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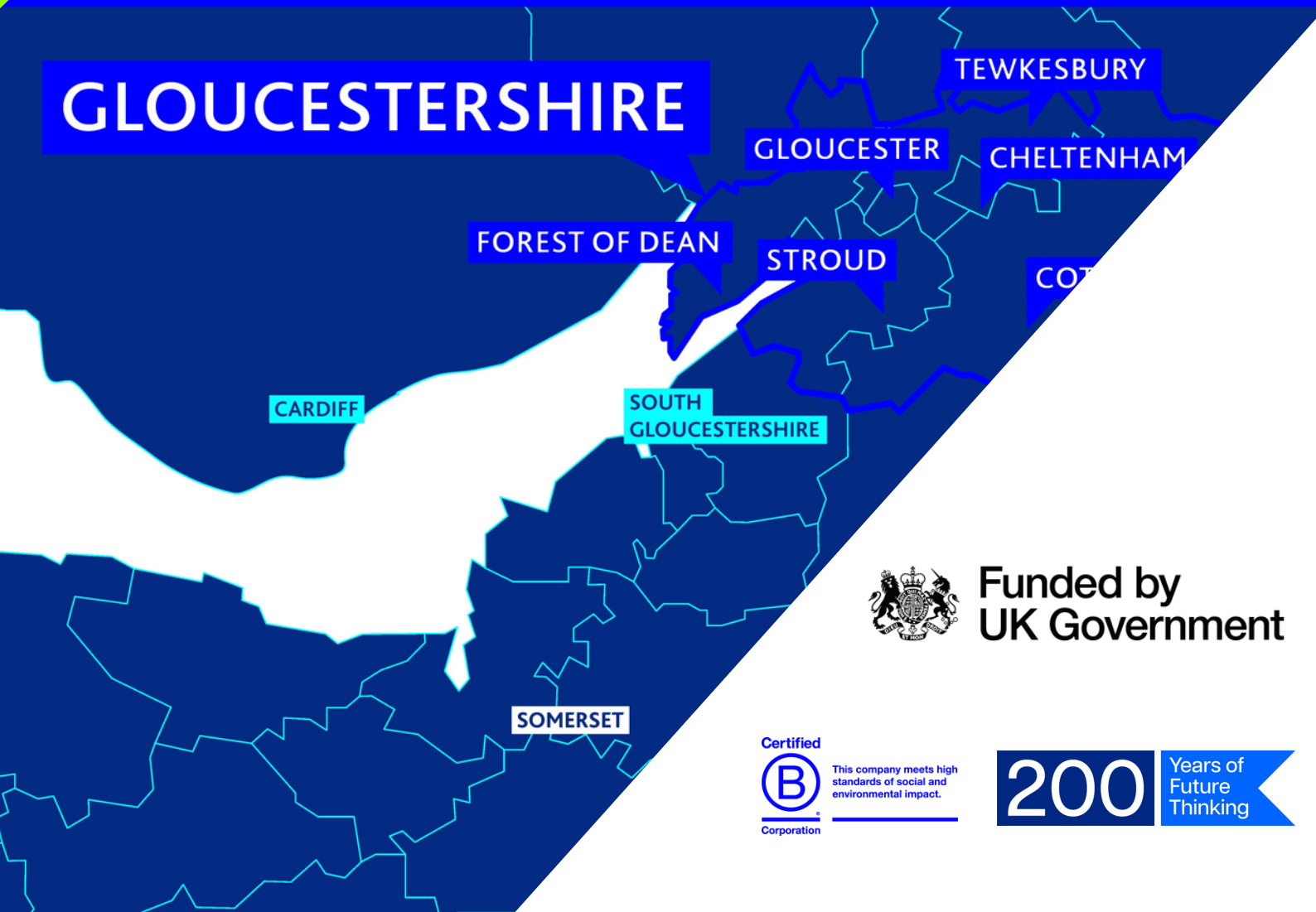
Gloucestershire LSIP Report 2023



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This Local Skills Improvement Plan has been approved by the Secretary of State in line with the approval criteria set out in the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, and in accordance with the LSIP statutory guidance.

July 2023

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Executive Summary.

Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan Report

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Executive Summary

This Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for the Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) region has been produced by Business West Chambers of Commerce as part of the national LSIP delivery, producing a selective skills analysis aligned to collaboratively chosen sectors from the perspective of employers and incorporating views and input from stakeholders within the region, nationally and those from the skills sector. The primary focus of the LSIP's intended outputs is towards Post 16 Technical Education and providers of Post 16 education (Further Education), but the findings may be of use/benefit to others within the education, skills and support systems.

The Skills for Jobs Whitepaper[1] published in January of 2021 set out how the current government intended on the reformation of Further Education to ensure the skills provision delivered post-16 met the economic requirements for the country's continued growth, including the transformation and revitalisation of technical education, with LSIPs one of the key tenets in the reform, by *'bringing employers, colleges and other providers, and local stakeholders together to set out the key changes needed to make technical skills training more responsive to employers' skills needs'.*

Post-16 educational pathways can be delineated into three areas: academic, technical and vocational, and Technical Education provision is within every Level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) from Entry level through to Level 8. Some technical education and training may not be within NQF, such as courses that are short, modular or industry-certified and accredited training. The core technical qualifications considered for the LSIP are:

- Apprenticeships
- T-Levels
- Higher Technical Qualifications, and
- Shorter non-core curriculum provision, such as:
  - Skills Bootcamps
  - Other short courses via funding mechanisms such as the Strategic Development Fund (SDF), and expected via the Local Skills Improvement Fund in direct response to identified industry needs.

Although BTECs are classified as vocational or applied courses (and are being defunded where there is considerable overlap with T-Levels) they are expected to be part of the non-academic Post-16 qualification landscape for the immediate future and are considered as having technical equivalence for some occupational pathways (such as the Applied Science BTECs).

Business West was designated as the Employer Representative Body (ERB) by the Department for Education in August 2022 against an application for the initial three year delivery period, commencing 2022. Business West chose to undertake an in-depth qualitative research project to gather and interpret current, granular and detailed intelligence (with the involvement of providers and partners) to build on existing understanding and identify any regionally significant needs outside of national and sectoral foresights. Business West was also designated to deliver LSIPs for the Swindon & Wiltshire and West of England LEP regions and those reports will also be available online when approved.

Due to limitations on length, this report cannot provide the full and in-depth findings sector by sector, and we therefore encourage all stakeholders and potential partners to read the priority findings

[1] From *Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth,* by Department for Education, 2021 (Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth (publishing.service.gov.uk). In the public domain.

documentation, regional strategic documentation such as the GFirst LEP's Employment and Skills Plan[2], Skills Strategy 2022-2027[3] and Local Industrial Strategy[4] and we welcome all inquiries for discussion of findings, alignment, opportunities to engage or collaboration and how to synergise projects in a whole systems approach for the benefit of employers, learners, providers and all others in the region.

The Gloucestershire region is a highly performing region with a diverse economy. The working population is around 325,000 and has higher than average senior and professional levels of employment, but simultaneously an aging population and the region is a net exporter of young people. Unemployment is low in comparison to both the South West and nationally[5].

Our primary methods of employer and stakeholder engagement were through in-depth engagements in the formats of interview discussion and immersion or focus events, allowing employers to explain and explore their understanding of sectoral changes alongside identified needs within the organisation and attached to their understanding of wider sectoral and technological changes. All engagements incorporated questioning routes attached to the UK's Net Zero Strategy, decarbonisation and sustainability, as well as core and soft skills and digitalisation. Outside of these primary methods the LSIP team were open to shorter and more open routes of discussion, with a multitude of activities inputting into the LSIP's findings and report but not considered part of the core research activities due to not meeting the 40 minute direct discussion threshold to be considered an in-depth engagement – the Head of Skills Planning alone held or attended around 20 additional meetings and events for the purposes of Gloucestershire LSIP activity and engagement that would not be incorporated into primary engagement.

A number of cross-cutting themes have been delineated within this initial stage of delivery, both for action by training providers and stakeholders, and for further exploration and refinement with further detail in Section 2. We also outline in Section 3 our suggested activities for Stage 2 delivery (from August 2023 onwards) including actions and priorities across the skills system to benefit employers in terms of access, navigation, messaging, governance, synergistic and amplifying opportunities and potential measures and indicators of success and performance.

During Stage 2 delivery, we will continue to develop our understanding via agile research methodologies, partnerships and monitoring progress in the roadmap for change. This roadmap and continuation will provide significant further opportunities to continue to add meaningful and ever more succinct understanding of unmet and changing skills needs that align with employers' imperatives and consequently targeted interventions within skills and supporting systems to ensure the Gloucestershire region remains one of the best places to live, work, grow and thrive. We will also ensure we align these activities where feasible with other programmes and initiatives that support post-16 educational improvements and understanding, both via the Department for Education and regional and national partners, including GFirst LEP (delivering Growth and Careers Hub provision), Gloucestershire County Council and the District Councils.

[2] From *Action Plan for Employment and Skills in Gloucestershire to implement skills strategy*, by GFirst LEP, 2022 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2022/action-plan-for-employment-and-skills-strategy-v5-jan-2022.pdf). In the public domain.
[3] From *Gloucestershire Skills Strategy 2022-2027*, by GFirst LEP, 2022 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2022/gfirst-lep-gloucestershire-skills-strategy-2022-27.pdf). In the public domain.
[4] From *Gloucestershire Local Industrial Strategy 2019,* by GFirst LEP, 2019 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/industrial-strategy/). In the public domain.
[5] From *GFirst LEP Jobs and Economic Bulletin*, by Jute Blackmon, 2023 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/economy/gfirst-lep---jobs-and-economic-bulletin---march-2023.pdf). In the public domain.

Part One: LSIP Priorities.

Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan Report

Business West

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Part 1: LSIP Priorities

LSIP Overview and Background

The Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) are designed to put additional employer voices at the heart of skills planning, providing better intelligence and a more joined up regional approach to meet employers' needs, helping close the gap between post-16 (technical) education and workforce readiness and to aid in planning and preparation for changes to industrial needs within priority sectors.

This report is for the Gloucestershire LEP region, an area of around 650,000 people with an active workforce of 325,000 and a strong, diverse economy with higher than both national and South West averages for senior, managerial and professional employment[6]. The area has above average productivity for the South West but lower than national in terms of GVA, low unemployment at 2.3% (March 2023[7]), but the highest share of 50-64 year olds of all neighbouring regions and is a net exporter of 18-24 year olds[8].

The Skills for Jobs Whitepaper of 2021[9] outlined the importance of ensuring technical education could be driven by employers' needs, creating a *'...strengthened and unified post-16 education and skills system that will benefit individuals, the economy and the nation'*. This Whitepaper also outlined the intention and setup of direct response mechanisms towards this, initially via the Strategic Development Fund and later this year the Local Skills Improvement Fund as its replacement and primary response mechanism, but there are expectations for further impact across core curriculum planning and alignment.

Business West was also designated as Employer Representative Body (ERB) for two adjacent LSIP regions, the West of England and Swindon & Wiltshire LEP regions, allowing investigation on a wider geographic basis whilst allowing for comparison of aligned sectoral needs and delineation of any difference within comparator region. Both of these reports will be made available at the same time as this Gloucestershire report. We have worked closely with a number of regional organisations through Stage 1, including GFirst LEP, South Gloucestershire & Stroud (SGS) College, Gloucestershire College and Cirencester College, Independent Training Providers (ITPs) via the Gloucestershire & Wiltshire Partnership, and District Authority representatives.

