucestershire's economic priorities and strengths, including the development of specialist facilities supporting agri-digital, data analysis and precision farming skills. This includes investment through Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) activity to support facilities such as SMART Farming Hub developments and agri-digital learning environments, alongside wider integration of industry-specific technologies within curriculum delivery. Examples cited through engagement included applications such as biomechanics and performance analysis within sport, and robotic milking, feeding systems and agricultural data interpretation within land-based provision. These developments reflect the increasing importance of digital, AI-enabled and data-driven capability across Gloucestershire's priority sectors, including agriculture, engineering, sustainability and wider rural industries.

Strengthened Digital Capability Across Workforce

Alongside specialist skills, employers identified a need to improve baseline digital capability across the wider workforce, ensuring that individuals can confidently use digital tools and systems within their roles. This includes foundational IT skills, digital communication, and the ability to engage with emerging technologies such as AI. Supporting upskilling and reskilling across all sectors will enable businesses to adopt digital solutions more effectively, improving productivity, efficiency and resilience.

Clear Digital & Cyber Career Pathways

Employers highlighted the importance of developing clear and visible pathways into digital and cyber careers, to support both entry into the sector and progression within it. This includes improving awareness of opportunities, routes into employment and the skills required at different stages. Strengthening alignment between education, training provision and employer demand will help to build a sustainable talent pipeline, supporting continued growth linked to assets such as GCHQ and the Golden Valley development. In addition, working with local authorities to develop industry insights to highlight the full scope of job roles available within the industry.

ADDRESSING AND MEETING DIVERSE REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Gloucestershire is a wide and disparate region with each district having varied priorities. To ensure this LSIP is representative of the skills needs of the local area and accurately represents the variation between these districts, we will work in collaboration with local authorities, further education colleges, independent training providers and representatives from each district to identify specific skills needs for the individual areas. The LSIP will then seek to develop and deliver interventions aligned with these diverse regional priorities, ensuring the methods of engagement are adapted to the sector and district they are catering for, such as the Forest of Dean which has a strong construction footprint, a sector which typically prefers in-person interventions.

Need Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills needs vary across Gloucestershire, with differences in sector demand, workforce challenges and access to training, particularly in rural areas and locations with distinct sector concentrations
Actions/Changes Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place-Based Skills Planning Improved Access in Rural Areas Alignment to Local Sector Demand
Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More Equitable Access to Skills Stronger Local Alignment Improved Regional Productivity Geographic spread of LSIP engagement activity Participation from rural employers Number of locally targeted interventions delivered
Medium-term (3 year) priorities	

Designing and delivering bespoke support to the local area, as opposed to a 'one size fits all' approach, would ensure each district is able to embrace its own identity and prioritise its own skillsets and needs. Other impacts include:

Strengthening regional growth – addressing each district’s skills needs individually, rather than a ‘one size fits all’, approach will develop each individual district, tailoring support to the industries or needs that are particularly prominent in those areas and contributing to an overall strengthened region.

Highlighting a variety of careers opportunities in the region – along with each district having distinct priorities and skills needs, they also have distinct opportunities. Highlighting the variety of career opportunities in the local area, and in turn the wide range of skills that are needed, will improve talent retention in the local area, fostering regional growth and resilience.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES, DIGITALISATION AND AI

Need Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers report gaps in both foundational digital skills and the ability to adopt emerging technologies, including AI, with a need for safe, ethical and effective use alongside broader digitalisation capability.
Actions / Changes Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline Digital Skills Development • AI Awareness, Prompt Literacy & Safe Use • Support for Digitalisation & Automation
Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased productivity & efficiency • Improved digital confidence • Enhanced business innovation • Employer participation in ai/digitalisation support activity • Uptake of digital upskilling provision • Employer confidence regarding ai adoption
Medium-term (3 year) priorities	

Disparity in Digital Skills

While employers in the local area highlighted emerging technologies that they are starting to integrate in their organisation, many raised concerns regarding the lack of basic digital skills within their workforces and the emerging workforce. This disparity between skills needs can be addressed by raising awareness around the ongoing digitalisation of businesses and how this can be utilised productively by each sector. In addition, there is an opportunity for local authorities, further education colleges and local independent training providers to ensure that fundamental IT skills are represented in their provision to provide the necessary training for both the emerging workforce and existing employees who require upskilling and reskilling.

In the last Gloucestershire LSIP, specific attention was suggested towards ‘enterprise software’ (specifically the software in packages such as Microsoft office suite) as a requisite for work in general, and this has been highlighted as an area that continues to

require attention to ensure minimum requirements on employers to initialise successful early careers roles; FE providers have responded to the last iteration (such as Cirencester's adoption of 'digation' (digital education) within all courses in a work-ready environment and outside of the course learning environment.

Stakeholders highlighted the growing importance of advanced digital capabilities linked to AI, secure systems, automation and emerging technologies, including potential future opportunities associated with quantum, defence and dual-use innovation. Ensuring businesses and learners can adapt to rapidly evolving technological change will be critical to Gloucestershire's future productivity and competitiveness. Stakeholders highlighted the Digital TEC as an important asset in supporting Gloucestershire's response to emerging technologies, including AI, digitalisation and data-driven industry change, helping strengthen local technical capability and workforce adaptability across multiple sectors.

Working with local education and training providers, the LSIP will gain an understanding of the current digital skills level, combining this data with the reported needs of a cross section of employers in the local area to create an achievable and functional digital skills baseline for the region.

Digital Safety and Security

There is a growing concern from local businesses in Gloucestershire regarding online safety – with AI and daily digital security highlighted as areas of concern. During the previous LSIP, Business West ran sector specific Meet the Expert sessions which can be utilised to support upskilling for the digital industry, this need highlights a potential opportunity to offer more sessions with local industry experts to raise awareness on the safe and ethical use of AI, using AI productively and prompt literacy, as well as day-to-day digital safety support for employers. This support could be strengthened further by the development of provision by the local authorities, further education colleges and local training providers to provide more one-to-one support for businesses. Business West can also work in collaboration with local authorities to explore further AI specific support, such as the Skills Advisors Demystifying series.

The impact of increased digital capabilities in the region include:

Future Proofing Organisations – providing training opportunities for both basic and more advanced digital skills needs will ensure that local businesses are equipped with the skills they need to embrace digitalisation and the benefits it provides, such as improved efficiency, productivity and innovation.

Baseline Digital Capabilities – ensuring all staff within a business meet a minimum threshold of digital capability will boost staff productivity, efficiency and confidence – streamlining some processes to allow opportunities for innovation and collaboration within the organisation.

Digital Resilience – providing support and training around digitalisation and safety will ensure that both the staff and the organisation as a whole are digitally resilient. It will provide security within their current work environment, as well as providing

opportunities for businesses to adapt, build upon these digital capabilities and embrace emerging technologies.

MEETING NET ZERO AND SUSTAINABILITY NEEDS

Need Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers in Gloucestershire report inconsistent understanding of net zero and sustainability, with confusion around terminology, difficulty applying it in practice, and gaps in technical skills such as retrofit, solar PV, battery systems and ESG reporting
Actions / Changes Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green Skills Clarity & Practical Application Technical Training (Retrofit, Solar PV, Battery) Business-Focused Guidance & ROI Awareness
Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased Employer Engagement with Sustainability Improved Uptake of Green Skills Training Stronger ESG & Commercial Positioning Participation in retrofit/solar/green skills training Employer engagement with sustainability support Number of sector-specific sustainability interventions
Longer-term future needs	

Training Clarity, Awareness and Relevancy

Employers in Gloucestershire reported a need for clarity in regard to green skills, net zero and sustainability – particularly understanding what training they need, what training is available and where to access it. They also highlighted specific technical skills gaps that require knowledge and skills training, including retrofit, solar PV and battery usage and how sustainability is often a bolt on rather than integrated into core delivery as a core competency. Stakeholders also noted that while many young people express strong interest in sustainability and “green careers”, there is often limited understanding of what these roles involve in practice or the breadth of opportunities available across different sectors. Improving awareness of green career pathways, workplace applications and progression routes was therefore identified as an important part of supporting future workforce development linked to the transition to net zero.

To tackle this, local further education colleges should work (and are already working) in collaboration with the local authority to ensure their training offering is up to date and relevant, for both new entrants to the workforce and existing employees looking to upskill and reskill, with the objective of creating a ‘one front door’ approach to engaging with the skills system. As the LSIP ERB, we will continue our work to provide impartial signposting to training and development opportunities in the area, offering bespoke support to identify skills needs and highlight appropriate training opportunities. We will monitor levels of engagement with this signposting service and review the themes of the training being requested to ensure that training meets the needs of the local area.

We will also seek to develop clear, business-friendly guidance covering:

- Where to start and priority actions
- Cost savings and efficiency opportunities
- Regulatory requirements and compliance
- Available support, funding and training

Provide sector-specific examples and case studies to highlight real world applications and strengthen signposting to support and advisory services.

Integration, ROI and Best Practice

Understanding how to integrate sustainability into organisations was a concern for employers in the local area, therefore Business West as the LSIP ERB, will work in collaboration with local authorities to raise awareness and support employers on this journey. Some sectors – notably Sustainable Tourism – highlighted the benefit of gaining useful knowledge and skills from their peers, and so we will seek to develop a working group to formalise the sharing of knowledge and best practice. This will encapsulate highlighting the importance of training and the return of investment for organisations that are on a sustainability journey and will include strengthening messaging around the commercial value of sustainability, including cost savings, efficiency gains, regulatory compliance and competitive advantage.

The focus on meeting net zero and sustainability needs will provide many positive opportunities for the local area including:

Opportunity for Collaboration – employers in some sectors in Gloucestershire have already highlighted the benefits of sharing best practice with industry colleagues – expanding this opportunity to all sectors will allow for both standardisation and innovation, knowledge sharing and problem solving.

Strong Regional Approach – providing opportunities for sharing best practice through industries, supply chains and cross sectorally will strengthen the local area's response to sustainability and provide a robust regional approach to green skills, encouraging further engagement with the skills landscape and uptake of training opportunities.

ESG (environmental & social governance) Goals and Reputation – adopting more sustainable practices across departments and through supply chains will help embed sustainability into organisational culture, having positive financial, environmental and reputational impacts.

CRITICAL AND ENABLING SKILLS

Need Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers highlight persistent gaps in critical and transferable skills (especially aligned with what is termed 'work-readiness'), alongside a shortage of leadership and management capability, particularly at supervisory and mid-level roles
Actions/Changes Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embedding Critical Skills in Provision Leadership & Management Development Workforce Planning Support
Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved workforce capability Increased staff retention & progression Greater consistency in core skills & recognition of existing integrations and opportunities employer-reported improvement in employability/transferable skills leadership and management training participation Staff progression and retention indicators
Immediate workforce pressures	

Navigating the Skills Landscape

Employers in the local area have highlighted confusion with navigating the skills landscape, especially with understanding what training they can access and where. A notable skills gap was where to access training for 'accidental managers' who have been promoted into roles based on technical abilities but require additional support in developing transferable skills through Leadership and Management training, however identifying the most relevant training and how to access it has been cited as a particular challenge.

As with the previous Gloucestershire LSIP, Business West will continue to provide bespoke workforce development planning support for local businesses through business skills advisors. This impartial service will help businesses identify the training they may require and provide support with navigating the skills landscape in order to engage with the training. Trends in requested training will be monitored and reported to local authorities, education and training providers to ensure key skills gaps are catered for.

Critical Skills in the Curriculum

Critical and Enabling Skills were the most frequently mentioned skills gaps across all sectors and business size – with most organisations in agreement that technical skills can be taught with reasonable ease, but human behaviours are more difficult to train in the workplace. There is an opportunity for Further Education Colleges, local authorities and independent training providers in the local area to develop curriculum and training opportunities that will ensure that the emerging workforce have been equipped with the

skills that they require, but also that the existing workforce have access to relevant upskilling and reskilling opportunities to develop or strengthen these skills.

Potential positive impacts that could occur as a result of addressing the critical and enabling skills needs in Gloucestershire:

Baseline Critical Skills – ensuring all new and existing workforce within the local area have a core set of transferable skills will provide regional standardisation across all sectors – easing the onboarding of new staff and improving efficiencies, confidence and productivity of existing staff.

Increased Engagement – helping employers understand and navigate the skills system will promote increased and ongoing engagement, empowering them to continue the development of their workforce.

Progression Opportunities – employers in multiple sectors, including Health and Social Care, reported a prominent reason for staff leaving their organisation is a lack of training and progression opportunities. By providing accessible training to further develop their skills, employers will likely see improved retention and staff morale, as well as developing clear progression pathways for their staff, and creating capacity for entry level positions.

ACCESSING AND UNDERSTANDING TRAINING PROVISION

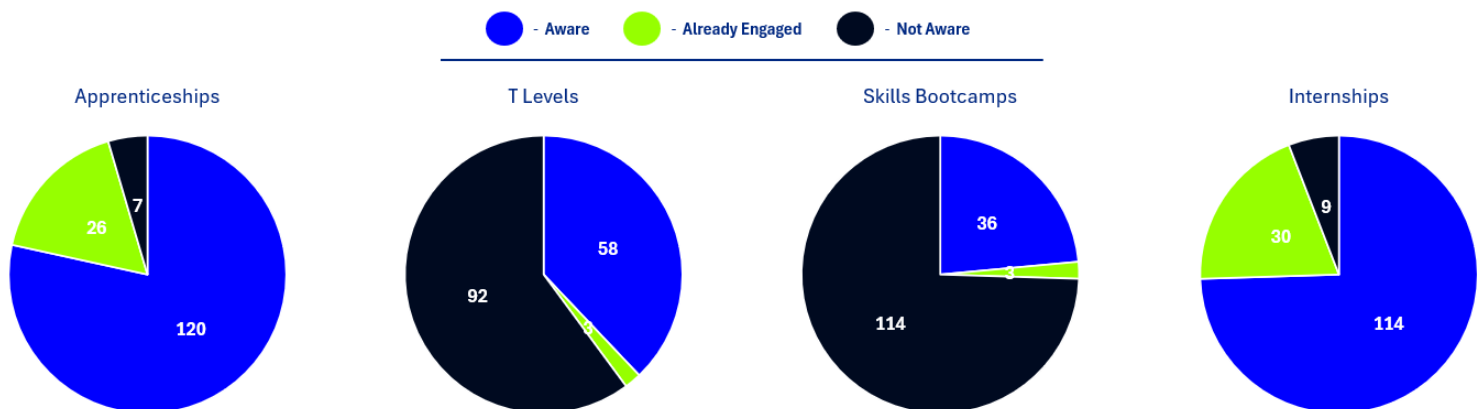
Need Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers report that the skills system is complex and difficult to navigate, with low awareness of training options, pathways and funding, limiting engagement with available provision
Actions/Changes Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear Training Pathways & Communication “One Front Door” Access to Support Workforce Development Advisory Support
Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures	<p>Intended outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased employer engagement with training and workforce development activity Improved employer understanding of training pathways and funding <p>Illustrative measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of employers accessing workforce development support Number of employers participating in Isip-linked events or engagement activity Uptake of identified priority provision Employer satisfaction and confidence measures
Medium-term (3 year) priorities	

Demystifying Training Opportunities

There is a wealth of opportunities for training, upskilling and reskilling however employers across all sectors have stated that they do not feel like they understand all the available options and therefore are unlikely to engage with the skills system. As the LSIP ERB for Gloucestershire, we will develop resources including webinars and infographics to highlight the different training options available, including durations, costs and outputs. Simultaneously, we will provide ongoing bespoke workforce development planning support through the Skills Advisor service. Recordings of webinars will be made accessible for local employers through the Gloucestershire LSIP resources webpage and engagement figures for these webinars and skills clinics will be reported through the Gloucestershire LSIP Impact Dashboard.

Data from the supplementary survey found the following:

- **75%** of employers favoured short or modular training
- **76%** of employers were interested in training on Emerging Technologies or Industry Best Practice
- **72%** of employers preferred online or blended learning delivery
- Access to specialist subject expertise was desirable to **72%** of employers surveyed
- Employer-informed or Co-designed programmes were seen as favourable by **56%** of employers
- **69%** of respondents reported needing financial support to reduce training costs



[Awareness of training pathways for Gloucestershire businesses from supplementary survey data]

Training Progression Pathways and Guidance

Working with local authorities, we create clear pathways to access the support and guidance in the local area, highlighting the range of bespoke support available to businesses in the area to improve engagement with the skills system. A 'one front door' streamlined approach and cohesive regional delivery method will ensure that all regional

support methods are showcased and provide more opportunities for employers in the local area to identify and engage with the most relevant training for them.

Highlighting and Streamlining the Existing Multi-Agency Support Mechanisms

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of strengthening coordination and visibility across the existing business support and skills landscape to help employers more easily access relevant advice, funding opportunities and workforce development support. This includes improving alignment between careers services, Growth Hubs, Connect to Work activity, Technical Excellence Colleges (TECs), Employer Representative Bodies and wider provider networks to support a more coherent and streamlined employer experience. Stakeholders also emphasised the value of building upon the strong collaborative relationships already established between employers, further education providers and local partners across Gloucestershire, rather than creating new or duplicative structures.

Impacts of improving access to and understanding of training provision in Gloucestershire:

Increased Engagement with the Skills System – providing a cohesive and robust ‘one front door’ approach to engaging with the skills system, allowing employers and individuals in the local area to navigate with ease will result in increased engagement with training, upskilling and reskilling of the emerging and existing workforce.

Workforce Development Opportunities – with clear training pathways and opportunities for staff development, employers will be able to upskills and reskill their workforce, future proofing their business and improving staff morale through career development.

Improved Knowledge and Understanding of the Skills System – employers across all sectors had limited knowledge of the available training options, including apprenticeships and skills bootcamps. By showcasing the various opportunities in an accessible way, employers will be able to make informed decisions about which training is relevant for their business – including upskilling and reskilling existing staff and engagement with their future talent pipeline through initiatives such as work experience or T levels.

WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND NEW ENTRANTS TO THE WORKFORCE

Need Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers report that young people and new entrants Lack work-readiness, particularly employability skills, Workplace behaviours and awareness of sector Pathways, limiting effective transition into employment
Actions / Changes Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embedding Employability Skills in Curriculum Improved Careers Insight & Pathways Stronger Employer Engagement with Education
Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved Transition into Employment Stronger Talent Pipelines Better Alignment of Expectations Number of employer encounters/work placements Learner participation in careers insight activity Employer satisfaction with work-readiness
Immediate workforce pressures	

Pathways and Progression

There is an opportunity for collaboration between local authorities, employers and further education colleges to provide robust and meaningful career insights. Showcasing different career pathways, sharing real life experiences and offering industry insight days will provide the emerging workforce with a comprehensive understanding of different industries and ensure expectations of work match the reality. As the LSIP ERB for Gloucestershire, we can support with the facilitation of webinars and the promotion of resources such as career toolkits, progression pathway maps and day-in-the-life videos to further solidify this offering, as well as reviewing destination data to monitor the effectiveness of these interventions.

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of retaining young talent and graduates within Gloucestershire by strengthening awareness of local career opportunities, entrepreneurship pathways and progression routes within high-growth sectors. Supporting stronger transitions from education into local employment will be important in addressing longer-term workforce sustainability and reducing the loss of skilled talent to other areas. Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of retaining long-term connections with young people who leave Gloucestershire for study or early career opportunities elsewhere. While some outward movement of talent is expected and beneficial, employers noted opportunities to strengthen Gloucestershire's attractiveness as a place for skilled individuals to return to later in their careers, establish businesses and contribute to the county's long-term economic growth. This includes ensuring the county continues to offer strong career opportunities, innovation ecosystems, quality of life and pathways for entrepreneurship across priority sectors.

Employability Skills

Employers across all industries highlighted the importance of employability skills, workplace behaviours and professional confidence in supporting successful transition into employment. Stakeholders also recognised the substantial work already undertaken by further education providers, universities and training organisations to embed employability, transferable skills and workplace experience within curriculum delivery, progression pathways and student support activity.

However, employers and providers both noted that employability skills continue to develop and mature beyond formal education, particularly during the transition into sustained employment. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of employers continuing to support and develop new entrants once in the workplace, recognising that young people and graduates will not always enter employment as fully developed professionals, but instead continue building confidence, communication skills, workplace behaviours and sector understanding through practical experience and supportive management.

There is therefore an opportunity for continued collaboration between employers, further education providers, higher education institutions and training providers to strengthen alignment between education, industry expectations and workplace transition. This includes expanding meaningful employer engagement, workplace exposure, mentoring opportunities, industry insight activity and applied learning experiences that help learners better understand workplace culture and expectations while supporting employers to develop and retain emerging talent effectively.

Projected impacts of working with young people and new entrants to the workforce for employers in the Gloucestershire area include:

Future Talent Pipeline – employers actively engaging with local further education colleges to provide industry insights and career pathway information will connect them with the emerging workforce. By sharing their experiences and expectations they will be ensuring that the future workforce have realistic expectations and the knowledge of the basic skills they will need in the world of work. These young people often bring with them a new set of skills and experiences that can innovate organisations and reinvigorate the existing workforce.

Relevant Provision – Bringing together local employers, further education providers, universities and training organisations to inform curriculum delivery, enrichment activity, work-based learning opportunities and employer engagement approaches will help ensure provision continues to reflect evolving labour market needs. Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of employers contributing insight into wider qualification development and awarding organisation consultation processes where appropriate, particularly in rapidly evolving sectors.

Providers also highlighted ongoing work already taking place across Gloucestershire to strengthen technical pathways and progression opportunities, including the successful delivery and expansion of T Levels linked to Agriculture Crop Production, Agriculture

Livestock Production, Agricultural Engineering, Animal Management and Behaviour, and Animal Management and Science. Stakeholders noted the importance of continuing to review and adapt associated foundation and progression programmes to support learners progressing into Level 3 technical education and wider workforce pathways.

Cross Sectoral Fundamental Skills – the employability skills that employers are reporting as lacking in the emerging workforce are universal across all sectors. Providing all learners with access to training to develop these fundamental skills that can be applied to any role in any sector, will ensure that every young person entering the workforce will be equipped with the same set of essential skills that employers are valuing.

RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES

Need Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers face ongoing recruitment and retention challenges, including difficulties attracting talent, an ageing workforce and barriers for new entrants, returners and economically inactive individuals
Actions / Changes Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded work placements & industry insight Improved CEIAG & employer engagement Support for changing workforce expectations
Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved recruitment outcomes Increased workforce participation Better retention & workforce stability Employer participation in recruitment/careers activity Increased participation from underrepresented groups Retention indicators where available
Immediate Workforce Pressures	

Increased Industry Insights: Employers across all sectors raised concerns about the difference between expectation and reality of young people when they enter the workforce, and the impact this has on recruitment and retention. Further Education colleges and local employers, working with the support of local authorities and Growth Hubs, could help remedy this with increased and improved work placement opportunities, industry insight days and earlier exposure to different industries, as well as improved, comprehensive careers, education information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). Stakeholders highlighted that significant placement and employer engagement activity is already taking place across Gloucestershire, including substantial industry placement opportunities linked to T Level delivery.

The priority identified through engagement was therefore not simply increasing placement activity, but improving awareness, coordination, accessibility and consistency of opportunities available to both employers and learners across the county. By setting more realistic expectations of the world of work for the emerging workforce, it should ease the transition from education into the workplace. Employers also identified the importance of improving retention of skilled workers and creating

clearer progression opportunities within Gloucestershire's key sectors. This includes strengthening the county's ability to retain highly skilled technical, digital and professional talent by ensuring that local employment opportunities, business growth and career development pathways remain competitive and visible.