Aims and Intentions

The Gloucestershire LSIP has been developed to:

- Gather and interpret granular and up-to-date employer intelligence about unmet skills needs within their existing workforce and for new entrants to the workforce
- Assist providers to act on this intelligence alongside existing research into and understanding of shortages, regional and occupational priorities, and known change to sectoral needs
- Help with decision making for potential changes to existing core post-16 technical provision, to help close the gap between formal learning and work readiness

[6] From *Labour Market Profile – Gloucestershire,* by Office for National Statistics, 2023 (https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/lep/1925185570/report.aspx#tabrespop). In the public domain.
[7] From *GFirst LEP Jobs and Economic Bulletin*, by Jute Blackmon, 2023 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/economy/gfirst-lep---jobs-and-economic-bulletin---march-2023.pdf). In the public domain.
[8] From *Gloucestershire Five Foundations of Productivity Evidence Report*, by GFirst LEP (https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/gloucestershire_five-foundations-of-productivity_evidence-report_2019.pdf). In the public domain.
[9] From *Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth,* by Department for Education, 2021 (Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth (publishing.service.gov.uk). In the public domain.

- Identify skills needs within employers that may be met with additional non-core curricula delivery
- Develop robust and effective methods of longer-term employer engagement to drive change and input into the system to best meet a region's needs.

Alongside these core aims, the LSIP may have additional impact or input into peripheral and supporting systems, initiatives and programmes, such as those further from the labour market, in receipt of universal credit and therefore return-to-work or work progression support and provision, Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) and wider business support, information and guidance. There are numerous supporting agencies and projects supporting and addressing learner and employee needs, towards those with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), and other communities and individuals who face additional barriers to learning and employment – these can improve access for employers to available labour market and support employers to recognise and mitigate additional needs, to effectively provide meaningful employment and benefit to both employers and employees. We recognise that the LSIP may have findings of relevance to these providers and supporting agencies and will ensure longer term we are open to further meaningful integration of these. Recognised projects to ensure further alignment within Stage 2 delivery include the Employment & Skills Hub, Growth Hubs and Careers Hub for wider systemic support for employers, learners and employees.

The Gloucestershire LSIP focusses on selected priority sectors alongside cross-cutting themes key to economic growth and change. Due to the value found in the West of England Plus trailblazer activities (in a geography extending into two Gloucestershire districts, we chose a continuation of the trailblazer methodologies of in-depth, lower volume qualitative analysis, to add meaningful depth to existing national, regional and sectoral understanding of change and need. We recognise that this lower volume approach may not provide a statistically robust method of analysis taken in isolation but have incorporated existing understanding and analysis into our methodology, to usefully extend understanding and to provide further granular intelligence and re-prioritisation during current and future shifts in needs.

Our core in-depth methodology produced a good level of detail that reinforced and reprioritised existing understanding of employers' skills needs alongside identified new areas for further investigation and provision, with the concatenated output of needs statements in the Priority Findings documentation providing useable specificity for providers to act upon, without being prescriptive in how responses should be planned. This hopefully found a central point between being actionable, and recognising that those who currently procure, plan and provide education and training are best placed to decide how best to incorporate these findings to meet the region's needs alongside and within existing provision.

The sectoral foci for Stage 1 delivery were chosen to align with existing regional imperatives and developed in partnership with primary stakeholder input (the region's further education (FE) Providers, ITPs via the Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Partnership (GWP) and representation from the LEP and County Council) prior to and during designation (March - May 2022). These parties were invited to initial discussions of potential foci, to ensure both alignment with regional needs and regional provision, with the priority sectors chosen following these discussions.

The Priority Findings from Stage 1 activity have been made freely available to all whom could benefit from access, and we are continuing conversation about further research for Stage 2. For further information about the research project, outputs and methodology please see Section 2 and Annex B.

Sectoral Foci

The priority sectors chosen for the Gloucestershire region were prioritised utilising a matrix approach across four criteria:

- *High Value (GVA)* - as measured by most recent statistics
- *High Employment* - as measured by most recent statistics
- *High Growth Potential* – expected to be capable of significant above trend growth in near future subject to barriers being addressed
- *High Need/Change* - expected to be or currently subject to significant barriers to growth or adverse business conditions in near future (e.g. workforce recruitment & retention, technology including automation, skills development, significant regional capacity loss etc)

In the table below, we have incorporated both regional and national statistics. Where feasible we have prioritised regional figures, with national statistics used where identified in our preliminary sectoral and secondary research, where they are more recent, or where they are more closely aligned with requisite data e.g. the Department for Education Unit for Future Skills dashboard highlights current online job adverts, but does not extrapolate to current estimated vacancies, which is a more precise indication of need within a sector. All national figures are highlighted as such and appended where feasible with regional comparative data.

Sector	High Value	High Employment	High Growth Potential	High Need/Change
Advanced Manufacture and Engineering	£2.8billion regional GVA[10], £645 billion GVA nationally in 2022; 9.2% of total GVA[11]	Manufacture provides 13% total employment in Glos for 35,000 people[12]	Forecast shrinkage but significant potential for growth aligned to net zero and transition[12]	
Construction	Value nationally of sector in 2021 around £115 billion[13], with £1billion added to regional GVA[14]	2.15 million workers nationally and 33,000 roles within Gloucestershire[12]	CITB forecast for an additional 225,000 extra positions needed in the next 5 years nationally[15] - regional requirement unknown	73% nationally report difficulties recruiting skills and technical workers, +-1 million expected retirements in next decade[14]. Regional figures unknown.
Agriculture, Agri-tech and pre-gate food production	Higher % total GVA in region than nationally, 8.8% Glos against 6.4% national[16]		Productivity of top 25% farms is 1.6 times the bottom 25%[17], no regional productivity figures available	Current shortfall in labour market nationally around 0.5 million out of 4.1million – extrapolation to regional roles of 50,000 would give a vacancy figure of approx. 6,250 unfilled roles[18]
Digital Industries	5% total GVA for Glos from digital sector, approx. £0.9 billion in 2020[19]	Estimated at 160,000 for South West in 2019[17] . Regional figures unknown	31.5% growth in employment roles nationally in sector 2011-2020[20] - regional figures unknown	Approximately 870,000 unfilled roles nationally between Jan-May 2022[21]. Regional figures unknown.

[10] Invest In Gloucestershire AEM proposition, 2021, https://www.investingloucestershire.com/downloads/2733_gfirst-lep_invest-in-gloucestershire-aem-brochure_2022-digital-final.pdf in the public domain

[11] From *A hotbed of innovation: New research reveals engineering adds up to an estimated £645bn to the UK's economy annually,* by the Royal Academy of Engineering, 2022 (A hotbed of innovation: New research reveals engineering adds up to an estimated £645bn to the UK's economy annually (raeng.org.uk)). In the public domain.

[12] From Unit of Future Skills Analysis, DfE https://department-for-education.shinyapps.io/local-skills-dashboard/ In the public domain

[13] From *Construction statistics, Great Britain: 2021,* by the Office for National Statistics, 2022 (https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/constructionindustry/articles/constructionstatistics/2021). In the public domain.

[14] From *GFirst LEP Jobs and Economic Bulletin*, by Jute Blackmon, 2023 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/economy/gfirst-lep---jobs-and-economic-bulletin---february-2023.pdf). In the public domain.

[15] From *The Skills Construction Needs: United Kingdom Five Year Outlook 2023-2027,* by CITB and Experian, 2023 (https://www.citb.co.uk/media/acbnbn5t/csn-national-report-final-report.pdf). In the public domain.

[16] From *The Scale and Impact of the Farming, Food, Drink & Rural Economy in Gloucestershire*, by Martin Collison, 2019 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/the-gloucestershire-agrifood-and-rural-economy-final-report-apr-2019.pdf). In the public domain.

[17] From *Agriculture in the UK Evidence Pack: September 2022 update*, by the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs, 2021 (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1106562/AUK_Evidence_Pack_2021_Sept22.pdf). In the public domain.

[18] From the NFU Online, April 2022, https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/efra-labour-shortages-report-warns-of-shrinking-sector/

[20] From *DCMS Sector National Economic Estimates: 2011 to 2020,* by DCMS, 2021 (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sector-national-economic-estimates-2011-to-2020). In the public domain.

The sectors have significant importance to Gloucestershire's growth and economic output, as well as the nation overall. Their alignment and relevance to Post-16 Technical Education pathways and provision within the region are significant, representing good foci for initial investigation and potential impact on provision.

These were chosen as the initial foci through pre-and-post designation meetings and conversations with stakeholders and to align with regional sector strengths and needs. We note that during Stage 2 delivery we will continue to 'deep dive' and refine understanding of skills needs within these sectors, but there is also some appetite for additional inclusions and sub-sectoral research, both within related and unrelated sectors and themes. These are expanded in section 2.8 alongside suggested primary refinement areas within Stage 2 delivery in section 3.

Thematic Foci

Alongside these sectoral divisions, we continued to incorporate and thematic 'drivers of change' and cross-cutting threads within skills needs that had been highlighted in the West of England Plus Trailblazer, prior Business West-led research into industry transformation and within existing external research. These themes were:

- Core and Soft Skills (otherwise known and transferable skills or critical workplace skills)

These are needed for most roles and are frequently listed as most sought after in recruitment, they enable effective communication, ability for further learning and a baseline of ability to progress within all pathways and professions.

- Core Digital Skills

Considered to be the skills employers need the majority of employees to have to utilise existing work systems, undertake core activities on digital infrastructure and platforms and communicate effectively both internally and externally. These were highlighted by the wide spectrum of response and understanding within trailblazer activity during conversation around digitalisation and within existing research and trends analysis, and recognition of such has been accelerated by the impacts of the pandemic on work practise via hybridisation and digital connectivity.

- Technological Change and the impact of Digitalisation

Technological change and digitalisation have been variously accelerated during and following the Covid pandemic alongside factors associated with tightness and lack of liquidity in the labour market. These factors are considered to be primary drivers of changing skills needs attached to continued growth, improved productivity and efficiency and potentially leading to significant transformation of employment and industry.

- Needs attached to the UK's Net Zero Strategy, decarbonisation, sustainability and 'green skills and technologies'

The UK's Net Zero Strategy outlines the national imperative to fully decarbonise all sectors of society by 2050, so there are clear UK and regional needs to decarbonise all industrial sectors and infrastructure, but less clarity surrounding understanding of requisite skills, timescales, and cost burdens to employers. These were chosen for incorporation into trailblazer activities and – following this – written explicitly into guidance for LSIP delivery and expectation.

[20] From *DCMS Sector National Economic Estimates: 2011 to 2020,* by DCMS, 2021 (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sector-national-economic-estimates-2011-to-2020). In the public domain.
[21] https://www.glos.ac.uk/content/employers-in-desperate-need-of-cyber-graduates-warns-university-expert/ University of Gloucestershire article 2022

The core skills needs (both soft and digital) remain essential to employers and are often perceived and needed to allow the development of enhanced or advanced technical skills, as well as gainful employ as a whole, with needs often either prior to or in parallel with new skills needs.

What is the LSIP attempting to solve?

The LSIP is a project to put additional employer need at the heart of skills provision, ensuring greater alignment between a region's business needs for continued success and a region's response to meet those needs. The Gloucestershire LSIPs aims are therefore:

- to build on existing understanding and add granular intelligence
- to allow providers to make meaningful interventions in existing provision
- to identify areas for new provision to meet immediate employer needs for continued commercial success and growth

The LSIP will also have broader repercussions across the skills and employer support systems, expanded in Section 3.

Stage 1 activity (to a degree) highlights some of these requirements, but also highlights areas where we can identify we have not yet reached a level of granular understanding in terms of industrial and employer needs, modes and methods of change, or timescales attached to needs versus commercial viability. We will prioritise these elements within Stage 2 activity as 'deep dive' topics in both interview and immersion event structures.