Workforce Priorities: Employers have acknowledged that the priorities of the emerging workforce have changed. Salary expectations and annual leave allowance are now secondary for most, to the organisation's values and corporate social responsibility (CSR), however there appears to be concern about how to navigate this. As the LSIP ERB for Gloucestershire, we will develop and share resources such as webinars and infographics to highlight these priorities and explore ways in which the employers can incorporate, or showcase, these values. We will ensure that these resources are accessible throughout the duration of the LSIP on the resources webpage and monitor engagement with the content.

Expected impacts of addressing recruitment challenges in the local area include:

Realistic Work Expectations – by resolving the disconnect between the expectations of the emerging workforce and the needs of prospective employers, the transition from education into work will be smoother and result in improved onboarding, integration and employee morale. This can be done through a combination of improved industry insights for young people and helping employers understand the change in priorities and how to engage with their prospective workforce.

Strong Regional Approach to Work Experience – developing a cohesive approach to career insights and work experience opportunities from further education colleges and local authorities and creating a clear and concise engagement plan is key for employers in the local area to engage with the skills landscape. Strengthening the regional approach to careers education information, advice and guidance and providing a standardised baseline of support available will allow for easier (and increased) engagement from employers and a more meaningful experience for young people.

Engaging NEETs and Economically Inactive – improving access to careers education, information, advice and guidance, ensuring delivery is clear and engaging and earlier interventions are in place for industry exposure through the curriculum, will be beneficial to those at risk of becoming economically inactive or at risk of NEET status.

There is also an opportunity to align LSIP activity with Gloucestershire's emerging Connect to Work programme and wider Get Britain Working ambitions, particularly in relation to economically inactive individuals, returners to work and groups facing barriers to employment. Greater coordination between employment support, careers guidance and employer engagement activity will support improved workforce participation and progression outcomes across the county.

Annex A: Sectoral Skills Needs & Occupational Mapping

Purpose of Annex A

This annex provides additional detail on the priority skills needs identified through the Gloucestershire LSIP evidence base. It should be read alongside the main LSIP report, which sets out the overarching priority needs and agreed actions. Annex A provides the more detailed sector-level narrative, occupational interpretation and indicative SIC/SOC mapping required by the LSIP guidance.

The annex has been structured around Gloucestershire's identified priority sectors: Security, Cyber and Digital Technologies; Agri-Tech; Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering; Green Energy Generation; and Creative Industries, Culture and Sustainable Tourism. It also recognises that many skills needs cut across sectors, particularly digital and AI capability, sustainability and carbon literacy, project management, communication, leadership, work readiness and access to flexible training. The content below draws on business and stakeholder engagement records, provider discussions, sector roundtables, survey evidence, the Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan, and national or regional secondary research.

Existing LSIP collaboration has already supported development of targeted agri-tech and agri-digital workforce development activity across Gloucestershire, including professional development workshops for adults employed within the sector, investment in specialist agri-tech learning facilities and growth in land-based apprenticeship provision. Stakeholders highlighted these developments as positive examples of employer-informed provision responding to emerging workforce, sustainability and technology adoption needs within Gloucestershire's rural economy.

LMI Introduction

Gloucestershire's Local Growth Plan identifies a set of high-growth sectors expected to drive future economic transformation, innovation and productivity growth. These include Secure Technologies and Digital, Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing, Energy Transition and Low Carbon Innovation, and Agri-tech, with creative industries recognised as part of the wider innovation ecosystem²².

Cross-cutting summary of priority skills needs

Across all priority sectors, employers and stakeholders described a skills landscape shaped by three simultaneous pressures: immediate workforce shortages and recruitment barriers; medium-term transition needs linked to digitalisation, AI and net zero; and longer-term structural change linked to demographics, automation, new technologies and changing expectations of work.

²² Gloucestershire Council (2026): [Gloucestershire's Local Growth Plan](#), p.86.

Theme	Summary of need	Sector relevance
Critical and enabling skills	Communication, reliability, professionalism, teamwork, problem solving, adaptability, confidence, stakeholder engagement and customer-facing behaviours remain the most consistently reported needs. Employers frequently described these as prerequisites for effective technical development.	All priority sectors
Digital, AI and cyber resilience	Baseline digital confidence, safe and ethical AI use, cyber awareness, data handling and use of digital tools are now mainstream requirements. Specialist cyber, software, data, AI and secure systems skills are also required to support the county's digital cluster.	Security/cyber/digital; advanced manufacturing; agri-tech; creative; tourism; energy
Net zero and sustainability	Employers need clearer, practical guidance on carbon reduction, carbon reporting, sustainable procurement, whole systems retrofit, energy efficiency, environmental compliance and communicating sustainability without greenwashing.	Green energy; agri-tech; tourism; manufacturing; digital; creative
Leadership, management and project delivery	Demand is strong for supervisors and middle managers who can translate strategy into delivery, manage change, coordinate projects and support people through transition.	All priority sectors
Flexible and modular training	Employers want shorter, flexible, practical provision that is easy to navigate and clearly linked to job roles, progression routes and business outcomes.	All priority sectors
Employer-provider connectivity	Employers want simpler routes into the skills system, stronger relationships with providers and clearer pathways for work experience, placements, apprenticeships and adult upskilling.	All priority sectors
Progression pathways and higher-level skills	Employers and providers highlighted the need for clearer progression routes from schools and FE into higher technical education, higher apprenticeships, degree apprenticeships and professional upskilling. Stronger alignment between FE, HE and employer demand will support workforce retention, progression and access to higher-level technical capability across Gloucestershire's growth sectors.	All priority sectors

SECURITY, CYBER AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Introduction

Gloucestershire's Security, Cyber and Digital Technologies sector is a distinctive county strength, anchored by GCHQ, the Golden Valley development, Gloucestershire College's digital infrastructure and a wider network of cyber, secure technology and digital businesses. The sector should be described broadly rather than narrowly as "cyber", because employer demand spans cyber security, secure systems, software development, AI, data analytics, digital infrastructure, cloud, digital project delivery and embedded digital capability within non-digital sectors.

Alongside Gloucestershire's established cyber capabilities, stakeholders identified increasing convergence between cyber security, defence, national security, artificial intelligence and wider digital technologies. National policy direction, increased defence spending commitments and growing focus on national resilience are expected to further increase demand for specialist technical, digital and security-related skills across Gloucestershire's economy. Emerging opportunities linked to dual-use technologies, secure systems, AI-enabled solutions and advanced digital infrastructure were identified as areas of future workforce demand, alongside the need for strengthened pathways into higher-level technical, engineering and digital occupations. Gloucestershire's nationally significant cyber ecosystem, including activity linked to GCHQ, Golden Valley, CyNam and associated innovation infrastructure, positions the county strongly to support these emerging sector opportunities.

Labour Market Intelligence

Labour market demand is both specialist and cross-cutting. Specialist demand relates to cyber security professionals, software developers, data analysts, AI specialists, secure systems engineers, cloud and infrastructure roles, and digital project/product roles. Cross-cutting demand relates to all employers needing stronger cyber awareness, data protection, digital communication and confidence using workplace digital systems.

Secure Technologies and Digital is Gloucestershire's most prominent knowledge-intensive growth sector. The Local Growth Plan identifies Gloucestershire as a nationally significant secure technology cluster, anchored by GCHQ in Cheltenham, with strengths spanning cyber security, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, secure technologies, data infrastructure and systems integration²³.

The most significant labour market growth signal is Golden Valley, described as a £1 billion employment-led development, expected to create 12,000 new jobs, alongside over 1 million square feet of commercial space and 3,700 homes.²⁴

²³ Gloucestershire Council (2026): [Gloucestershire's Local Growth Plan](#), p.69; p.86.

²⁴ Gloucestershire Council (2026): [Gloucestershire's Local Growth Plan](#), pp.70-71.

Skills Implications

Likely workforce priorities include cyber security, software engineering, AI capability, data science, digital systems engineering, technical project delivery, higher-level STEM skills and adult retraining routes into secure technology occupations.

Occupational Priorities

Occupational priorities include cyber security professionals, programmers and software developers, IT business analysts and architects, data analysts, AI and machine learning specialists, cloud/infrastructure technicians, digital project managers, secure systems engineers and digital marketing/automation roles. Employers also highlighted the need for non-technical staff to understand cyber risk, data handling, AI governance, confidentiality and responsible digital use.

Occupational Opportunities

The sector offers opportunities to build clearer pathways from school and college into digital careers, including aptitude-based routes, higher technical pathways, degree apprenticeships, adult retraining and mid-career transition. A key opportunity is to present cyber and secure technology as a broad ecosystem, with roles in project management, business analysis, compliance, sales, communications, professional services and facilities/infrastructure alongside specialist technical posts.

Reported Skills Needs

Reported skills needs include cyber resilience, software development, secure systems integration, data handling, AI literacy, prompt literacy, critical evaluation of AI outputs, ethical use of AI, GDPR/confidentiality, digital communication, project management, problem solving, adaptability and stakeholder management. Employers and stakeholders also raised concerns that digital confidence is uneven across the workforce, with gaps in basic digital tools still affecting productivity.

Sector Specific

The key sector-specific challenge identified through employer engagement is the pace at which digital, cyber and AI capability requirements are evolving across the wider economy. Employers highlighted growing demand not only for specialist cyber and digital expertise, but also for broader digital literacy, data capability, AI awareness, secure systems thinking, and digital project management across non-digital sectors. As digital and cyber capability is increasingly embedded within manufacturing, defence, professional services, health, construction and clean energy, workforce demand cannot be viewed solely through traditional sector classifications. The Gloucestershire LSIP therefore needs to recognise the importance of combining labour market analysis with employer intelligence, cluster engagement and emerging technology trends to fully understand current and future skills needs. Many businesses are registered under broader IT, consultancy, manufacturing, professional services or R&D categories, while cyber capability is embedded across sectors, so SIC/SOC analysis must be triangulated with cluster intelligence, employer engagement and innovation asset mapping.

Net Zero

Net zero relevance is twofold. First, the digital sector can enable resource efficiency, automation, smart systems, monitoring and data-led decision making across the economy. Second, AI and data infrastructure have environmental impacts, including energy and water use. Further work could explore how the county can support responsible, energy-aware digital adoption and help employers understand the environmental implications of AI.

A widely reported skills need in the Security, Cyber and Digital Technologies sector is the emergence of AI, and the environmental implications of this increased usage. The general consensus in the Gloucestershire area is that the industry is “turning a blind eye to it at this point” and that more needs to be done to raise awareness of the resources that support AI usage, such as data centres, water usage and increased energy consumption. Through collaboration with industry experts, the LSIP will seek to demystify and raise awareness about the environmental impact of AI, encouraging the embedding of greener practices and understanding within organisations.

Further research requirements

Further research: Gloucestershire-only cyber workforce baseline; entry-level role availability; digital poverty and equipment access; cyber teacher pipeline; Level 4–8 progression mapping.

Digital Skills

Digital skills should be interpreted at three levels: baseline digital confidence for all workers; applied digital tools relevant to the sector; and specialist technical capability where digital systems are core to the occupation. Employer engagement identified a rapidly growing demand for advanced digital capability across both specialist cyber businesses and the wider economy. Businesses highlighted the increasing need for skills in cyber security, AI and machine learning, cloud and network infrastructure, secure software development, automation, data analytics and digital risk management. Employers also referenced growing demand for individuals able to confidently use AI-enabled tools, interpret data and operate securely within digitally connected environments. Alongside specialist technical capability, businesses highlighted the importance of digital adaptability, particularly as AI and automation continue to reshape workflows, job roles and operational processes.

Critical and Enabling Skills

Across this sector, employers identified communication, reliability, adaptability, professionalism, teamwork, problem solving, confidence, leadership and stakeholder engagement as core enablers of productivity and progression. Employer engagement highlighted that, alongside specialist technical capability, businesses increasingly require professionals able to operate confidently within fast-moving, high-trust and highly collaborative environments. Communication between technical and non-technical audiences, and problem-solving were consistently highlighted as critical enabling skills, particularly as AI and automation reshape digital workflows. Employers also identified growing demand for adaptability, systems thinking and the ability to apply

digital and AI-enabled tools within operational business contexts, rather than purely specialist technical environments.

AGRI-TECH

Introduction

Agri-Tech is a priority sector because Gloucestershire combines a major rural economy with nationally significant higher and further education and research assets, notably the Royal Agricultural University and Hartpury University and College. The sector is framed around the future of agriculture, food security, regenerative agriculture, land stewardship, nature recovery and digital innovation in farming rather than solely around agricultural production.

Engagement with Gloucestershire's agricultural and land-based sector has continued throughout both phases of the LSIP process, drawing on contributions from farming businesses, agri-tech organisations, animal health and veterinary stakeholders, land management specialists and sector representative bodies. Collaboration with organisations including Hartpury University and Hartpury College and the Royal Agricultural University has helped reinforce understanding of workforce pressures, progression challenges and emerging opportunities linked to food security, sustainability, animal welfare, precision agriculture and rural innovation. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of ensuring that Gloucestershire's agricultural sector is recognised not only as a traditional land-based industry, but as an increasingly innovation-driven sector shaped by digital technology, AI, environmental transition and advanced engineering capability.

Wider Agri Ecosystem

The sector also includes wider land-based and animal health activities, including veterinary services, animal welfare, livestock management, equine industries, environmental land management and agricultural supply chains. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of recognising the role these activities play in supporting sustainable food production, animal welfare, rural resilience and long-term food security across Gloucestershire and the wider region.

Labour Market Intelligence

Labour market demand reflects a mix of traditional land-based roles and emerging technical or advisory occupations. The sector is shaped by climate adaptation, profitability pressures, food security, technology adoption, biodiversity and changing land-use models. Agri-tech is presented as an emerging high-growth innovation sector, combining Gloucestershire's agricultural base with advanced technology capability.

The Local Growth Plan identifies Gloucestershire as having a strong competitive position due to the presence of Hartpury University and the Royal Agricultural University, alongside strengths in engineering, digital technology and sensor innovation.²⁵ The plan highlights Hartpury's Digital Innovation Farm, which supports real-world trials of robotics,

²⁵ Gloucestershire Council (2026): [Gloucestershire's Local Growth Plan](#), pp.72-73.

AI and sensor technologies aimed at improving productivity and sustainability in farming.²⁶ Although the plan does not provide a direct employment estimate, agri-tech is clearly framed as an innovation-led future growth opportunity.

Skills Implications

Likely workforce priorities include agri-tech capability, agricultural engineering, robotics, AI applications, environmental land management, food systems innovation and entrepreneurial capability.

Occupational Priorities

Occupational priorities include agricultural engineers and technicians, farm managers, land managers, agronomists, environmental and sustainability consultants, biodiversity/nature recovery specialists, data analysts, drone and sensor technicians, precision agriculture advisers, food systems specialists, agricultural business advisers and policy/compliance specialists.

Occupational Opportunities

Occupational opportunity is strongest where agriculture overlaps with digital, engineering, sustainability and consultancy. Employers and providers identified opportunities in drone monitoring, tractor mapping, sensors, automatic spraying, autonomous dairy technologies, resilient food systems and sustainable nutrient management. There are also opportunities to support career changers into land-based advisory, consultancy, data, finance, business and technology roles.

Reported Skills Needs

Reported skills needs include data interpretation, critical thinking, technology adoption, digital confidence, presentation and persuasion skills, stakeholder engagement, reliability, communication with farmers, understanding of regenerative and sustainable farming practice, biodiversity, environmental compliance, project management and business resilience. Provider evidence suggests that demand is not only for new technology but for people able to interpret, explain and apply the resulting data in practical farm and land management decisions.

Sector Specific

The sector-specific issue is that technology is sometimes developed without sufficient consultation with farmers and land managers. The LSIP will continue to emphasise co-design, trusted knowledge exchange and impartial brokerage between farmers, researchers, providers, technology developers and business support organisations. Rebranding the sector for young people and career changers remains important, as does demonstrating the breadth of careers beyond traditional farm labour.

Net Zero

Net zero and sustainability needs include regenerative farming, sustainable nutrient management, nature recovery, biodiversity, climate adaptation, drought resilience, low-carbon food systems, circular resource use and sustainable land stewardship. Employers

²⁶ Gloucestershire Council (2026): [Gloucestershire's Local Growth Plan](#), p.74.

need practical, trusted support rather than abstract sustainability language. The sector also has a direct role in natural capital, local food security and resilient rural economies.

The Agri-Tech and Agriculture industry in the local area requires greater communication and collaboration between all parties, including farmers, scientists, the government and developers, to develop a more cohesive, joined up approach to net zero challenges in Gloucestershire. There is a reported disconnect between the development of technologies without consulting with the farmers and those who will be utilising these new technologies. Utilising the impartial, business support organisations such as those delivering the LSIP will help facilitate this collaborative approach. Aligned with this more collaborative approach, there is a growing need for specialist roles to keep abreast of changes to policy and standards, such as Agricultural Sustainability Consultants. Other highlighted skills needs that would ease this relationship include stakeholder engagement, relationship building and objection handling.

There is also a reported need to 'rebrand' the sector in the hope of attracting, recruiting and retaining the next generation of workforce. The risk of an aging workforce without the next generation to step into these roles will leave huge skills gaps, in addition to wider concerns around risks of food security. Improving careers and education information, advice and guidance and industry exposure for the prospective workforce will help expand the pool of potential talent. Improved curriculum providing a greater understanding of the job roles available, progression pathways and the importance of agriculture (both locally and nationally) will provide the emerging workforce with a robust understanding of the industry and improve recruitment and retention rates.

Further Research

Further potential research activities: farmer-specific engagement; agri-tech adoption barriers by business size; learner progression into land-based and advisory roles; mapping of RAU/Hartpury/Farm491/Digital Innovation Farm provision.

Digital Skills

Digital skills are required at three levels: baseline digital confidence; applied digital tools relevant to the sector; and specialist technical capability where digital systems are core to the occupation. Digital capability was identified as an increasingly important component of modern agricultural practice. Employers and sector stakeholders highlighted growing use of technologies including drone monitoring, autonomous systems, tractor mapping, sensors, remote spraying and precision farming tools.

Stakeholders also highlighted increasing convergence between agriculture, digital technology, cyber resilience, AI and advanced engineering. Emerging technologies including autonomous systems, remote sensing, AI-enabled data analysis, precision agriculture and digitally connected infrastructure are reshaping modern farming and land management practices. Gloucestershire's combination of rural economic strengths, cyber capability and innovation assets creates a distinctive opportunity to support the development of integrated agri-tech capability within the county.

Businesses emphasised the need for individuals able to gather, interpret and apply data effectively to support productivity, sustainability and land management decisions. Stakeholders also highlighted challenges around digital confidence and technology adoption within parts of the sector, particularly among smaller or more traditional farming businesses, reinforcing the importance of practical and accessible digital upskilling.

Critical and Enabling Skills

Engagement with Agri-Tech stakeholders highlighted the growing importance of communication, influencing and practical problem-solving skills alongside technical agricultural capability. Employers and sector representatives noted that many roles increasingly require individuals able to interpret and communicate complex data, engage effectively with farmers and landowners, and support the adoption of new technologies and more sustainable farming practices. Adaptability, resilience and entrepreneurial thinking were also highlighted as increasingly important, particularly as the sector responds to climate pressures, changing regulations and advances in automation, robotics and precision agriculture.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND ENGINEERING

Introduction

Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering is a core high-value sector for Gloucestershire, reflecting the county's aerospace, defence, precision engineering, advanced materials, manufacturing and engineering heritage. The sector is both a strategic growth sector and an enabling sector for clean energy, cyber, agri-tech, transport and national security.

Labour Market Intelligence

Labour market demand is shaped by replacement demand, an ageing workforce, automation, digitalisation, defence and aerospace growth, and the need to maintain specialist production and engineering capability.

Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing is Gloucestershire's strongest established productive growth sector. The Local Growth Plan states that Gloucestershire has a manufacturing workforce of approximately 33,000 people.²⁷ The wider Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing sector supports 34,500 jobs across 3,196 businesses, including 433 firms identified as having high growth potential.²⁸

The sector's local economic importance is particularly significant in some parts of the county, with Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing accounting for up to 50% of GVA in Tewkesbury and Stroud.²⁹

²⁷ Gloucestershire Council (2026): [Gloucestershire's Local Growth Plan](#), p.77.

²⁸ Gloucestershire Council (2026): [Gloucestershire's Local Growth Plan](#), p.78.

²⁹ Gloucestershire Council (2026): [Gloucestershire's Local Growth Plan](#), p.78.

Skills Implications

Likely workforce priorities include engineering technicians, aerospace engineering, advanced manufacturing operations, robotics, automation, precision engineering, maintenance engineering, digital manufacturing and higher-level technical STEM capability.

Occupational Priorities

Occupational priorities include mechanical engineers, electrical and electronics engineers, production and process engineers, engineering technicians, CNC machinists, metal machining setters/operators, welders, fabricators, quality assurance and regulatory professionals, CAD/design technicians, maintenance technicians, production supervisors, project managers and supply chain/logistics specialists.

Occupational Opportunities

Occupational opportunities include higher technical routes into engineering, apprenticeships, degree apprenticeships, adult retraining, automation and digital manufacturing, low-carbon aerospace, defence technologies, composites, advanced materials and robotics. The sector also offers opportunities for collaboration with Technical Excellence College activity, employer-led curriculum development and stronger FE/HE progression routes.

Reported Skills Needs

Reported skills needs include engineering fundamentals, electrical competence, mechanical and process engineering, CAD, CNC, automation, PLC/control systems, quality assurance, health and safety, regulatory compliance, project management, leadership, communication, reliability and problem solving. Employers also emphasised the value of practical experience, coachability and workplace behaviours, with technical skills often developed on the job where foundational aptitude is strong.

Sector Specific

Sector-specific issues include the need to retain older skilled workers as coaches/mentors, ensure transition planning before experienced staff leave, and strengthen the conversion of learners into apprenticeships or employment. Employers also described pressure from energy costs, logistics costs and macroeconomic uncertainty. Training should therefore combine technical capability with productivity, continuous improvement, leadership and commercial resilience.

Net Zero

Net zero relevance includes energy efficiency in production, resource efficiency, recycling, heat recovery, low-carbon materials, sustainable procurement, electrification, hydrogen, battery and EV-related capability, and measurement/reporting of emissions. Manufacturing employers need support to embed sustainability as an operational improvement rather than as a separate compliance activity.

Further Research Requirements

Employer validation of high-priority occupations; apprenticeship starts/completions by engineering route; defence supply chain skills mapping; instructor/workforce capacity in specialist engineering provision.

Digital Skills

Employers highlighted increasing demand for digital capability linked to automation, digitally enabled production systems and advanced engineering technologies. Businesses referenced a growing importance of data analysis, digital design tools, robotics, systems integration and digitally connected manufacturing environments. Stakeholders also highlighted the need for employees able to operate across multidisciplinary technical systems and adapt to increasingly automated and technology-driven production processes. Digital capability was frequently linked to productivity improvement, precision engineering, operational efficiency and innovation within advanced manufacturing environments.

Critical and Enabling Skills

Across advanced manufacturing and engineering, employers highlighted the importance of enabling skills that support operational quality, collaboration and innovation. In addition to technical expertise, businesses identified growing demand for project coordination, leadership and supervisory capability, communication across multidisciplinary teams, and the ability to work effectively within highly regulated and quality-driven environments. Problem-solving, systems thinking, reliability and adaptability were also frequently referenced, particularly as businesses integrate advanced technologies, automation, sustainability requirements and digitally enabled production processes.