The structure of activity for Stage 1 delivery revolved around three distinct phases of activity:

These can be summarised as primary research activities, working with providers and stakeholders to translate business input into skills needs and responses, and identifying how the wider skills system can respond and where LSIP activities in Stage 2 can be planned for wider regional benefit and synergy.

- Potential primary audiences for the LSIP activities and findings are within three broad areas:
- Employers, who may find alignment with their needs (strengthening existing understanding) or may not (allowing further exploration of unmet skills needs for further clarification and exploration towards further response).
- Those with the duty to respond (FE Providers of Technical Education)
- Those who should 'have regard', including but not limited to:
    - other education and training providers,
    - Local Enterprise Partnerships and County and District Authorities
    - Employer organisations, sectoral bodies and centres of innovation,
    - The Jobcentre Plus network,
    - CEIAG providers

and

- Other organisations that support the needs of employees and learners

We have, through the priority findings process, divided employers' concatenated needs statements into areas of the workforce we believe they are most pertinent towards, from new entrants without experience (such as those direct from post-16 long course without significant industry placement or experience) through to awareness within senior management or changing needs in experience workforce. These findings have relevance to into-work education and training provision, and in-work training needs, both for internal upskilling and for those who are looking to progress within work towards more highly skilled occupation or further financial reward.

The LSIP has operated via an agile engagement methodology, utilising learnings from the LSIP trailblazer and previous Business West skills' research projects, with the intention of providing analysis of employer engagement, strengths and weaknesses of competing methodologies of research, and to predominantly build on existing national, regional and sectoral understanding.

Alongside the delivery of granular business intelligence towards regional needs for growth and prosperity, the LSIP is also attempting to improve business engagement mechanisms, both within the reporting of unmet needs and within the wider skills system; we therefore developed a light touch but comprehensive referrals system against reported needs, to ensure that employers with whom we engaged could receive signposting towards additional support and internal and external supporting partners to continue to investigate needs and solutions. This will be expanded further for the region and integrated into Stage 2 delivery and employer engagement with a pathway developed for ensuring skills gap analysis results in signposting, navigation and suggestions for further exploration to meet identified needs.

We have designed the process to work collaboratively and openly with all whom could benefit from engagement. All regional FE providers – plus those whom provide towards regional needs and employers - were incorporated into the research and events delivery, often with LSIP teams invited to engage in their own employer engagement activities such as employer forums planned and held simultaneously. We recognise too that there is a significant part employers need to play in improving the system for their benefit, whether that is through sharing identified needs to assist with provision, or by further engagement within skills, careers and learner support to help embed industrial needs, career awareness and potential industrial transformation. Gloucestershire's Employment & Skills Hub has a team of jobs brokers and projects specifically supporting Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEETs), over 50s and those looking for progression and higher value opportunities, and the Gloucestershire network of physical Growth Hubs (with online and telephone support) provide first points of contact for employers looking for support, advice and signposting towards skills and labour market needs.

The LSIP findings and process have the potential to feed into existing regional and sub-regional strategies, mechanisms and planning processes: identified priorities for LSIP incorporation include GFirst LEP's Economic Plan for Gloucestershire22, which will contain sections specifically attached to employment and skills – as well as needs for attaining Net Zero – and to take forward identified priorities from the Gloucestershire Local Industrial Strategy23 and other strategic documentation. Our ongoing collaborative relationship with the LEP and County Council ensures we can align with and input into planning and strategic processes, documents and initiatives as identified. The Economic Plan for Gloucestershire will enter public consultation from July 2023, and is being led by both Gloucestershire County Council and GFirst LEP; we will ensure the LSIP aligns with and can amplify this strategic documentation, as well as ensuring the LSIPs activities are incorporated for wider regional benefit.

[22] From *Executive Summary,* by Pete Carr, 2022 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2022/executive-summary-of-e-and-e-evidence-base.pdf). In the public domain.
[23] From *Gloucestershire Five Foundations of Productivity Evidence Report*, by GFirst LEP (https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/gloucestershire_five-foundations-of-productivity_evidence-report_2019.pdf). In the public domain.

We have made and will continue to make iterative improvements in the LSIP methodology, to improve understanding of the skills system, how providers and adjacent supporting systems respond, and employer engagement, in particular in respect to ensuring small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and those with low capacity for non-critical activities can engage and benefit from LSIP activities. The LSIP will have maximum impact when it recognises and reflects the needs of employers around direct skills provision, and we therefore are working towards longer term 'meshing' of LSIP processes, findings and engagement activities to support and initiatives of additional value to employers including via careers services and provision, strategic and sectoral research and planning.

Further work will be undertaken in Stage 2 to ensure we can leverage Business West's existing networks and audiences, whilst recognising that there is true value in engaging those not already engaged, in particular SMEs, and intend on identifying additional opportunities to collaborate and routes to market for further reach into those not yet engaged.

Why does the LSIP matter? How can it help?

The rapid transformation of work life and environments have come about due to both wide-ranging economic factors and changes to the labour market in terms of those seeking work and those available for work. In some respects, these are accelerations of existing transformational progressions within employment due to political and geopolitical change. Whilst some of the themes of changing work are well known, there is uncertainty in direction for some employers, and needs within both the existing workforce and future employees for educational provision and workforce planning are only partially known in terms of both need and timescales. The LSIP – as a current project exploring from an employer's perspective needs and awareness of transformative factors – can assist in closing gaps in understanding and support current understanding of employers needs from Post-16 educational routes.

To a degree, employers do not care whether the available and applicable training is vocational, technical, or academic, and these separations are used primarily within provision and planning; as long as courses appear to meet recognised needs in terms of delivery method and content and can mitigate concerns attached to time and money they will meet needs; however, understanding of the skills system, provision and routes to market (frequently alongside understanding of internal needs) is intermittent and compounded by change.

What is currently happening?

Existing provision and supporting initiatives

Existing Post-16 technical education provision in the region is provided via the three FE Colleges, the specialist provider of further and higher education Hartpury University and Hartpury College (for this project a major provider of agricultural education), Sixth forms and via Independent Training Providers, as well as via higher education institutes (HEIs) such as the University of Gloucester and industry specific programmes, CPD and courses, via accredited, certified and non-accredited methods. Around 70% of apprenticeships nationally are delivered by Independent Training Providers, and 67% of training providers are considered ITPs24.Projects in the Gloucestershire region to provide education and training support to both employers and employees are predominantly delivered via the Growth Hub and the GFirst Skills Portal25, in response to employer needs as well as supporting employers with wider employment and skills needs.

There are a number of recent and imminent significant changes to the Post-16 educational landscape, with FE providers recently being moved from private to public sector classification, potentially reducing access to investment and funding outside of direct central government mechanisms, as well as changes to

[24] From *Key Facts – Independent Training Providers 2021*, by AELP, 2021 (https://www.aelp.org.uk/resource-and-information-centre/resource-and-information-centre/research/key-facts-independent-training-providers-2021/). In the public domain.
[25] From *Gloucestershire Skills Portal,* by GFirst LEP (https://www.skillsportalglos.com/). In the public domain.

national core delivery attached to the gradual removal of some BTECs and the wider rollout of T Levels. This is set against some funding levels that have not changed against increases to the cost of living and expectations in recompense for employment (that is not currently being fully met within teaching professions in the same capacity as some industry roles, reducing the potential uptake of teaching for career progression from some career pathways) and both regional and nationally funded provision and response, and the forthcoming LSIF.

Other Parts of the System

Our primary partners for delivery of the LSIP in Gloucestershire are GFirst LEP and Gloucestershire County Council, with Gloucestershire as a region (including the support from District Authorities) working towards greater devolution of powers for further regional control over public services and Adult Education. We have worked extensively with the LEP to ensure the LSIP can add value and alignment with strategic planning, avoid replication of existing initiatives, and will remain doing so throughout project delivery longer term.

Away from direct education and training provision, there are additional needs being met (or partially met) for both employers and learners, including via careers services, support for those further from the labour market, those with additional needs or barriers to education or work. We recognise the importance of integration and relevance but have not focused primarily on potential unmet needs within these unless they have been explicitly referenced during our employer engagement activities; we do however recognise that labour market liquidity can be improved by improving opportunities for those under-employed or with the potential to return to work, including within those on universal credit, other jobseekers and those whom are underemployed – there are existing regional and leading support projects from the Growth Hubs and Careers Hubs and via County and District Authorities and partner agencies that are being utilised by those seeking employ, underemployed or looking for further progression. District Authorities will also be further integrated in Stage 2 delivery as the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) third investment priority, 'People & Skills', starts to roll out responses to regional needs as identified by these authorities, but also via some delivery of the national Multiply programme for numeracy skills.

Early stage careers interventions and awareness are themes that were highlighted by employers in most sectors and we expect further activity to highlight cross-pollination between employers and careers service providers; variously these services are provided via the Careers and Enterprise Company and Careers Hub, directly via staff within school and FE careers provision, and is being integrated into ITP delivery, but with further analysis on potential improvements to be done under the proviso that apprentices are already employed with the funder of the apprenticeship, so there is some minor consternation about future expectations in this element of service delivery.

What changes are needed?

Employers are suggesting through the LSIP process both changes to content and mode of provision. There is a – somewhat justifiable - perception that core curriculum and national qualification framework courses are shaped solely by large employers and therefore don't wholly meet SME needs, without the accompanying and mitigating understanding of potential adaptations and adjustments via training providers, through discussion and ongoing effective relationships. This is alongside a lack of awareness of current shorter provision towards immediate and future needs in understanding technological shift or industrial trends, at least in part due to shorter term funding and delivery cycles that do not provide significant lead time to generate demand, alongside potentially competing funding streams such as those seen for regional and national Bootcamp programmes, which have to a degree put similar provision in competition with itself. There is some need against technological change – in particular attached to green skills and jobs – for stimulation of demand in some areas and ensuring awareness of commercial demand and viability, to allow employers to recognise current and future demand shifts.

Overwhelmingly employers prefer delivery methodologies that are flexible, rapid, and modular where feasible, but this must take into account the demands of the learners too, at least some of whom may prefer to gain recognised qualifications whilst combining studying and work. Employers also need to better understand technical provision (awareness of the new T Levels remains particularly low and still for some Apprenticeships alongside benefits of shorter courses) and the commitments they may need to make towards support, industry placements and experience; this needs to be tempered with greater awareness of benefit, helping employers to embed and take advantage of longer-term learners, and reducing barriers to engagement.

Alongside having unmet needs in the understanding of existing provision and requirements, employers need to feel that they can meaningfully shape provision and build relationships with providers so that there is greater understanding and recognition of alignment with needs. Simultaneously, employers (smaller in particular) need further support to understanding current and future skills needs, as well as highlighting issues with bureaucracy and administration of longer term provision such as apprenticeships, and need to identify how longer term investment into skills needs as part of strategic growth planning will pay dividends across recruitment, retention and futureproofing, highlighting further potential needs for region-wide messaging about training and its impact on longer term retention and economic output versus short term commitment towards planning and integration into workforce development. The current reduced ability national to recruit fully trained employees requires a whole system shift towards workforce training, secession planning and development as core parts of businesses' growth strategies.

How will the LSIP drive change?

Section 3 outlines in further details the expected longer-term direction of LSIP delivery, opportunities and a 'whole-system approach' that Business West has identified as priority activities, collaborative opportunities and ongoing employer engagement – these will include a refinement of methodology and impact measurement, additional signposting and navigational support in direct response to identified needs and change, awareness raising of opportunities, amplification of existing initiatives and pathways for support, galvanic opportunities and events to increase employer understanding of current and future need, change, provision and other regional response. To a degree, due to the wide sectoral alignments identified for Stage 1 delivery, there are now highlighted areas within our sectoral and thematic understanding where we have identified additional skills needs to delineate and clarify understanding. These areas (expanded in section 2 and the priority findings documentation) will be embedded and highlighted in Stage 2 delivery to ensure further granularity of skills needs and appropriate provisional and systemic responses. Stage 2 will continue work in mapping the wider skills and employer support system, to improve signposting, amplify existing initiatives of benefit to employers and identify gaps in both provision and support.