GREEN ENERGY GENERATION

Introduction

Green Energy Generation is a priority sector and a cross-cutting transitional theme. In Gloucestershire, it includes energy transition activity, renewable installation, retrofit, solar PV, battery storage, heat pumps, hydrogen, nuclear/small modular reactor potential, grid and high-voltage infrastructure, circular economy and low-carbon innovation.

The evidence strongly suggests that clean energy jobs should not be isolated from construction, engineering and electrical occupations; they are often modernised versions of existing trades and technical roles.

Labour Market Intelligence

Labour market demand is being shaped by national Clean Power 2030 objectives, grid constraints, retrofit demand, housing and infrastructure plans, renewable deployment, electrification and sustainability requirements in procurement. Energy Transition and

Low Carbon Innovation is identified as a strategic future growth sector linked to Net Zero, industrial transformation and sustainable infrastructure.

The Local Growth Plan highlights opportunities in renewable generation, industrial decarbonisation, energy efficiency, green hydrogen, retrofit, low-emission transport, sustainable aviation fuels and circular economy innovation (pp.80–86).³⁰

Berkeley Green is identified as a strategic growth asset, with ambitions to become a nuclear science and clean energy hub attracting UK and international investment. The plan references an outline planning application for 600,000 square feet of development space, supporting education, R&D and commercial activity in clean energy and nuclear-related sectors.³¹

Skills Implications

Likely workforce priorities include retrofit capability, electrical installation, energy systems, industrial decarbonisation, hydrogen technologies, low-carbon construction, sustainability management and green technical retraining.

Occupational Priorities

Occupational priorities include electricians and electrical fitters, high-voltage engineers, renewable installation technicians, solar PV installers, battery storage technicians, heat pump installers, retrofit coordinators, retrofit assessors, construction trades, roofers, planners, ecologists, environmental consultants, data analysts, energy managers, project managers, hydrogen/process safety specialists and sustainability advisers.

Occupational Opportunities

Occupational opportunity is significant, but dependent on quality pathways. Employers and trade bodies emphasised the importance of core electrical, construction and engineering competence before short and agile clean-tech upskilling. The Experienced Worker Route, NVQ routes, apprenticeships, manufacturer training, wholesaler training and modular CPD all have a role, but provision must protect safety, competence and installation quality.

Reported Skills Needs

Reported skills needs include electrical competence, high-voltage capability, whole-house retrofit understanding, systems integration, solar, battery, heat pump and retrofit knowledge, project management, planning and regulatory awareness, carbon measurement, data analysis, sales, marketing, communication, stakeholder engagement, community engagement and confidence explaining the wider benefits of clean energy.

Sector Specific

Sector-specific barriers include grid connection delays, Distribution Network Operator (DNO) processes, planning bottlenecks, shortage of planners and ecologists, poor-quality installations, stop-start funding, limited SME capacity to take apprentices,

³⁰ Gloucestershire Council (2026): [Gloucestershire's Local Growth Plan](#), pp.80-86.

³¹ Gloucestershire Council (2026): [Gloucestershire's Local Growth Plan](#), pp.80-81.

employer confusion over standards, and misalignment between national ambition and local delivery. Employers want clearer messaging, practical business-focused guidance and a stronger local partnership approach.

Net Zero

Net zero skills needs are unsurprisingly central in this sector, but with the understanding they are often built on previous long format learning and towards specialisms. Needs not referenced in other sections include carbon accounting, carbon reduction planning, Scope 1/2/3 understanding, procurement requirements, sustainability reporting, adaptation planning, energy efficiency and local green skills coordination. There are also additional needs around quality assurance and competence, particularly around electrification and retrofit.

Further Research requirements

Local project pipeline, electricity/grid workforce modelling, provision map, learner conversion data, demand for nuclear/SMR-related skills, Gloucestershire Green Skills Strategy final publication.

Digital Skills

Employer engagement identified growing demand for digital capability across clean energy generation, retrofit and wider low carbon industries. Businesses highlighted increasing use of digital monitoring systems, smart technologies, data platforms, diagnostics and energy management systems across renewable energy and retrofit activity. Stakeholders also referenced a growing need for data analysis, digital administration and monitoring capability linked to sensors, smart infrastructure and grid technologies. Employers highlighted that digital skills are increasingly important in supporting system efficiency, compliance, performance monitoring and customer engagement across the clean energy transition.

Critical and Enabling Skills

Employer engagement identified that enabling skills are becoming increasingly important within the transition to clean energy and low carbon industries. In addition to technical installation and engineering capability, businesses highlighted strong demand for project management, customer engagement, sales and communication skills to help explain technologies, build consumer confidence and communicate the wider benefits of clean energy adoption. Employers also identified the growing importance of collaboration, networking, leadership and stakeholder engagement skills, particularly where projects involve communities, planning processes, infrastructure coordination and behaviour change. These should be embedded into technical provision and reinforced through employer projects, placements and applied learning.

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Introduction

Creative Industries, Culture and Sustainable Tourism should be framed together because Gloucestershire's cultural assets, festivals, heritage, visitor economy, creative businesses and distinctive places are closely interdependent. The sector is economically important, place-shaping and linked to the county's attractiveness as a place to live, work, study and invest.

Labour Market Intelligence

Labour market demand is diverse and often distributed across microbusinesses, freelancers, seasonal employers and cross-sector roles. Creative activity does not always appear clearly in SIC/SOC analysis because many creative professionals are self-employed, embedded in marketing/digital roles, or work across tourism, education, events and business services.

Creative and cultural industries are not presented as a standalone quantified high-growth sector in the same way as secure technologies or advanced engineering, but they are explicitly recognised within Gloucestershire's wider economic ecosystem. The Local Growth Plan references digital creative industries, immersive technology (AR/VR), arts, entertainment, design, culture, festivals and heritage as part of the county's wider innovation and economic ecosystem.

The plan also explicitly identifies action to champion the creative arts industries as drivers of inclusive growth, recognising their economic, social and cultural contribution. For LSIP purposes, this suggests a role in supporting digital content creation, design-led innovation and entrepreneurial creative capability.

Skills Implications

Likely workforce priorities include digital creative production, immersive technologies, design, content creation, entrepreneurial skills and transferable digital competencies.

Occupational Priorities

Occupational priorities include marketing and advertising professionals, digital content creators, audio-visual and broadcasting operators, photographers/videographers, events managers, visitor economy managers, hospitality and customer service roles, sustainability/green tourism advisers, business development roles, cultural producers, project managers, freelancers and creative technologists.

Occupational Opportunities

Occupational opportunities include collaboration between creative businesses, cultural organisations, tourism providers and education; business support for freelancers and microbusinesses; stronger routes into marketing, digital content and creative technology; and sustainable tourism roles linked to green accreditation, local supply chains, carbon reporting and visitor behaviour change.

Reported Skills Needs

Reported skills needs include communication, stakeholder management, sales, marketing, collaboration, strategic planning, business development, finance, client management, digital content creation, AI-enabled workflows, video and audio production, editing software, sound, lighting, storytelling, customer service, confidence, networking and project management. In tourism, employers also need practical sustainability skills, carbon measurement, local sourcing, green communications and ways to engage visitors without being preachy.

Sector Specific

Sector-specific challenges include small business capacity, seasonality, short-term contracts, limited entry-level roles, difficulty supporting young people, uncertainty around AI's impact on junior creative roles, uneven access to equipment and networks, and limited confidence in sustainability claims. For tourism, measurement remains difficult because granular visitor and carbon data is often limited.

Net Zero

Net zero and sustainability are increasingly important to reputation, procurement, visitor expectations and business resilience. Sustainable tourism evidence suggests that many businesses are interested but wary of greenwashing or cost. Peer learning, local case studies, practical checklists, carbon literacy, green accreditation support and clear messaging will be more effective than abstract sustainability language.

It is acknowledged that the Creative Industry is in an advantageous position to influence public attitudes and behaviours towards net zero, through media, culture and storytelling in its public facing industries, however there is also a need to maximise this opportunity and showcase the good practice of the industry and promoting net zero. The LSIP can facilitate this through collaboration with local creative organisations to showcase the scope of green job roles available in the sectors, the impact these roles and values can have on businesses and opportunities that arise from embracing a green, sustainable and net zero approach within organisations.

In order for this to work effectively, the challenge of understanding green skills in the industry needs to be addressed. While some local organisations are implementing sustainable practices, others report a lack of clarity and understanding about what green skills means for them and what green jobs are within the industry. The LSIP will seek to provide a definition of green skills for the creative industry and potential job roles, raising awareness of the breadth of opportunities that are available and how these roles can be embedded within an organisation. By sharing best practice and positive case studies of those already on a sustainability journey will help empower other businesses in the local area to embed these practices within their organisation.

While some Visitor Economy employers in the Gloucestershire area reported encouraging steps in embracing net zero practices within their organisations, there was a general consensus that "people are so worried about greenwashing they don't do anything". As the green skills landscape is complex, additional support is required to

help businesses in the local area navigate this. Highlighting positive case studies from local businesses, using consistent messaging and easily accessible, simplified language is key to ensuring greater understanding and engagement. Adopting this 'business first' approach, using business-friendly language and highlighting achievable short, medium and long term interventions and focusing on the return on investment and positive impact will encourage further uptake of green initiatives across the local area.

Further Research Requirements

Further research: Gloucestershire creative workforce baseline, freelance/microbusiness needs, visitor economy sustainability data, AI impact on entry-level creative roles, equipment access and inclusion barriers.

Digital Skills

Digital skills should be interpreted at three levels: baseline digital confidence for all workers; applied digital tools relevant to the sector; and specialist technical capability where digital systems are core to the occupation. Businesses within the creative, cultural and sustainable tourism sectors highlighted increasing reliance on digital capability to support audience engagement, marketing, content creation and business development. Employers referenced growing use of digital platforms, social media, AI-assisted tools and analytics to promote destinations, communicate sustainability activity and enhance customer experience. Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of digital storytelling, online engagement and digital marketing capability, particularly for smaller businesses expected to manage multiple operational, creative and promotional functions simultaneously.

Critical and Enabling Skills

Employers within the creative, cultural and sustainable tourism sectors highlighted the importance of communication, storytelling, partnership working and audience engagement skills in supporting future sector growth. Businesses identified increasing demand for individuals able to engage customers around sustainability, create authentic visitor experiences, collaborate across networks and communicate effectively through digital and social media channels. Adaptability, creativity, entrepreneurial capability and customer-focused communication were also highlighted as important enabling skills, particularly within sectors characterised by high levels of self-employment, small businesses and rapidly changing consumer expectations around sustainability and experience-led tourism. These should be embedded into technical provision and reinforced through employer projects, placements and applied learning.

Indicative SIC/SOC Mapping

The occupation and industry mappings included within this annex are intended to support consistent interpretation of employer intelligence and labour market analysis across the LSIP. As outlined in Skills England guidance, SOC and SIC classifications are used as analytical tools rather than employer-facing terminology and have therefore been applied retrospectively to employer insight gathered through engagement activity. In some cases, emerging or highly specialised occupations do not map neatly against existing classifications. Where this occurs, explanatory definitions and contextual notes have been provided. They should not be treated as a complete definition of the sectors. Several emerging roles, particularly in cyber, AI, clean energy and creative technologies, do not map neatly to existing classifications and should be supplemented by qualitative employer evidence.

LSIP occupation name	Definition within LSIP	Relevant SOC code(s)	LSIP sector(s)	Relevant SIC code(s)	Mapping limitations/further information
Cyber security and digital technology professionals	Protecting systems, data and infrastructure; secure digital solutions and AI-enabled systems	2135 Cyber security professionals; 2139 IT professionals n.e.c.	Security, Cyber and Digital Technologies	62 Computer programming; 63 Information services; 80 Security activities	Cyber often embedded in broader IT, consultancy or defence roles.
Programmers and software development professionals	Software, applications, AI, cloud and digital systems development	2134 Programmers and software development professionals; 2133 IT business analysts/architects	Security, Cyber and Digital Technologies	62 Computer programming; 58.29 Software publishing	Wide occupational scope from entry-level coding to advanced AI/cyber roles.
Data analysts and AI specialists	Data handling, analytics, machine learning, AI adoption and insight generation	2133 IT business analysts; 2134 Programmers; 2425 Actuaries/economists/statisticians (where analytical)	Security, Cyber and Digital / Agri-Tech / Green Energy	62; 63; 72 R&D	AI roles are not always clearly captured in SOC/SIC classifications.