Part Two: Taking the LSIP Forward.

Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan Report

Business West

Funded by UK Government

Part 2: Taking the LSIP Forward

2.1 Summary

This section outlines both sectoral and thematic reported needs as reported to us by employers in Stage 1. This is an illustrative snapshot of the much more comprehensive 'Priority Findings' documentation[26] for the Gloucestershire region. We continue to welcome discussion of these as work progresses into Stage 2 delivery and invite any and all employers, providers and stakeholders to get in touch via lsip@businesswest.co.uk

As a summary of the core, in-depth engagement methodology for the Gloucestershire region, Business West completed a total of 172 engagements specifically relating to the Gloucestershire region, totalling approximately 280 hours of direct engagement time. This was via 9 held events and 4 organised by others but with a direct research methodology for a total of 140 attendees, 28 interviews and 4 wider skills system discussions. Further breakdown of these activities, including sectoral alignment is within Annex B. Existing members of Business West Chambers and Initiative activities made up only 17% of the total of employers engaged for Gloucestershire, with 83% of engagements with non-members and new contacts.

2.2 Priority findings process

To assist with the 'Duty to Respond' and the Accountability Statement processes for FE providers, we adopted a structured approach to the LSIP's priority findings release, publishing separate documents per sector. Each document was segmented as follows:

- Summative Labour Market Intelligence (LMI)
- Analysis of future regional employment needs within the sector
- Summative analysis of top occupational priorities, shortages and opportunities
- Primary LSIP research via employer engagement, categorised into:
  - Core, soft and transferable skills needs
  - Core digital skills needs
  - Sector specific & technological change skills needs (including 'digitalisation')
  - Skills needs attached to the UK's Net Zero strategy, decarbonisation and sustainability.

We also incorporated a table outlining additional systemic or labour market needs highlighted through research that was not directly linked to skills needs, but was frequently enough reported to ensure we included in this process. We delineated primary findings through 'needs statements' across different categories within the labour and learner markets, from younger and/or inexperienced starters through to experienced workers with needs for upskilling, reskilling, awareness and understanding, particularly towards future need and change. Each sector specific document has been published on Business West's website and made available to providers and stakeholders at the end of March 2023. We have held feedback sessions and received welcoming feedback since release, to ensure these are living documents and continue to be refined. The documents are included in appendices and are in much more depth than the summaries included here.

[26] From *Business West Local Skills Improvement Plan Priority Findings,* by the LSIP Team at Business West, 2023 (https://www.businesswest.co.uk/business-west-local-skills-improvement-plan-priority-findings). In the public domain.

2.3 Action and response from providers

Providers have been responsible for mapping current and planned future provision against needs outlined within Priority Findings documents and identifying provision gaps within the LSIP region where there is likely to be a deficit of supply against anticipated demand. In terms of embedding and taking forward the findings of the LSIP, providers have been reflecting these in their Accountability Statements for provision commencing September 2023 onwards and will turn their focus towards implementation over the next few years. The Annual LSIP Report refresh will continue to shape providers responses to identified skills needs and priorities within the LSIP process. We are also aware of - and involved in - other elements of response to the LSIP findings, including via Ofsted Enhanced Inspections (where applicable), ongoing liaison with other training providers, and where requested discussion of strategic and direct curriculum planning.

The Local Skills Improvement Fund27 (LSIF) is intended as a direct response mechanism to LSIP priority findings and will be replacing the Strategic Development Fund. Business West commits to supporting and enhancing the successful collaborative application and ensuring full integration of this project's aims within LSIP Stage 2, without side lining other provision and support of non-included providers.

2.4 What do employers want

2.4.1 System, navigation, awareness

Both our LMI research and business engagement activities have been focussed on division of stated needs statements, subdivided by areas of the workforce (current and future). We have consistently been mindful of, and clearly communicating limitations to our intelligence and areas where there are gaps in data.

We have mapped our findings to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education occupational pathways where possible as the most comprehensive and easily understood terminology for both employers and training providers to relate to roles and functions within the labour market and expect to continue to do so throughout Stage 2. We considered employees needs at different points within their working lives – those already with extensive experience within the sector, career changers, and new entrants from Post-16 Education and Training.

To make sure our findings are sufficiently robust and reflective of the sector as a whole, we only incorporated needs statements where they met an evidence threshold (and removed outlying needs for further clarification and investigation in future activities), or where they align with national findings and/or regional LMI.

2.4.2 Existing provision

Employers consistently made broad systemic points about their needs and the changes that they need to retain economic viability and grow to meet future needs. Provision should break down the barriers that currently exists between industry and teaching (e.g., terms and conditions which make it difficult to recruit teachers with relevant recent experience especially in the sectors where technological developments continue at pace). To drive higher uptake, courses (where possible) need flexibility within both content and delivery, modular options, and to reflect and respond to market changes.

In many cases our engagement activities with employers identified significant gaps in awareness of local existing provision, and most employers have significant needs for information, advice and guidance about suitability and differences in qualifications and courses in order to both identify best solutions to needs and to frame their engagement in the LSIP appropriately longer term; both apprenticeships and T-Levels have only partial understanding within the region's employers as to commitment, need and suitability for recruitment and training.

[27] From *Applying for funding from the local skills improvement fund.* (2023, May 24). GOV.UK. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/applying-for-funding-from-the-local-skills-improvement-fund. In the public domain.

2.4.3 New provision

Within our prioritised findings we have suggested changes in relation to existing provision (divided between Post 16 technical curriculum and other non-technical content e.g., work readiness of learners by the end of their course) and the needs for new provision. Employers overwhelmingly request flexible, modular and rapid provisional responses to needs, with longer term and core curriculum course often utilised primarily for specific roles where prior work has been undertaken in partnership with providers to embed understanding of suitability and employer support within the process. A significant proportion of employer's reported needs aligns with shorter course delivery, for initial understanding or investigation of sectoral or technological change, to fill gaps within existing workforces and to upskill and reskill employees towards the future.

2.4.4 Next steps

We expect these themes and findings to be reflected within accountability and strategic documentation from FE providers, and Business West are committed to review, collaborate and support to ensure that the LSIP can be meaningfully integrated into regional responses to employer's needs. We outline within each section some areas where we expect to focus Stage 2 research on deep dives and other work, but this will be a dynamic model that can evolve as work develops. We will continue with our core methodology of research via wide-spectrum analysis of business expectations of change and need alongside incorporating in-depth qualitative research into the areas that require further delineation and granular understanding.

2.5 Core, Soft and Transferable Skills (Critical Workplace Skills)

These are (still) considered essential across all sectors and most roles, as a foundation for technical skills specific to a sector, essential in themselves and as a gateway opening up additional potential pathways within careers and organisations. Common themes came up again and again across all sectors:

- Communication across all categories: verbal (especially face to face for younger cohorts), written, digital, and both internal and external modal shifts. Some indicators of communication 'anxiety' to be addressed in new entrants to the workforce, against preliminary observations of the impact of the pandemic on learner needs and expectations.
- Work readiness especially of younger staff members, realistic expectations of the workplace and roles within employers, motivation and work ethic.
- Leadership potential and behaviours, supervision and management of people and projects/workstreams.
- Administration and organisational skills including time management.
- Problem solving, critical thinking, and how individual roles impact on outcomes of the whole organisation.
- Succession planning and workforce development (which has been brought closer to the fore by Brexit, covid and the resultant tight labour market.
- Resilience, especially where hybrid and remote working is the norm.

Some sector specific needs/alignments were identified outside of this, see below sector specific sections and the prioritised findings documents.

Deep dive topics

- "The Disconnect": Employer expectations and assumptions of soft skills and ability from new entrants to workforces
- Project Management and Leadership as critical work functions

2.6 Core Digital Skills

Businesses have reported significant additional support and training needs in effective utilisation of generic and specialist digital systems for core office and work requirements. Some of these are attached to generic work functions carried out by almost all roles (email, data recording and analysis, planning and administrational functions) and some are more industry and role specific. Employers are both looking for direct solutions via provision and support to effectively manage rollout and utilisation. Common themes across sectors include:

- Email and communication platforms, including calendar management (Microsoft Office etc).
- Communication via digital modes – effectiveness and expectation in digital comms.
- Infrastructure for hybrid and virtual working, such as Microsoft Teams - collaboration, communication, efficiency, standardisation of usage, rollout.
- Customer Relationship Management/customer management system (CRM/CMS) (Internal data usage in general outdated – those with digital client facing systems/support can often use as a USP)
- Generic office functions for data and usage (including Excel and databases)
- Some social media/marketing expectations across core functions undertaken by new employees (such as those within administrational and business roles)
- There is a disconnect in employer expectations with younger new entrants to the workforce and their experience and ability to use core office platforms – having grown up with online social activities and digital pastimes does not necessarily translate to business specific digital skills.

There are further sector-specific interventions and needs within all sectoral findings documents, including both re-prioritisations and additional core sectoral digital needs and alignments.

Potential Deep dive topic for Stage 2 LSIP delivery

- Effective Internal Rollout of Digital Systems

2.7 Alignment to the UK's Net Zero Strategy, Decarbonisation, Sustainability and Climate Change

This theme is key to the long-term sustainability of the wider economy but the major issue across all sectors is that the specifics of the implications are undefined, and demand is lumpy and low at present. There is an element of market failure and raising demand from the perspective of employers – turning demand signals into economic certainty for business investment is a high priority to improve uptake of provision.

Major investment and planning currently focussed around regulatory/legislation changes (which are often a response to crunch events such as the hike in gas prices following the war in Ukraine) and/or large procurement decisions within major contractors. Cash flow and responding to other business risks often takes precedence.

Across all sectors (short course) management training on what the implications for their sector, organisation and role would help pick up key themes, such as:

- Calculations and monitoring of carbon budgets, lifecycle assessments, whole life concept including disposal.

- Understanding funding for Net Zero, including Green Finance, cost benefit analyses (Low hanging fruit), measurement of footprints, Return on Investment (ROI).
- Regulatory/ legislative frameworks and expected changes, required timescales for action, clear direction of travel, including carbon offsetting.
- Waste and resources management, pollution, waste and plastics on sites/in delivery
- Sustainability is often isolated in roles rather than embedded in delivery roles.
- Communicating change and sustainability (internal for success and external for benefit), understanding and planning for changing end consumer demand.

Some sector specific needs/alignments were identified outside of this, see below sections for sector specificity alongside the prioritised findings documents within Annex B.

2.8 Sector 1: Advanced Manufacture and Engineering

2.8.1 Labour Market Intelligence summary

Manufacturing provides 11.6% of employment within the Gloucestershire region[28]. A recent manufacturing report produced for the House of Commons (March 2023)[29] suggested that the sector accounted for 9.2% of total GVA nationally between October and December 2022, while total employment in VAT and PAYE registered businesses accounted for 2.67 million workers across the country.

Starkly across the UK, there are now 4.58 times more vacancies in Manufacturing per worker for a job in that industry than there were in 2019[30].

The Manufacturing sector is the second largest sector by employment in the Gloucestershire region, with 35,000 employees, equating to 13% of the total number of employees, well above the national figure. This indicates that the sector is the most locally concentrated of all the sectors. In particular, the computer, electronic and optical products, fabricated metal products, manufacture of machinery and equipment, aerospace, rubber and plastics and food products sub sectors account for the highest number of employees.

Employment in the Manufacturing sector in Gloucestershire matches the decline expected nationally but to a greater degree, projected to change by -9% between 2015-2025, compared with a UK forecast of -7%[31]. Looking at the 2017-2027 period Other Manufacturing is expected to be the second slowest growing sector within Gloucestershire's economy, followed by Engineering[32].

Based on 2019 EMSI data, the proportions of vacancies within the manufacturing sector is materially higher than the national average, reflecting the particularly tight labour market immediately prior to the Covid-19 pandemic within Gloucestershire[33].

28 From Labour Market and Skills Review, Section one: The Labour Market, by GFirst Lep, 2022 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2022/lmsr-section-1_labour-market-background_2022.pdf). In the public domain.
29 From Manufacturing: Key Economic Indicators, by Abbas Panjwani, 2023 (https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn05206/). In the public domain.
30 From Market Tightness by Industry Post-COVID, by COVID Jobs Research: UK, 2022 (https://covidjobsresearch.co.uk/market-tightness-by-industry-post-covid/). In the public domain.
31 From Economic Growth Strategy 2019-2022, by Gloucester City Council, 2022 (https://www.gloucester.gov.uk/business-economy/economic-growth-strategy-2019-2022/). In the public domain.
32 From Labour Market and Skills Review, Section one: The Labour Market, by GFirst Lep, 2022 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2022/lmsr-section-1_labour-market-background_2022.pdf). In the public domain.
33 From Labour Market and Skills Review, Section one: The Labour Market, by GFirst Lep, 2022 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2022/lmsr-section-1_labour-market-background_2022.pdf). In the public domain.

2.8.2 Priority Needs

Priority needs (awareness and understanding against workforce) shortage occupations via national data research, and primary business engagement employer reported skills needs

Shortages within occupations as identified nationally with suggested route to attract new workers to sector

Apprenticeships/Full time 16-19 study programmes:

- Production and entry level roles; Machinists, fitters, operatives
- Data analysts
- Electrical engineers
- T levels Higher Apprenticeships Full time and part time HE:
- Mechanical engineers

Sector Specific and technological skills

- Design engineering requirements across wider roles: custom design technologies (CDT), technical drawing, computer aided design (CAD).
- Wider need for understanding of cloud storage, digitisation, data and analytics, turning data into intelligence.
- Needs for understanding coding/software development becoming wider across engineering roles – python in particular, computer modelling.
- Business skills within engineering roles: sales, communications, 'financial viability in my role'.
- Project management and research and development through to commercialisation of new products. Understanding project flow and efficiencies from R&D stages through prototyping, build, quality assurance (QA) and certification.
- Lean manufacture and quality improvement, design thinking and methodologies.
- Design engineering – need for understanding across roles, more design requirements in more engineering and manufacturing roles. 3D printing.
- Automation & artificial intelligence (AI) robotics, cobotics gaining in wider awareness and adoption.

Net Zero sector specific:

Electrification as a core sectoral change (and needs attached to high voltages, H&S, batteries and storage, codes and standards) gas systems and replacements

2.8.3 Priority areas for Stage 2

- CAD, Digital and Design Engineering
- Data: analysis, usage and visualisation
- Industry 4.0
- **Net Zero theme: Engineering for the Energy Transition**

2.9 Sector 2: Construction

2.9.1 Labour Market Intelligence summary

The Construction sector is a significant contributor of growth and employment within the UK's economy. In 2021, total Construction revenue streams were valued at £115 billion, while total Construction employment in VAT and PAYE registered businesses accounted for 2.15 million workers across the country.[34] According to the ONS census 2021 summary, 32,797[35] people aged 16 or over in Gloucestershire (Cheltenham, Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Gloucester, Stroud and Tewksbury) work in Construction of buildings; Civil engineering; Specialised construction activities and Architectural and engineering activities; technical testing and analysis.

Nationwide trends are broadly replicated for the Gloucestershire region, where the construction sector adds over £1bn to the sub-regional Gross Value Added (GVA)36.

The sector has historically relied upon workers from overseas to fill many of the shortage roles, and this has been hindered in recent years by the covid-19 pandemic and the UK's departure from the European Union. The Office for National Statistics reported a 42% fall in the number of EU nationals working in UK construction between 2017 and the end of 2020, with construction sector vacancies peaking in Q3 2022 at around 50,000 and remaining higher than any period prior to the first half of 202137 (regional equivalent data unknown). The sector has since faced difficulties in finding skilled manual or technical workers with 73% of employers attempting to recruit new workers into vacant positions reporting this.

2.9.2 Priority Needs (awareness and understanding against workforce)

Priority needs (awareness and understanding against workforce) shortage occupations via national data research, and primary business engagement employer reported skills needs

Shortages within occupations as identified nationally with suggested route to attract new workers to sector

Apprenticeships, T levels, Full time 16 to 19 study programmes:

- Woods trades (Joiners/Carpenters etc.) and interior fit out
- Electrical trades
- Bricklayers
- Surveyors
- Plumbers

L2 Boot Camps/adult education budget (AEB) programmes including CSCS card:

- Groundworkers /labourers / plant operatives

Sector Specific and technological skills

- Modular and offsite construction for portable and static sites.

[34]From *Construction statistics, Great Britain: 2021,* by the Office for National Statistics, 2022 (https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/constructionindustry/articles/constructionstatistics/2021). In the public domain.

35 From Industry – Census 2021, by Office for National Statistics, 2022. (https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS060/editions/2021/versions/3). In the public domain.

[36] From *GFirst LEP Jobs and Economic Bulletin*, by Jute Blackmon, 2023 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/economy/gfirst-lep---jobs-and-economic-bulletin---march-2023.pdf). In the public domain.

[37] From *UK Job Vacancies (thousands) – Construction,* by the Office for National Statistics, 2023 (https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/jp9l/unem). In the public domain.

- Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) are all expected to be understood as principles/basics to enable future adoption as required. Energy assessors, as the use of Energy Performance Certificates increases.
- Retrofit coordinators will be essential to ensure quality installation across different systems.
- Project managers with an understanding of the retrofit process.
- Insulation installers. Existing installers will need to be upskilled if minimum qualifications are set in PAS2035 for building retrofit.
- Plumbing and Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) and its place within fabric first/performance.
- Heat pump installers. Starting by upskilling existing Gas Safe engineers, existing training needs to be improved and standardised.
- Expected changes to Gas certification and skills, needs for existing workforce to reskill as legislation impacts, timescales awareness of need.

Net Zero sector specific:

- Insulation – existing/traditional alongside external and internal retrofit insulation
- Solar installation, usage and project planning stages
- Importance of aligning skills needs with commercial viability - return on investment, payback period, built environment sustainability 'basics'.

2.9.3 Priority areas for Stage 2 (deep dives)

- Fabric First Efficiency
- Building Regulations and Change (Building Standards, Legislation)
- Net Zero themes:
- Retrofit and Decarbonisation
- Sustainable Building Techniques and Modern Methods of Construction

2.10 Sector 3: Agriculture, Agri-tech & Land Management

2.10.1 Labour Market Intelligence summary

Agriculture provided a net contribution to UK Gross Value Added (GVA) of £18.9 billion in 2021. Farms in Gloucestershire are smaller sized than the England average, at 76 hectares (ha)[38] vs 85 ha, likely due to the prevalence of dairy farming, which usually has a smaller area per farm than other types of farming. Gloucestershire has a farming, food, drink and rural economy sector valued at nearly £1.5bn GVA - 8.8% of the local economy compared to 6.4% nationally - and the sector supports over 50,000 jobs across wider industry in the county, around 14.9% of the total workforce[39].

38 From Numbers of commercial holdings and areas by: farm type and farm size (1905-2021), by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2022 (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1084972/structure-england-june21-county-23jun22.ods). In the public domain.

39 From Agri-Food and Rural Economy Report for Gloucestershire, by Martin Collison, 2019 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/our-vision/agri-food-and-rural-economy-report-for-gloucestershire/). In the public domain.

An EFRA report delivered to the House of Commons in March 2022 suggested that the current shortfall in the labour market for food and farming roles was around half a million vacancies, out of a total workforce of 4.1 million[4], National trends are broadly replicated in Gloucestershire, but due to the region creating double the national proportion of sectoral activity is particularly acute – Gloucestershire agriculture directly supports 6,280[7] jobs, with professional supporting employees estimated around 210. This would potentially equate directly to 700 – 900 farming sector vacancies, though this difficult to estimate more precisely due to the majority of employment in the sector via owners and manager family units, alongside roles classified as other industries due to their supporting nature.

According to the most recent data available, taken in March 2022 there were 2,120 VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses within Gloucestershire.[40] The overwhelming majority of businesses are small – 18,855 employ up to 4 staff. Only 5 businesses are in the large category employing over 250 full time equivalents[41].

2.10.2 Priority Needs

Priority needs (awareness and understanding against workforce) shortage occupations via national data research, and primary business engagement employer reported skills needs

Shortages within occupations as identified nationally with suggested route to attract new workers to sector

L2 and 3 technical qualification routes, L4 and 5 specialist and managerial routes:

- General farm roles
- Equipment farm roles (internal and external)
- Support and suppliers
- Roles attached to livestock
- Roles attached to arable and crop production
- Data and analysis consultancy

Sector Specific and technological skills

Technological change short course programme for managers and those involved in engineering.

Automation/robotics/drones/ sensors (including data/image capture,

Sensors/ machine learning (ML) and data systems

Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality (AR/VR) and simulation as both learning methods and tools in sector

Specialist digital /data basic skills programme (as from construction sector) short course programme for the sector for roles within the following areas:

- data ownership and management
- data protection, sharing and security

[40] From *UK business: activity, size and location,* by the Office for National Statistics, 2022 (https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/datasets/ukbusinessactivitysizeandlocation). In the public domain.
41From UK business: activity, size and location, by the Office for National Statistics, 2022 (https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/datasets/ukbusinessactivitysizeandlocation). In the public domain.

- data driven decision making
- data analytics and intelligence
- supply chain requirements (and potential increasing needs for compliance/ability)
- localised intelligence platforms
- data as driver efficiency and productivity
- CRM and data platforms

2.10.3 Priority areas for Stage 2 (deep dives)

- Advanced Commercial Agri-Tech (Robotics and Autonomy)
- Digital Farming (Data, sensors)
- Smart Farm Management (Integration of Technology and Efficiency)
- **Net Zero theme: Decarbonising Farm Infrastructure**

2.11. Sector 4: Digital Industries (IT, Tech & Business Services)

2.11.1 Labour Market Intelligence summary

Digital professional services are of significant importance to Gloucestershire and the UK as a whole, with UK annual revenue within the UK's cyber security industry alone worth an estimated £10.1bn, up 14% on the previous year, supporting 52,700 employees[42]. DCMS figures from 2021 suggest there has been a 31.5% growth in individuals working in the digital sector from 2011 - 2020[43], with both turnover and employment growth more than double the rate of the economy as a whole, requiring a significant expansion of the UK's current digital workforce[44].

Home to GCHQ and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), Gloucestershire has the largest cluster of cyber businesses outside of London. Cheltenham has the highest density of cyber businesses in the country, with 620 businesses across the county and increasing. Gloucestershire has long been a home to significant professional services and IT service cluster, with over 1,000 cyber security professionals and more than 120 firms involved in cyber related activities as of June 2022[45].

The Cyber Resilience Alliance (formed 2017) reports that the combined region it represents (Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, The Marches, and Swindon & Wiltshire) is the leading region in cyber security outside of London, with an estimated 5% UK market share of activity yet only 3% of the population[46].