LSIP occupation name	Definition within LSIP	Relevant SOC code(s)	LSIP sector(s)	Relevant SIC code(s)	Mapping limitations/further information
Agricultural engineers and technicians	Engineering, machinery, sensors, precision agriculture and technical farm systems	2122 Mechanical engineers; 3113 Engineering technicians; 5119 Agricultural trades n.e.c.	Agri-Tech	01 Agriculture; 28 Machinery; 72 R&D	Agri-tech roles often sit between agriculture, engineering and digital.
Environmental and sustainability professionals	Environmental compliance, carbon accounting, nature recovery and sustainability advice	2152 Environment professionals	Agri-Tech / Green Energy / Tourism	70 Consultancy; 71 Engineering; 74 Professional/scientific activities	Cross-cutting roles may be embedded in wider management functions.
Mechanical engineers and engineering professionals	Design, analysis and optimisation of mechanical and production systems	2122 Mechanical engineers; 2125 Production/process engineers	Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering	25 Fabricated metal; 28 Machinery; 30 Transport equipment; 71 Engineering	Broad grouping spanning design, production and process roles.
Electrical and electronics engineers	Electrical systems, control systems, automation, electronics and high-voltage systems	2123 Electrical engineers; 2124 Electronics engineers	Advanced Manufacturing/ Green Energy	27 Electrical equipment; 26 Electronic products; 35 Energy; 71 Engineering	Significant overlap with clean energy, manufacturing and infrastructure.
Engineering technicians and machinists	Operating, maintaining and programming machinery, CNC, fabrication and precision engineering	3113 Engineering technicians; 5221 Metal machining setters/operators; 5223 Metal working technicians	Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering	25 Fabricated metal; 28 Machinery; 33 Repair/installation	Technician/operative boundaries vary by employer.
Electricians and electrical trades	Installing and maintaining electrical systems, including clean energy applications	5241 Electricians and electrical fitters	Green Energy / Advanced Manufacturing / Construction	43 Specialised construction; 27 Electrical equipment	Core electrical competence is prerequisite for many clean technology roles.

LSIP occupation name	Definition within LSIP	Relevant SOC code(s)	LSIP sector(s)	Relevant SIC code(s)	Mapping limitations/further information
Retrofit and renewable installation roles	Whole house retrofit, solar PV, battery, heat pump and energy efficiency installation and coordination	5315 Plumbers/heating/ventilation; 5319 Construction trades n.e.c.; 5241 Electricians	Green Energy Generation	43 Specialised construction; 35 Energy	Emerging clean-energy roles may need narrative definitions alongside SOC codes.
Planners and ecologists	Planning, environmental assessment, ecology, biodiversity and project approval support	2431 Architects/town planners/surveyors; 2152 Environment professionals	Green Energy / Agri-Tech	71 Architectural/engineering; 74 Professional/scientific	Planning and ecology bottlenecks affect clean energy and development delivery.
Marketing and advertising professionals	Marketing, sales, campaigns, client engagement and communications	2432 Marketing/commercial managers; 3554 Advertising/marketing associate professionals	Creative Industries / Tourism / Cross-sector	73 Advertising/market research	Often located outside creative SIC codes but core to creative and tourism businesses.
Creative and media professionals	Film, video, audio, photography, content and creative production	3417 Photographers/audio-visual/broadcasting operators; 3413 Entertainers/presenters	Creative Industries	59 Film/media; 90 Creative arts	Freelance and microbusiness work often undercounted.
Events, visitor economy and customer service roles	Events, visitor experience, hospitality, tourism and customer-facing delivery	1223 Restaurant/catering managers; 6211 Leisure/travel; 7111 Sales/retail assistants; 7219 Customer service n.e.c.	Culture and Sustainable Tourism	55 Accommodation; 56 Food/beverage; 79 Travel; 90 Creative arts; 91 Culture	Seasonality and part-time work can obscure progression and skills needs.
Project managers and business support roles	Planning, delivery, stakeholder coordination, procurement and operational improvement	2439 Business and related professionals n.e.c.; 1259 Managers/proprietors n.e.c.	All priority sectors	70 Management consultancy; sector-specific SICs	Frequently reported as a skills need, not always visible as a sector-specific occupation.

Emerging and Specialist Occupations (Not Yet Covered by SOC)

Gloucestershire's economy is in the midst of a significant and rapid transformation. Across its priority sectors — from the nationally significant cyber and secure technology cluster anchored by GCHQ and the emerging Golden Valley development, to the agri-tech innovation being pioneered at Hartpury and the Royal Agricultural University, through to the green energy transition centred around Berkeley Green and the county's construction supply chains — new kinds of work are taking shape faster than the systems designed to describe them.

The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system, which underpins much of the UK's labour market intelligence, was last substantially updated in 2020. It was not designed to anticipate the pace of change that AI, automation, the net zero transition and the convergence of digital technologies with traditional industries have since imposed on the workforce. As a result, a growing number of roles that employers in Gloucestershire are actively seeking to recruit — and struggling to fill — do not map cleanly onto any existing classification code.

This presents a practical problem for skills planning. If a role cannot be counted, it cannot be funded, trained for or tracked with confidence. The Gloucestershire LSIP has therefore adopted a deliberate approach: using SOC and SIC codes as a reference framework, but triangulating that analysis with direct employer intelligence, sector cluster engagement and qualitative evidence gathered across more than 1,172 engagements with businesses, providers and stakeholders across the county.

Role/ Occupation	Sector	Context & Employer Demand	Closest SOC Code(s)	Classification Gap/Limitation	Cross-Cutting Themes	Classificatio n Status
Security, Cyber & Digital Technologies						
AI and Machine Learning Specialists	<i>Security, Cyber & Digital Technologies</i>	Demand reported across all sectors, not only tech. Manufacturing, agri-tech, tourism and creative businesses all seek staff who can design, train and govern AI systems and interpret AI outputs safely and ethically.	2133 IT Business Analysts; 2134 Programmers & Software Developers	Neither code captures AI/ML as a distinct function. Role is cross-sector and evolving faster than the classification update cycle.	Digital & AI; Net Zero (AI energy impact); Advanced Manufacturing	No dedicated SOC
Secure Systems Engineers / Dual-Use Technology Roles	<i>Security, Cyber & Digital Technologies</i>	Convergence of cyber security, defence, national security and advanced digital technologies – anchored by GCHQ, Golden Valley and increased national defence spending. Expected to create ~300 high-skilled jobs and £31m+ regional GVA.	2135 Cyber Security Professionals; 2139 IT Professionals n.e.c.	Cyber is embedded across broader IT, consultancy and defence SIC codes. 'n.e.c.' suffix reflects that existing codes do not adequately distinguish secure systems roles from general IT.	Digital & AI; Advanced Manufacturing; National Security	Partial – fragmented across codes
Cross-sector (all priority sectors)						
AI Governance, Prompt Literacy & Ethical Use Roles	<i>Cross-sector (all priority sectors)</i>	Employers in every sector seek staff who can use AI responsibly: writing effective prompts, critically evaluating outputs, understanding limitations and applying ethical governance frameworks. Not a traditional technical skill – a new professional competency.	None – spans operational, compliance and analytical SOC groups	Entirely new occupational function with no SOC equivalent. Evolving so rapidly that any classification would risk being outdated before implementation.	Digital & AI; Critical & Enabling Skills; Cyber Resilience	Not classified – new function

Security, Cyber & Digital Technologies / Creative Industries						
Digital Marketing Automation Specialists	<i>Security, Cyber & Digital Technologies / Creative Industries</i>	SMEs are replacing traditional marketing hires with AI-enabled automation capability. One surveyed sole trader stopped recruiting marketing resource entirely due to AI. Compresses multiple roles into a single AI-augmented function.	3554 Advertising & Marketing Associate Professionals	SOC code predates AI-driven marketing roles. The hybrid function – AI tool management, strategic oversight, content direction – has no classification precedent.	Digital & AI; Creative Industries; SME Productivity	Outdated SOC – role reshaped by AI
Agri-Tech						
Precision Agriculture Advisers / Drone & Sensor Technicians	<i>Agri-Tech</i>	Operating autonomous systems, tractor mapping, remote spraying, robotic milking and AI-enabled data analysis in farming. Combines agriculture, digital and engineering. Hartpury Digital Innovation Farm and Royal Agricultural University are key assets.	2122 Mechanical Engineers; 3113 Engineering Technicians; 5119 Agricultural Trades n.e.c.	Each code captures part of the role but none the whole. Agri-tech roles sit between agriculture, engineering and digital – no single code reflects the full skills profile.	Digital & AI; Net Zero; Advanced Manufacturing	Fragmented – no single SOC
Agricultural Sustainability Consultants	<i>Agri-Tech</i>	Keeping pace with changing policy, environmental standards and sustainable land management. Bridges science, regulation, farming practice and nature recovery. Identified explicitly in employer engagement as a growing need.	2152 Environment Professionals	Does not capture the agricultural policy and advisory specialism of this role, nor the stakeholder engagement and persuasion skills required to bridge policy and farm-level practice.	Net Zero; Agri-Tech; Environmental Compliance	Partial – specialist dimension unclassified

Food Systems & Resilience Specialists	<i>Agri-Tech</i>	Addressing food security, circular resource use and climate-adapted food production. Combines agronomy, economics, environmental science, supply chain management and policy analysis. Demand driven by climate pressures and regenerative farming transition.	None — spans multiple SOC groups	Cross-disciplinary by design; no single SOC code captures the synthesis. Invisible to standard LMI despite strategic significance to long-term economic resilience.	Net Zero; Agri-Tech; Rural Economy	Not classified — cross-disciplinary
Green Energy Generation						
Retrofit Coordinators & Assessors	<i>Green Energy Generation</i>	Planning and coordinating whole-house retrofit: solar PV, battery storage, heat pump, insulation and energy efficiency as integrated systems. Demand driven by Clean Power 2030 and national housing retrofit targets.	5315 Plumbers/Heating/Ventilation; 5319 Construction Trades n.e.c.; 5241 Electricians	Each code captures a component, but none reflects the systems-level thinking, project management and multi-technology knowledge the role requires. LSIP notes these roles need narrative definitions alongside SOC codes.	Net Zero; Construction; Green Skills	Partial — systems role not captured
Battery Storage & Hydrogen Technicians	<i>Green Energy Generation</i>	Installing and maintaining large-scale battery systems and early-stage hydrogen technologies. Linked to Berkeley Green clean energy hub ambitions. Electrical competencies required are related to but distinct from conventional electrical installation.	5241 Electricians (partial); no specific battery/hydrogen code exists	New technology specialism not yet reflected in SOC. Classified under broad electrical trades codes that do not reflect process engineering, safety management or materials science requirements.	Net Zero; Advanced Manufacturing; Green Skills	Not classified — new specialism

Cross-sector (all priority sectors)						
ESG & Carbon Accounting Professionals	<i>Cross-sector (all priority sectors)</i>	Managing ESG reporting, Scope 1/2/3 carbon measurement and sustainability compliance across complex supply chains. Required in manufacturing, agri-tech, construction, digital and creative industries. Driven by regulatory and procurement requirements.	2152 Environment Professionals	Does not capture the financial, governance and reporting dimensions. The role is closer to accounting and management consultancy than traditional environmental science. Often embedded in existing management or finance job titles – invisible in datasets.	Net Zero; Digital & AI; All Priority Sectors	Partial – financial/governance dimension unclassified
Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering						
Digital Manufacturing & Automation Specialists	<i>Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering</i>	Operating robotics, PLC/control systems and digitally connected production environments. Optimising production through data. Gloucestershire manufacturing sector supports 34,500 jobs; automation reshaping the skills profile of this base.	2122 Mechanical Engineers; 3113 Engineering Technicians	Automation specialism has no dedicated classification. Role spans mechanical, electrical and digital systems simultaneously – the SOC system treats these as separate domains.	Digital & AI; Advanced Manufacturing; Net Zero (energy efficiency)	Fragmented – no automation-specific SOC
Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, Health & Social Care						
'Accidental Managers' / Technical Supervisors	<i>Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, Health & Social Care</i>	Technical experts promoted into management without management training. Identified across multiple sectors. The skills gap sits in the transition between technical and management functions – not a new role but a development need with no classification home.	Transition between technical codes (e.g., 5221) and management codes (1259 Managers n.e.c.)	SOC captures the before and after but not the transition itself. This is a cross-sector development need that is both widespread and structurally invisible to labour market data.	Critical & Enabling Skills; Leadership & Management; All Sectors	Transition gap – not classifiable as distinct occupation

Creative Industries, Culture & Sustainable Tourism						
Creative Technologists / Immersive Media Producers	<i>Creative Industries, Culture & Sustainable Tourism</i>	Working with AR/VR, AI-assisted content generation, immersive audio-visual production and digital storytelling. High levels of self-employment and microbusiness activity make this population structurally undercounted in employer surveys.	3417 Photographers/A V/Broadcasting Operators; 3413 Entertainers/Producers	Both codes predate immersive technology and AI-assisted production. Freelance and microbusiness work is systematically undercounted regardless of code accuracy. AI is also disrupting entry-level creative pathways.	Digital & AI; Creative Industries; Emerging Technologies	Outdated SOC + structural undercounting
Sustainable Tourism Advisers / Green Accreditation Specialists	<i>Creative Industries, Culture & Sustainable Tourism</i>	Implementing carbon reporting, green accreditation, local supply chain sustainability and visitor behaviour change communications. Employers describe wariness about greenwashing and inconsistent understanding of sustainability requirements.	Spans 6211 Leisure/Travel; 2152 Environment Professionals	No code exists for sustainability within a tourism/hospitality context. Role is simultaneously technical and communicative. Typically embedded in existing hospitality or management titles – invisible as a distinct occupation.	Net Zero; Creative Industries; Rural Economy	Not classified – embedded in existing titles

Annex B: Delivery Plan & Implementation Activities

The below activities annex outlines planned activities from Business West, as the LSIP ERB, as well as stakeholders, employers, Local Authorities and Further Education providers in Gloucestershire. Where a specific lead organisation for each action has been determined, this is included below. For instances where a lead has not yet been assigned this will be updated as the action is undertaken and the annex updated accordingly. This annex is a live document and will be updated regularly, with new activities added and a status update for each proposed activity. Updated versions of Annex B will be hosted on the LSIP pages of the Business West website for transparency, accessibility and engagement from partners in the local area.

Skills Need	Actions/Changes Needed	Activities	Lead	Partners Involved	Timescale and Milestones	Expected Outcomes	Monitoring and Measurement
Maximising the Development of the Cyber and Digital Cluster's Potential	Strengthened Digital Capacity Across Workforce	Collaborative working with Cynam	Business West	Cynam	Ongoing from August 2026 – June 2028 (TBC)	Awareness raised around Digital and Cyber needs in the workplace. Additional training.	Sign up for Cyber Security Training & Digital Bootcamp/ new module training
	Specialist Cyber & Digital Skills Development	Digital and Cyber Skills Breakfast	Business West	Stakeholders, Employers	Delivered by June 2026 (TBC)	Improved digital skills knowledge.	Sign up for Cyber Security Training & Digital Bootcamp/ new module training
		Digital and Cyber Skills Online Event	Business West	Stakeholders, Employers	Delivered by December 2026 (TBC)	Improved digital skills knowledge.	Sign up for Cyber Security Training & Digital Bootcamp/ new module training
	Clear Digital & Cyber Career Pathways	Delivery of Skills Clinics and development of additional resources to help navigate the Skills System	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Bespoke workforce development planning. Signposting to provision and resources.	Support businesses across Gloucestershire

Addressing & Meeting Diverse Regional Priorities	Place-Based Skills Planning	Construction Skills Event in the Forest of Dean with Schools and locally economically inactive / careers changers promoting careers in construction.	Business West	AccXels	Delivered by October 2025 - November 2025	Awareness raised around Construction career pathways	Survey before/after the event, against College and DWP metrics
	Alignment to Local Sector Demand	Construction Skills Employer Breakfast	Business West	AccXels	Delivered by January 2026 - February 2026	Awareness raised around Construction career pathways	Survey before/after the event, against College and DWP metrics
	Improved Access in Rural Areas	Review transport infrastructure in rural areas	Local Authorities		Ongoing from August 2026 - June 2028 (TBC)	Review and identify areas of improvement	Request for intel and update via Governance
		Review digital infrastructure in rural areas	Local Authorities		Ongoing from August 2026 - June 2028 (TBC)	Review and identify areas of improvement	Request for intel and update via Governance
Emerging Technologies, Digitalisation and AI	AI Awareness, Prompt Literacy & Safe Use	Digital and Cyber Skills Breakfast	Business West	Stakeholders, Employers	Delivered by June 2026 (TBC)	Improved digital skills knowledge.	Sign up for Cyber Security Training & Digital Bootcamp/ new module training. Tech4adoption referrals. Techspark, Techosaurus, Tech for Good, Cynam overlapping intel and referrals

		Digital and Cyber Skills Online Event	Business West	Stakeholders, Employers	Delivered by December 2026 (TBC)	Improved digital skills knowledge.	Sign up for Cyber Security Training & Digital Bootcamp/ new module training. Tech4adoption referrals. Techspark, Techosaurus, Tech for Good, Cynam overlapping intel and referrals
	Baseline Digital Skills Development	Strengthen fundamental digital skills provision	FE Colleges	Business West	Ongoing until June 2028 (TBC)	Relevant, up to date and industry aligned provision	College baseline metrics
		Develop baseline digital skills threshold/needs matrix	Local Authorities	Business West, FE Colleges	Ongoing until June 2027 (TBC)	Digital skills matrix developed	Adoption by FE colleges in the region
	Support for Digitalisation and Automation	Develop AI, Digitalisation and Automation upskilling provision and support mechanism	Local Authorities	FE Colleges, Independent Training Providers	Ongoing until June 2028	Increased engagement with digital training.	Provision developed. Number of employers engaged with provision.
Meeting Net Zero and Sustainability Needs	Business-Focused Guidance & ROI Awareness	ROI – Sustainability Plan/Social Value offering	Business West	Local Authorities	Ongoing until June 2028 (TBC)	Awareness raised on Sustainability ROI	Number of employers engaged
	Green Skills Clarity & Practical Application	Green Lead – Who’s the ‘go to’ for sustainability business resources?	Business West		Completed by June 2027 (TBC)	Guide developed for referrals and signposting	Support businesses across Gloucestershire
	Technical Training	Retrofit – Curriculum design/module – what’s missing?	Business West	Employers, FE Colleges	Completed by June 2028 (TBC)	Curriculum review and provision development where necessary	Review of curriculum with 4 regional FE colleges

		Solar PV – Curriculum design/module – what’s missing?	Business West	Employers, FE Colleges	Completed by June 2028 (TBC)	Curriculum review and provision development where necessary	Review of curriculum with 4 regional FE colleges
		Battery – Curriculum design/module – what’s missing?	Business West	Employers, FE Colleges	Completed by June 2028 (TBC)	Curriculum review and provision development where necessary	Review of curriculum with 4 regional FE colleges
Critical and Enabling Skills	Leadership & Management Development	Leadership and Management Short Courses	Local Authorities	Business West	Delivery by May 2028 (TBC)	Development of modular provision	Reviews at Governance meetings
	Workforce Planning Support	Delivery of Skills Clinics and development of additional resources to help navigate the Skills System	Business West	Local Authorities	Ongoing until June 2028 (TBC)	Bespoke workforce development planning. Signposting to provision and resources.	Support businesses across Gloucestershire
	Embedding Critical Skills in Provision	Collaboration with Glos College / Cirencester College to align objectives and identify potential new short courses.	Business West	FE Colleges	Ongoing until June 2028 (TBC)	Cohesive approach and messaging. New provision developed.	College baseline metrics
Accessing and Understanding Training Provision	Workforce Development Advisory Support	Delivery of Skills Clinics and development of additional resources to help navigate the Skills System	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Bespoke workforce development planning. Signposting to provision and resources.	Support businesses across Gloucestershire
	Clear Training Pathways & Communication	Construction Sector Skills Employer Breakfast	Business West	AccXels, CITB	Delivery by January 2026 – February 2026	Awareness raised around Construction career pathways	Support businesses across Gloucestershire

		Increased LSIP presence in community to expand engagement	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Increased event attendance, Skills Clinic attendance and 121s	Hours of engagement. Amount of employer engagements. Number of events delivered.
		Sector Events – Delivery/Talks/Workshops	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Sector specific insight events – topics based on demand from intel	
	"One Front Door" Access to Support	Develop One Front Door approach to training support	Local Authorities	Business West, FE Colleges	Ongoing until June 2027	Develop and maintain working group – cohesive messaging and marketing	Reviews at Governance meetings
Working with Young People and New Entrants to the Workforce	Improved Careers Insight & Pathways	Demystifying Recruitment Event (focus on Digital and Essential Skills)	Business West	FE Colleges, Local Authorities	Delivery by March 2028 – June 2028 (TBC)	Awareness raised around Digital and Essential Skills in Recruitment	Survey before/after the event, against College and DWP metrics
		Construction skills event in the Forest of Dean with Schools and locally economically inactive / careers changers promoting careers in construction	Business West	AccXels	Delivery by October 2025 – November 2025	Awareness raised around Construction career pathways	Survey before/after the event, against College and DWP metrics
		Demystifying Careers resources (blogs and videos)	Business West	FE Colleges, Employers	Delivery by March 2028 – June 2028 (TBC)	Bank of resources	Survey before/after the event, against College and DWP metrics
		Development of robust and flexible Industry Insights programme – guest lecturing, placements	Local Authorities	FE Colleges, Business West	Ongoing until June 2028 (TBC)	Report highlighting Industry Insights offering in the region.	Increased employer engagement and opportunities available.

	Embedding Employability Skills in Curriculum	Embed Employability Skills, CV skills and interview preparation into the curriculum	FE Colleges		Ongoing until June 2028 (TBC)	Increased employability skills in emerging workforce.	Review destination data and work placement uptake.
	Stronger Employer Engagement with Education	Determine priorities of Gen Z (platforms used, considerations) via survey and share this intel with local businesses through infographics and webinars	Business West	FE Colleges	Completed by January 2027 – June 2027	Report to share with employers and stakeholders highlighting recommendations for Gen Z outreach and engagement methods	Amount of survey responses
		Benefits of Employer/Education Engagement webinar	Business West	FE Colleges	Completed by January 2027 – June 2027 (TBC)	Awareness raised of Employer/Education Engagement opportunities. Increased employer engagement with FE Colleges.	Amount of webinar attendees
Recruitment Challenges	Support for Changing Workforce Expectations	Digital Recruitment Event reengaging those furthest from the workplace (NEET/50+)	Business West	Gloucestershire County Council	Completed between June 2027 – June 2028 (TBC)	Reengagement with skills system.	Event attendees
	Expanded Work Placements & Industry Insights	Day in the Life Videos/Career Blogs marketing campaign	Employers	Business West	Ongoing until June 2028 (TBC)	Development of a bank of career insights resources	20 careers insights outputs created and hosted on the Business West LSIP Resources Page

		Sector Events – Delivery/Talks/ Workshops	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028 (TBC)	Sector specific insight events – topics based on demand from intel	Contribute to referrals to Youth Guarantee programmes. Support businesses across Gloucestershire. Add intel and facilitate to add value to sector forums.
		Development of robust and flexible Industry Insights (including cross-sectoral opportunities) programme – guest lecturing, placements	Local Authorities	FE Colleges, Business West	Ongoing until June 2028 (TBC)	Report highlighting Industry Insights offering in the region.	Increased employer engagement. Wider range of engagement opportunities available.
	Improved CEIAG & Employer Engagement	Workforce Planning (focus on Inward mobility, Apprenticeships/Bootcamps)	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028 (TBC)	Awareness raised around Inward Mobility and upskilling	Businesses supported
		Showcasing employer skills growth journeys and success stories through marketing (case study)	Business West	Employers (BPM)	Ongoing until June 2028	Development of a bank of case studies. Increased engagement with skills landscape.	5 careers insights outputs created and hosted on the Business West LSIP Resources Page.