[42] From *Gloucestershire wins Government backing for exciting new cyber status*, by GFirst Lep, 2022 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/news/gloucestershire-wins-government-backing-for-exciting-new-cyber-status/). In the public domain.
[43] From *DCMS Sector National Economic Estimates: 2011 to 2020*, by DCMS et al., 2023, (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sector-national-economic-estimates-2011-to-2020). In the public domain.
[44] From *Tech Nation Report 2018*, by Francesca Cahill, George Windsor, Henri Egle Sorotos, Lucy Cousins, Safa Boga and Sahra Bashir Mohamed, 2018 (https://technation.io/insights/report-2018/). In the public domain
[45] From *Gloucestershire wins Government backing for exciting new cyber status*, by GFirst Lep, 2022 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/news/gloucestershire-wins-government-backing-for-exciting-new-cyber-status/). In the public domain.
[46] From *Cyber Resilience Alliance: A Science and Innovation Audit Report sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy,* by Worcestershire LEP, GFirst LEP, SWLEP, The Marches LEP and Skylon Park, 2018 (https://www.cyberresiliencealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Cyber-Resiliance-Alliance.pdf). In the public domain

2.11.2 Priority Needs (awareness and understanding against workforce)

Occupational shortage areas

Apprenticeships/16 to 19 FE/T-Level and HE:

- Software development professionals, software engineers and programmers
- IT Business Analysts
- Architects and Systems Designers, and IT and Telecommunications Professionals
- Cyber security professionals
- IT User Support and Operations Technicians

Sector specific and Technological Change

- Software engineering and coding widely needed and expected to be embedded in most roles in future (admin, IT, business, software, especially python, C++ html). Existing unmet need for fullstack developers and developers, QA/test engineers and technicians.
- Data usage, analysis, data science and visualisation growth areas across service provision.
- AI, automation and chatbot integration and understanding – efficiency, role change, productivity. Significant changes expected to services and roles pan-sector.
- Design thinking methodologies, user experience (UX) and product design, client experience, principles of CAD.
- Systemic sustainability within service provision: data, storage and data centres, cloud computing; Understanding sustainability standards inc. ISO14001.

2.11.3 Priority areas for Stage 2 (deep dives)

- Marketing (Digital Services), PR, Comms
- Software and Coding: Digital Industries
- AI and Automation
- Net Zero theme: Systematic Sustainability within Service Provision (Data storage)

Part Three: Delivering the LSIP Priorities.

Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan Report

Business West

Funded by UK Government

Part 3: Delivering the LSIP Priorities

3.1 Summary

The principles of longer-term LSIP delivery and a roadmap for change for the Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan can be delineated into three areas for future work and refinement:

- Research and Engagement
- Addressing Systemic Needs

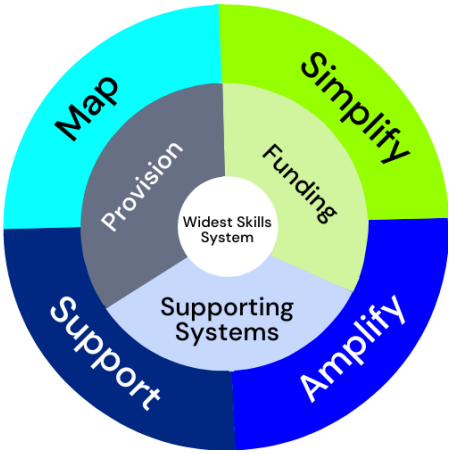
  and

- Collaborative Messaging

The areas employers can benefit from integration into the skills system are across access to and understanding of provision, understanding funding and financial arrangements, and understanding available support to identify, map and navigate solutions to labour market challenges, alongside providing support for mutual benefit into the skills system such as via provision of industry placements, guest sessions for learners and steerage and guidance for providers and affiliated projects and initiatives.

The LSIP through its core activities and wider delivery (and impact and partnership with others) can meaningfully support and assist in the widest possible skills system for the benefit of employers, through mapping, supporting, amplifying and simplifying for employers:

- Understanding employers' needs (research content and engagement methodologies)
- Addressing systemic issues and needs (map, simplify, amplify and support)
- Clear replicable messaging based on evidence, peer recommendation and a 'one message many voices' methodology across a number of partners and stakeholders utilising collaborative action



The LSIP will have most potential impact when all identified elements of need are incorporated into intended existing and new response and direct delivery, as well as recognised across the widest possible skills and employer support systems regionally. We recognise that across the region, the widest skills system (incorporating business support, careers support, skills support, Jobcentre provision, business intelligence and other elements) is complex and therefore we are not putting forward suggestions for potential support gaps and additional service provision specifically within this roadmap (such as the suggested activities outline in Stage 2 guidance, to be made publicly available June 2023); however, we commit to mapping these existing supporting mechanisms, projects and partners to attempt to delineate longer term potential gaps in the supporting system during the initial period of Stage 2. We believe there is more value at this stage in amplifying existing initiatives, such as the Skills Portal and support via the

Growth Hubs alongside employer encounters through the LEP's Careers Hub and national Careers & Enterprise Company supporting programmes.

Business West held 'Developing a Regional Roadmap' sessions for each LSIP region, to ensure we could identify existing initiatives and tailored interventions for each region, dependant on existing provision, support and understanding of the system, with input from businesses, training providers and stakeholders (see Annex B for further information). We divided these facilitated sessions into three areas for incorporation into Stage 2 delivery, summarised as follows:

Collaboration and communication

- Primary stakeholders should lead by example in sharing and utilising post 16 opportunities, share best practise and utilise the anchor organisations identified as industry leaders
- More investigation needs to be undertaken to recognise how best to support businesses who "don't know what they don't know": how can the region ensure robust skills need analysis via multiple supporting agencies?
- Multiple agencies are undertaking multiple support projects, making it hard for a regionwide approach, more needs to be done to map and align support and provision
- Information needs to be easily digestible for those with low capacity and in business terminology
- Highlight throughout all LSIP communications and engagements where businesses can receive support to identify solutions

*LSIP **Governance***

- Don't reinvent the wheel; utilise the existing expertise and mechanisms/structures available via the LEP – this may require additional work and support of the Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel, to be integrated into Stage 2 planning processes.
- Need to ensure the governing bodies can incorporate national issues and research into ongoing activities

Measuring impact and success

- There may be a wider regional opportunity to measure satisfaction with provision following LSIP engagement – needs met, satisfaction change, wider changes in demand/awareness
- Ongoing regional metrics need to be measured alongside direct project metrics on a clear and extended timeline; impact and impact delineation will take time
- Utilise case studies and celebratory narrative of what's going well and changing

- There are some clear and wide LMI metrics: people studying, take up of courses, jobs and jobs advertised, demand for provision

Business West will – as expected in the guidance and designation process – produce annual progress reports during Stage 2 for release by June 2024 and June 2025, outlining how the system has been changed, including across navigation, support and provision, as well as employer perception. As this report is limited, the refinements of understanding and deep dive activities will be published separately in full. We will review both direct response (through provision, uptake and awareness) and identify further targeted activities to improve awareness.

A key principle in successfully addressing systemic needs is the principle of 'no front wrong door' in respect to advisory information given to employers against identified and potential needs, but this will require greater stakeholder understanding of supporting bodies, simplification of the narrative attached to the skills system, work to address employer awareness of both support and provision and shared consistent messaging from primary partners. Time will be allocated in partnership with others to mapping employer's existing routes to support, current awareness and potential collaborative solutions to improve employers access to best possible responses for identified needs.

As a first point of contact appropriate for most employers in Stage 2 delivery and signposting, Gloucestershire's strong network of Growth Hubs provide support, information and guidance in both physical and virtual settings. Gloucestershire Employment & Skills Hub provided by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and GFirst LEP supports residents with work and skills' needs and reducing barrier to improve career prospects for current and prospective individuals. This includes specialist support to those over 50 and with additional needs or barriers to employment and learning and will be integrated into employer engagement for cascading information and advice.

Apprenticeship support and levy transfer support is provided by GCC and encouraged in larger employers via their work on and with 'anchor organisations'. It may be that the region could benefit too from a shared technical education placements support programme, to help SMEs and other businesses utilise support, administrative advice and the sharing of benefit and best practise. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund for Gloucestershire is managed by the 6 District Authorities, which will contribute towards addressing some identified gaps in skills and contributing towards the region-wide Employment & Skills Hub Outreach (ESHO) programme, funded from March 2024. Both the SPF and ESHO programmes will – upon commencement – be integrated into LSIP engagement activities.

There has been Gloucestershire specific response to green skills needs (including those identified during the LSIP Trailblazer) via SGS College's Green Skills Project, funded through the Strategic Development Fund and local Strategic Economic Development Fund allocation. Cirencester College in particular has been a trailblazer in the region for T Level provision, with a new centre about to open – these (along with other FE responses to employer's needs and new technical provision) will be amplified throughout Stage 2 delivery. There is also potential to attempt to align other skills gap provision into employer intelligence and signposting where a need is identified, such as via Multiply, existing Adult Educational provision, and expected new AEB provision towards digital and functional skills – Business West will ensure it remains abreast of developments for employer benefit.

Partnership and collaboration in action and narrative are key in assisting employers to engage with the skills system, from investigation through diagnosis to receipt of solution: better collaborative responses from all potential points of contact to simplify an employer's journey are essential and we will work with GFirst LEP, GCC, District Authorities and other supporting bodies to develop a primary process for iterative improvement that puts employer needs at the heart of suggested action via a multi-agency approach. If it is feasible to identify and agree primary routes to market and messages, we will then break down this approach into areas appropriate for diagnostic/analytical support, solutions for longer provisional response, solutions for shorter provisional response, and business support/navigation/brokerage options and opportunities.

We recognise that employers need to play a part in the system too, both in terms of change of awareness, perception and uptake and also in providing support and input via providers towards learners needs. We will:

- amplify and encourage take up of opportunities, existing programmes and initiatives such as via GWP and the Growth and Careers Hubs
- encourage greater aggregation of demand and awareness of support required for learners, via workplace awareness, opportunities, experience and placements
- raise employers' ability to analyse and identify needs, through internal resource and skills gap analysis, and raising understanding of sectoral change, best practise and opportunity attached to skills and provision

Providers are integrated into the LSIP system explicitly via the current response mechanisms; the new Annual Accountability Statements, which will show how FE providers are responding to both National Skills Priorities and directly to the LSIP priorities, the inclusion of Skills within enhanced Ofsted inspections, and potentially directly and indirectly through both curriculum planning and strategic planning documentation, but it is also likely that the LSIP will be further incorporated into regional planning and procurement processes via both the LEP and District Authorities. We have worked closely with providers through Stage 1 delivery and will undertake further activity to ensure Business West continues to be seen as a trusted partner, critical friend and employer engagement asset and can be integrated into existing engagement activities alongside providing opportunities to work collaboratively.

We recognise that more work can be done with a wider variety of stakeholders, representing both the skills system and employer support. We will integrate further communication and partnership during planning and implementation of Stage 2, highlighting the benefits of our integration into and support of existing initiatives within employer engagement activities. This will include cross-pollination into and from LSIP engagement for employer benefit, shared messaging to employer audiences, increased awareness of needs identification and support and alignment with regional imperatives. These will be integrated into the external governance mechanisms intended via GFirst LEP's Skills Advisory Panel and Business Groups into wider skills planning processes, the addition of meaningful intelligence for the Employment & Skills Evidence Base and Action Plan for Employment and Skills in Gloucestershire[47], ensuring maximum replicability and alignment of region-wide activities.