Annex C – Background and Method

1. Evidence Base

As with the previous iteration of the LSIP, we have adopted an agile methodology to outreach and research to best engage with employers, stakeholders, Further Education providers and Independent Training Providers and identify the skills needs of the local area. To ensure the LSIP is accessible to all who wish to contribute, and the views and highlighted needs are representative of the skills landscape in the area, we will continue to review and amend our data capturing and engagement methods as needed throughout the duration of the LSIP.

Engagement methods that proved successful in the first iteration of the LSIP, such as one-to-one interviews and sector skills discussions will be continued and refined, whereas other outreach activities that did not garner the level of interaction expected, such as the Signposting Local Provision service have been discontinued. Evolving our engagement methods in line with the needs of the local area will ensure that we are accurately representing the needs of the local area as a whole.

We will also continue to introduce new avenues for outreach including a skills landscape survey which will remain open through the duration of the LSIP, and respondents will be encouraged to share their thoughts at various points – allowing us to compare how the skills landscape adapts over the course of the LSIP.

The previous LSIP provided extensive qualitative data, however it was acknowledged that further qualitative data was required to support these findings. This LSIP utilises both qualitative methods (one-to-one interviews, focus groups) and quantitative methods (surveys), both with equal weighting. Secondary data was also incorporated to provide further supporting evidence, ensuring the findings in this report are representative of a cross section of employers and the inclusion of the Post 16 White Paper and Industrial Strategy, as well as Skills England intelligence and datasets, within the research ensures alignment with both regional and national priorities.

2. Alignment with the LSIP Guidance

The development of the Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) has followed the process outlined in statutory guidance, ensuring that it is employer-led, evidence-based and reflective of the full breadth of the local skills system. Business West, as the designated Employer Representative Body (ERB), has led the development of the LSIP through a structured and iterative process of engagement, analysis and validation. This approach has ensured that the LSIP reflects both current and emerging skills needs, grounded in robust employer insight and supported by labour market intelligence and regional strategic priorities.

All relevant identified education and training providers have been engaged in the development of this LSIP, ensuring alignment between employer demand and skills provision.

This includes providers with statutory duties under the Act, such as further education colleges, alongside independent training providers, higher education institutions and specialist providers operating within the county and surrounding areas.

Providers have been engaged through:

- Direct consultation and one-to-one discussions
- Participation in sector workshops and stakeholder events
- Ongoing dialogue to test and validate emerging findings and proposed actions

This collaborative approach has ensured that the LSIP reflects both employer need and the practical considerations of delivery, including capacity, accessibility and existing provision.

Progress against identified priorities will continue to be monitored through ongoing employer engagement, provider collaboration, labour market intelligence review and stakeholder governance structures.

Employer engagement has been central to the development of this LSIP and has extended significantly beyond the existing membership of Business West (membership is less than 3% of the total figure of engagements) with a wide range of engagement methods used to ensure both depth and breadth of insight, including:

- One-to-one employer interviews and advisory discussions
- Sector-based workshops and roundtables
- Surveys distributed through digital channels and targeted outreach
- Stakeholder events and partnership-led engagement

This approach has enabled engagement with employers across Gloucestershire's priority sectors. Engagement has included employers of varying sizes, with particular emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which form a significant proportion of the local economy. (see Section 2) Engagement has been designed to capture detailed qualitative insight sectorally and broader cross-sector trends aligned to our themes, ensuring that the LSIP reflects the lived experience of employers alongside wider systemic challenges. Sectoral and occupational analysis drew upon SIC and SOC aligned labour market intelligence where available, alongside qualitative employer engagement.

Higher education providers were engaged throughout the development of the Gloucestershire LSIP alongside further education providers, employers, local authorities and wider stakeholders. This included discussion around higher technical skills, graduate retention, progression pathways, research and innovation activity, and the role of higher education within Gloucestershire's priority sectors. Feedback from higher education stakeholders informed both the identification of skills needs and the development of proposed actions and changes, particularly in relation to Levels 4–8 provision, technical progression routes and employer collaboration.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and JobCentre Plus have also been engaged through the development of this LSIP, working collaboratively with the LSIP Skills Advisors to develop activities that work towards LSIP priorities. In addition, the LSIP

has identified all relevant Trade Unions that align with the Industrial Strategy priorities and will engage where appropriate.

The development of this LSIP has been iterative, with findings and priorities continuously refined through ongoing engagement and we expect this to continue throughout the whole project lifecycle, continuing to advance understanding of employers' needs by utilising a deep dive methodology shaped through input from regional governance and steering. We also commit to continuing to understand economic developments and investments into the region, supporting Local Authorities and others to ensure robust support and understanding of needs as they arise.

Mechanisms such as open surveys, continued employer engagement and stakeholder collaboration will remain in place throughout the lifecycle of the LSIP. This will enable:

- Continuous feedback from employers
- Identification of emerging skills needs
- Ongoing refinement of priorities and actions

This approach ensures that the LSIP remains responsive to changes in the labour market and evolving employer demand.

3. Environmental and Net Zero Goals

In addition to investigating sustainability and net zero as cross cutting themes, Clean Energy was identified as a key priority sector. This meant that resource was allocated to specifically focus on research and engagement for Clean Energy sector needs, with 54 engagements (primarily through focus groups, 121 wider skills chats). Questions were tailored to each business, generally covering the following main areas:

- Business context and growth plans
- Challenges and barriers faced
- Skills needs/gaps
- Specific job role needs/gaps
- Training methods, needs, and preferences
- Support, changes, or interventions to support them and the wider industry

To accurately represent the findings and recommendations that came from this research a separate report consolidating key Clean Energy LMI and secondary research, alongside business insights and recommendations will be published. Engagement in Gloucestershire highlighted that while there is strong interest in sustainability, there is inconsistent understanding across businesses, with many relying on informal or ad-hoc approaches led by individuals rather than structured organisational strategies. Businesses also identified a need for clearer, practical guidance on sustainability, including understanding key terminology, identifying priority actions, and accessing relevant support, training and funding.

The LSIP fed green skills questions into all engagements across sectors, including 121, wider skills discussions, focus groups, telemarketing, surveys (including surveys shared by stakeholder organisations), etc regardless of sector. Including questions on:

- Actions being taken to become more sustainable
- Challenges and barriers faced
- Skills required
- Job roles
- Support, changes or interventions needed to support them and their wider industry be more sustainable

Green insights were shared by groups across 238 engagements, and we engaged with 59 organisations specifically working in the Clean Energy or wider sustainability space (including Consultants, trade unions, associations, business networks or key stakeholder organisations). We attended a further 17 sustainable external events.

In reflection of the Agile methodology, we have adopted throughout the LSIP to date, we have reviewed the engagements that took place and will make some amendments to future Clean Energy outreach. There was mixed receptiveness and understanding of businesses to provide insight on their sustainability goals, barriers or actions taken. Engagement also demonstrated that using simplified, business-focused language and framing sustainability in terms of operational and commercial value improved employer participation and quality of insight.

Reasons provided for this hesitation include a lack of understanding of 'green skills', 'net zero' or 'sustainability' or because this responsibility sat with other people in the company and was not clearly communicated. Feedback was received regarding specialist technical language such as 'environmental sustainability', with those engaged citing that providing definitions of 'green skills' helped with understanding, as well as keeping the questions open and not too specific to allow for more response. In ongoing LSIP activity, one mandatory question regarding sustainability will be included, as well as a presence in the ongoing surveys, to continue to gather this data.

Future LSIP activity will place greater emphasis on embedding sustainability across all priority themes and sectors, alongside targeted deep dives to better understand sector-specific requirements and support more consistent integration across the skills system.

4. Equality of Opportunity

To ensure this LSIP represents the local area as fully and accurately as possible, we have refined existing and adopted additional engagement methods, as well as putting into practice learnings from the first iteration of the LSIP [see [Simplifying Communications Report](#)], including adapting language and communication methods so that needs, recommendations and outputs reach all who will benefit.

This LSIP will continue to investigate and identify any barriers to engagement with the skills system through conversations with employers, stakeholders and Further Education colleges in the area, and support these parties to implement change. While some activity has already begun through partner collaboration and community outreach, such as the AccXels Business Breakfast, we acknowledge that there is still much work to be done based on the needs highlighted by employers, such as addressing digital poverty and the barriers this presents to those wishing to engage with training.

Alongside the barriers identified, including rurality and digital access, this LSIP recognises the need to widen participation across Gloucestershire's varied geography and workforce. This includes supporting entry and progression routes for young people, returners to the workforce and those in areas with more limited access to training and employment opportunities. Through collaboration with local partners, including further education providers, local authorities and business networks, the LSIP will support improved outreach, clearer communication of opportunities and more accessible pathways into priority sectors. Particular focus will be placed on ensuring that provision reflects sub-regional needs and that progression routes enable individuals to access and sustain employment within their local area. Stakeholders also highlighted opportunities to strengthen pathways for new entrants into priority sectors, including through more accessible land-based provision, targeted support for learners at risk of becoming NEET and development of more inclusive progression routes linked to Gloucestershire's rural economy.

5. LSIP Governance

Governance of the Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) has been developed in line with Skills England's expectation for a clear and recognised steering function, aligning with the re-establishment of the Gloucestershire Business Board (GBB) as the county's primary business-led economic governance body.

Throughout the development of the Gloucestershire LSIP, Business West has worked closely with Gloucestershire County Council and wider strategic stakeholders to ensure ongoing alignment between identified skills priorities, local economic ambitions and emerging governance arrangements within the county. Existing collaborative relationships, regular engagement activity and ongoing discussion with strategic partners have informed the development and testing of priorities, actions and evidence throughout the LSIP process, rather than governance being established retrospectively following publication. This engagement included regular discussion with strategic stakeholders throughout the LSIP development cycle, ensuring that governance, evidence gathering and priority setting evolved concurrently rather than governance arrangements being developed solely following completion of the draft report.

Ongoing stakeholder engagement and feedback mechanisms will continue to support LSIP delivery and review, including sector forums, employer roundtables, provider engagement activity and partnership networks. These mechanisms will help ensure continued employer buy-in, enable emerging skills needs to be identified quickly, and support collaborative development of responsive skills solutions across Gloucestershire's priority sectors.

Business West, as the designated Employer Representative Body (ERB) and contract holder, will retain full statutory accountability for the LSIP, operating within its internal governance, project management and assurance arrangements to ensure effective delivery, oversight of progress, and compliance with national requirements.

In both scenarios, the GBB will fulfil the LSIP steering function as required by Skills England, with membership spanning business, education, local government and the voluntary and community sector to ensure balanced stakeholder input. Governance will be explicitly aligned to Mission One of the Gloucestershire Local Growth Plan (Talent and Future Skills), ensuring that LSIP priorities directly inform and are informed by the county's growth, investment and innovation agenda.

The GBB's role in advising the City Region Board and Leadership Gloucestershire provides a clear route for LSIP insights to influence wider strategic decision-making. This approach ensures that statutory LSIP governance requirements are met while avoiding duplication of existing structures, embedding employer voice within Gloucestershire's evolving governance landscape, and maintaining a proportionate and locally grounded model. A final governance arrangement will be confirmed in advance of LSIP publication.