Business West as the Chambers of Commerce have access to – through various routes - a significant proportion of the employer audience for the region and is uniquely placed to region-wide response coordination given our impartiality and representation of a broad based of businesses and relationships with stakeholders, leading by example where possible by engaging directly with the FE skills system, as well as further integrating into strategic planning and development bodies via the LEP and Skills Advisory Panel and, where identified and relevant, within District Authorities. As an Accredited Chamber of Commerce, we recognise the strength in our impartiality and representation, and will maintain and improve our outstanding relationships with a wide spectrum of stakeholders and providers.

For region-wide strategic planning the key document for the Gloucestershire region will be the refreshed Employment and Skills Action Plan, which seeks to ensure that strategic direction, priorities and business needs from within the Local Industrial Strategy (and the LSIP findings) have clear intended direction for skills planning and funding purposes. We are maintaining conversations with the appropriate contacts within the LEP and GCC and recognise the benefit of the ongoing excellent working relationships we have for the benefit of the region as we move into Stage 2.

[47] From *Action Plan for Employment and Skills in Gloucestershire – March 2021 update*, by GFirst Lep, 2021 (https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2021/action-plan-for-employment-and-skills-v6-march-2021.pdf). In the public domain.

3.2 Research and Engagement

A number of expected areas of deep dive and refinement (see section 2) for which future investigation is required have been identified through the initial research. This work allows us to continue engagement with new and existing employers. We will amend our interview narrative, tailored towards those previously engaged as areas for further analysis, and adapt the existing interview script and prompts to incorporate more questioning routes directly related to these needs and focus our events outputs onto these areas to help shape response from providers.

An in-depth breakdown of LSIP engagements and activities is within Annex B, but in summary Business West held 172 in-depth engagements relevant to the Gloucestershire region totalling approximately 280 hours of direct engagement time (with some engagements included in more than one region due to wider geographic representation, economic activity and/or workforce or learner activity). Engagement with SMEs remains more difficult than larger employers, and hence our priority focus in Stage 2 activities is to give us the best chance of reaching those smaller employers. We will undertake greater exploration of partnership routes to market and collaborative opportunities, including internal and external Chamber activities and via partners, other ERBs and education and training providers.

Although we believe our current core methodology provides a good level of granular intelligence to act upon and add value to existing understanding, we recognise that it is structured in a way that favours larger employers who normally have dedicated capacity to make themselves heard. We will refine and further develop our lighter touch modes of research via new surveying methods and content, likely in partnership with other stakeholders.

Our Stage 1 research content was both a continuation of the successful trailblazer narrative and a further sector-specific prompted conversation shaped with input from stakeholders and existing research and understanding, both within Business West and via external routes. We will work where possible with others with sectoral understanding to ensure additional questioning routes align with widest possible needs for understanding and to investigate prioritisation and change within sectors.

We have outlined in intended deep dive activity for Stage 2 further explicit and additional foci attached to green jobs, green skills and the integration of these needs into both core curriculum delivery and short modular training provision. We will continue activities attached to employer demand and awareness of green skills and decarbonisation of the economic activity of the UK and ensure maximum alignment with skills planning, highlighting and amplifying legislative change, benefits, end-consumer needs and expected timescales for change.

A significant proportion of both our employer and stakeholder engagement events were held in partnership with others, primarily FE colleges, yielding new audiences for LSIP engagement, in particular those who were unknown to Business West at inception. We intend on expanding and continuing this method including dual branded or partnership opportunities, both through identifying existing opportunities for LSIP integration and via new events outputs in partnership with a wider range of stakeholders to align activities for mutual benefit.

3.3 Addressing Systemic Needs

Mapping the system and gaps: Although in-depth research has been done by Business West (and continues to be refreshed) into existing provision in the region, there will be a need to continue to map skills provision and understand its' relevance to employers' needs as well as learners' needs and position within regional requirements. This will allow us to identify further gaps within provision and analysis recommendations and priority actions for the annual LSIP updates.

Simplify: All too frequently, feedback on the availability and relevance of education and provision was either patchy, incorrect, unknown or dismissive, and there is a vast need to simplify the region and nation's access to education and training narrative for employers to identify routes to potential solutions. Whilst

there are national initiatives that will support this (such as the integration of apprenticeships into the UCAS application process and website); the region will no doubt benefit from this too. The Gloucestershire Employment & Skills Hub will provide learner/employee side intelligence and support, but there may be unmet demand from employer side that may be further developed during both mapping of existing support mechanisms and wider Stage 2 delivery.

Amplify: The work undertaken in Gloucestershire through the Growth Hubs, Careers Hub and Employment and Skills Hub (as well as projects delivered by district authorities and other supporting bodies) provide a significant amount of the support, advice, signposting, navigation and brokerage services that employers will need to both identify internal needs and the routes to solution. The LSIP delivery in Stage 2 will incorporate tailored regional support and signposting to these and others to ensure direct response to identified needs through research and engagement, as well as develop a support map for other stakeholders, to simplify their understanding of best routes for further support.

Navigate: Employers have identified (both overtly and implicitly) that they struggle to navigate and understand current provision, routes to market and identification of best solutions to needs. Therefore, we recognise (whilst not owning the process) that there needs to be perhaps widest change to employer's understanding of support and response mechanisms and greater awareness across partners and stakeholders of the best supporting projects and initiatives. Business West will ensure that during Stage 2 we are providing a tangible and clear follow up to all employers engaged to share the best 'front door' for initial conversations, whether that is via a Growth Hub, direct to training providers or via further engagement with the LSIP team to explore skills needs, understanding and potential opportunities.

We will methodically and explicitly increase the signposting commenced in Stage 1 to engage employers where identified needs arise. In most cases the region's Growth Hub's remain the first and most-appropriate point of contact for a business to receive support against identified or partially identified needs.

Support and provide: We will encourage employers to engage positively with 'giving back' to learners and potential workers, for both short-term and longer-term benefits including driving greater recognition of careers and pathways in CAIEG and opportunities for employer integration, opportunities to highlight vacancies and sectors, improvements to recruitment and retention through meaningful engagement with learners via experience, placements, lecturing and any other relevant opportunities to engage with both learners and providers.

Galvanise: There is a need for 'galvanic' events, to allow for the sharing of industry knowledge from expert sources and partners alongside raising awareness of the necessity of skills need identification. Where we can raise employers' awareness of impending changes in employment, training and educational needs, significant change to decisions and strategic planning for future change and growth can be achieved.

3.4 Messaging and collaboration

Employers have clearly suggested that they and therefore the region will benefit from clear, consistent messaging about skills provision and identification of solutions, both in terms of how to identify need and solutions. This concept suggests that LSIP marketing and communication activities should be geared towards a 'one message many voices' modality, with agreed shared narratives to be utilised via providers and supporting bodies where possible. The Business West intention as part of Stage 2 is to utilise external governance via the LEP Skills Advisory Panel to work out how to best translate this into measurable improvement in understanding regional provision and suitability.

In our sessions developing Stage 2 intentions and activities, the consensus was towards 'you said we did' and peer content, highlighting how provision and support are responding to employer needs alongside case studies and narrative from those whom have taken advantage of new, successful and tailored

provision – both via shorter term deliveries such as bootcamps and via core curricula course such as T-Levels and Apprenticeships. We will pivot requests through LSIP engagement towards these types of content, to boost understanding and take up, alongside any requisite messaging attached to the successful LSIF applications, helping make change in narrative and comprehension of the skill system. Additional messaging and marketing will be integrated attached to both improving understanding of T-Levels and the potential benefits of providing input and placements Stage 1 engagement has highlighted that more needs to be done to dispel myths, highlight benefits and share opportunities.

3.5 Governance

The LSIP project management and oversight structure is comprehensive and will remain so. Direct project management is maintained within the LSIP delivery team with direct reportage to the Skills contracts holder, Business West's Finance Director. Operational and Strategic decisions are made as per the internally agreed and written project application and internal project plan. Business West maintains a joint internal working and governance group of the Heads of the Skills Delivery, Skills Research, Strategy & Policy and Membership departments, with the oversight of the Finance Director as Skills contracts holder, and access to all Senior Management as required.

The LSIP Project Manager is required to report to the Business West senior management team (SMT) quarterly and to the executive board biannually to ensure project alignment, progress and internal oversight. Internal and external auditing are carried as per contractual obligation and internal processes.

For Stage 2 delivery – and to ensure ongoing alignment within regional skills planning and procurement, we will establish a direct external governance mechanism via GFirst LEP and in partnership with GCC, with the exact governance structure to be decided during Stage 2 initiation as it may require some additional support and resource if this is through the Skills Advisory Panel. Whichever structure is used will ensure maximum alignment with and buy-in from regional partners, provide input and alignment into long term strategic direction, leverage sectoral expertise when needed, and ensure the beneficial establishment of working groups towards both the LSIP and the Business Groups core functions.

3.6 Measuring Success

Business West has started region-wide conversations about how best to commit to comprehensive and useful measures of success, project metrics and performance indicators – some of these are reasonably easy to identify via:

- internal engagements
- referrals
- identified needs (and routes to market)
- SME representation
- integration of FE and ITP into delivery/research
- provision of events (both research and galvanic)
- marketing and communications outputs, including analysis of impact and progression.

There have also been suggestions that – if adequately measured against an existing baseline - there could be more robust measures of impact, such as via those who voluntarily choose technical education pathways, take up of provision in explicit response to the LSIP and those with whom FE Providers engage for planning purposes. These will be developed further during Stage 2 planning activities, in further partnership with providers and primary stakeholders and shared prior to commencement where feasible.

Annex A: Strategic and Economic Context.

Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan Report

Business West

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Annex A: Strategic and Economic Context

4.1 Economic context of the Gloucestershire region

The Gloucestershire economy is buoyant in comparison to the wider South West region and England overall. The working age population (as collected by Census 2021) was 393,100 – 60.8% of the total resident population of 646,600. For the 2022 calendar year 333,100 people were economically active, the vast majority being employees (280,000).

The most recent claimant rate, for March 2023 bears out this economic prosperity – the proportion of the working age population claiming out of work benefits is lower than the regional and national averages (Gloucestershire 2.3%, South West 2.5%, England 3.8%)

The labour market is strong, with around 22,000 unique job postings (March 2023 21,935; February 2023 22,320), considerably stronger county wide and in each constituent district than the pre pandemic figures in early 2019 or February 2020. The proportion of residents holding an NVQ level 4 qualification is in line with the national average (43.3% for the most recent year available being 2021), and tracks a few percentage points ahead of the South West proportion.

During 2022 the number of residents who are economically inactive (65,900 or 17.3%) is considerably lower than the GB average of 21.5%. Of these the largest categories were long term sick 30.5% in Gloucestershire vs 25.8% for GB and the retired (12,300 being 18.7%, vs 13.8% for GB as a whole.

4.2 Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) Data and Reports provided by GFirst LEP & others used in the Development of the LSIP

GFirst LEP Jobs & Economic Bulletin (monthly)
https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/economy/gfirst-lep---jobs-and-economic-bulletin---march-2023.pdf

Nomis dashboard summarising ONS data by LEP:
https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1941962903/report.aspx#tabrespop

GFirst LEP (draft) Industrial Strategy 2020:

https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2020/gloucestershire_draft_local-industrial-strategy_2019-updated.pdf

G First LEP Labour Market & Skills review January
2022 https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2022/lmsr-section-1_labour-market-background_2022.pdf

GFirst LEP Gloucestershire Employment and Skills Evidence Base Skills for Business in Gloucestershire | https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business/

GFirst LEP Five Foundations of Productivity Evidence Report

https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2020/gloucestershire_five-foundations-of-productivity_evidence-report_2019-updated.pdf

Gloucestershire County Council Strategy 2022-26
https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/documents/s79635/1Covering%20report%20-%20Council%20Strategy%202022-26.pdf

G First LEP Skills Strategy 2022-27 https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2022/gfirst-lep-gloucestershire-skills-strategy-2022-27.pdf.

Gloucestershire Green Jobs January 2023 Update

The Economy of Gloucestershire 2022, Gloucestershire City Council https://www.gloucester.gov.uk/business-economy/economic-growth-strategy-2019-2022/

G First LEP Productivity Evidence Report, 2019 https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/gloucestershire_five-foundations-of-productivity_evidence-report_2019.pdf

DfE Further Education and Skills for the academic year 2022/23 https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/further-education-and-skills
DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships for the academic year 2022/23 https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships
DfE Local Skills Dashboard Local skills dashboard - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Lightcast proprietary reports for Gloucestershire as whole and sector specific queries

4A.3 Other sources of information relevant to, and used, as part of developing the LSIP

ONS data, UK Business Activity Size and Location, 2022 https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/datasets/ukbusinessactivitysizeandlocation

COVID Jobs Research Market Tightness by Industry Post-COVID - COVID Jobs Research UK, 2022,

The Skills Imperative 2035: Occupational Outlook – Long run employment prospects for the UK, Baseline Projections (nfer.ac.uk)

https://nfer.ac.uk/key-topics-expertise/education-to-employment/the-skills-imperative-2035/

Labour Market & Skills projections 2020-2035
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/labour-market-and-skills-projections-2020-to-2035

DEFRA, Agriculture in the UK, 2021 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1106562/AUK_Evidence_Pack_2021_Sept22.pdf

DEFRA, Holdings, areas and make up of UK agriculture by county, June 2022
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1084972/structure-england-june21-county-23jun22.ods

House of Commons DEFRA Report, Labour Shortages in the food and farming sector, March 2022
https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/9580/documents/162177/default/

GFirst LEP Agrifood and the Rural Economy Report, 2019, https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2019/the-gloucestershire-agrifood-and-rural-economy-final-report-apr-2019.pdf

Manufacturing-the-Future-Workforce-Full-Report.pdf (catapult.org.uk) January 2020, https://hvm.catapult.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Manufacturing-the-Future-Workforce-Full-Report.pdf

Economic Indicators for Manufacturing, March 2023 Report from House of Commons Library SN05206.pdf (parliament.uk)

UK Cyber Sectoral Analysis 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957960/UK_Cyber_Sectoral_Analysis__2020__Report_V2.pdf

Tech Nation Report 2018, https://technation.io/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Tech-Nation-Report-2018-WEB-180514.pdf in the public domain

CITB (2023) The skills construction network: United Kingdom Five Year Outlook 2023-2027 https://www.citb.co.uk/media/acbnbn5t/csn-national-report-final-report.pdf

ONS (2022) Construction statistics, Great Britain: 2021 https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/constructionindustry/articles/constructionstatistics/2021

ONS Construction Industry Job Vacancies time series https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/jp9l/unem

Office for National Statistics (ONS) Census 2021 https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS060/editions/2021/versions/3

Ecuity Consulting & Local Government Association (2020) Green Jobs 2030-2050

Local Government Association LG Inform https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/lga-research/estimated-total-number-of-direct-jobs-in-low-carbon-and-renewable-energy-sector?mod-area=E10000013&mod-group=AllCountiesInCountry_England&mod-type=namedComparisonGroup

CITB Labour Market Intelligence report, January 2023 https://www.citb.co.uk/media/o2nngsgp/csn-lmi-south-west.pdf

Annex B: Process for Developing the LSIP.

Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan Report

Business West

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Annex B: Process for Developing the LSIP

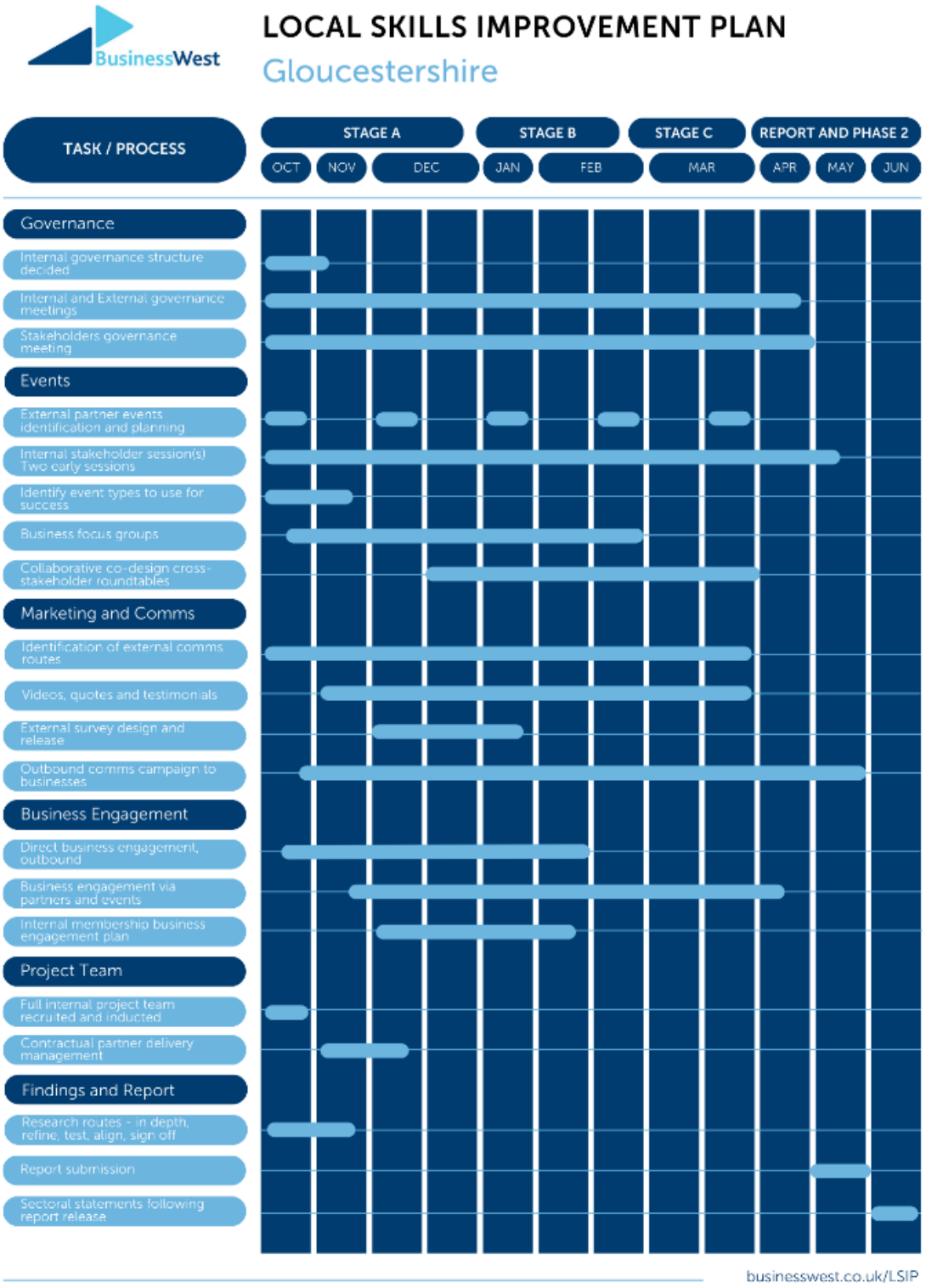
5.1 Summary

Business West utilised the principle for development of the LSIP methodology that most value could be added through this process by undertaking qualitative research, to add to existing understanding via granular and current employer's needs statements, rather than volume or quantitative analysis, significant quantities of which exist through Labour Market Intelligence and other national, regional and sectoral skills needs research. This process produced needs analysis on the principles of 'truing the wheel, not reinventing it' and adding value by freely sharing LSIP findings with others who could benefit from it, rather than replicating existing understanding. The findings align comprehensively against trends in existing sectoral national understanding, but provide additional detail on demand, re-prioritisation and micro-intervention within existing provision, alongside identification of potential areas for new provision.

A number of initial sectoral priorities were chosen in collaboration, prior to and during the designation phases, with sessions held with FE providers, ITPs and stakeholders such as the Local Enterprise Partnership. The principles under which sectoral investigation and prioritisation took place were to ensure both maximum impact aligned with the region's industries and economy, and relevance and applicability to FE provision within the region.

A project plan, timeline and executive summary were developed and shared, both internally for project governance and management and with stakeholders, to ensure best possible awareness of project intent, outputs and timescales, ensuring awareness of engagement and collaboration potential and helping in shaping partnership opportunities.

Gloucestershire LSIP Project Gannt Chart (overview)



5.2 Methodology

As outlined above, Business chose as primary engagement methodology a qualitative framework, with a 40 minute plus expected timescale for each engagement for inclusion. The LSIP project operated under an agile project methodology, refining the questioning route and prompts, to ensure maximum benefit to the process.

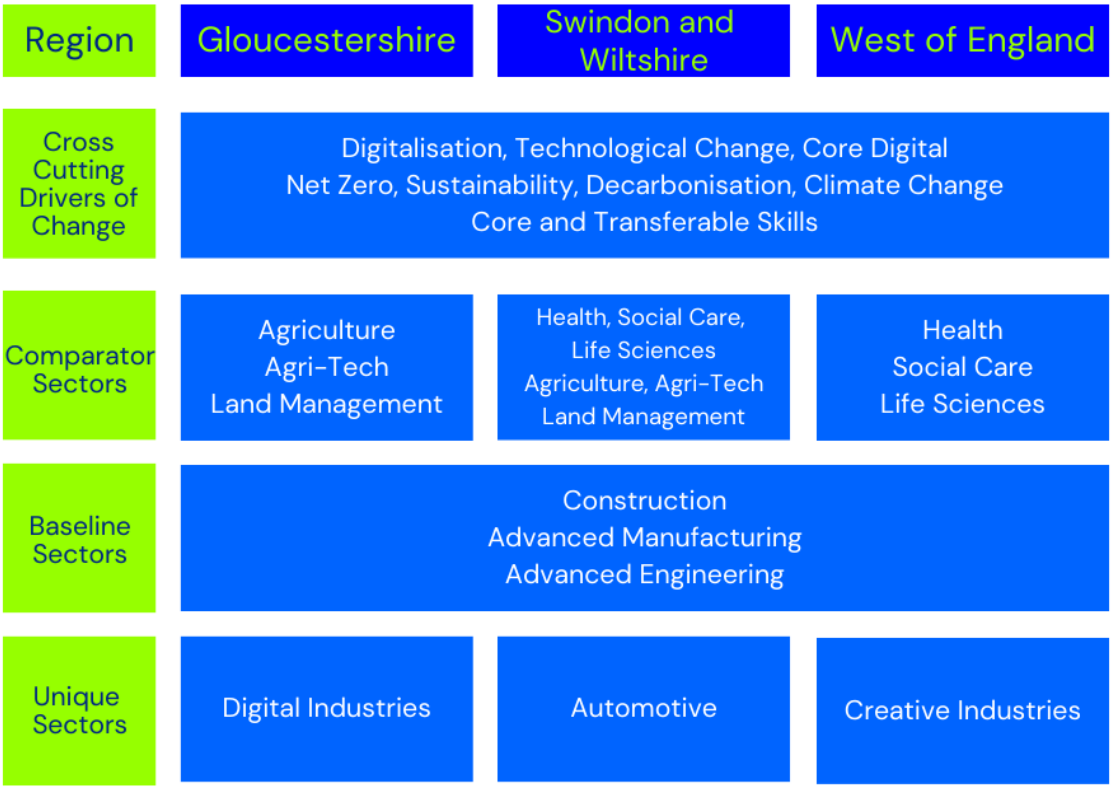
Business West utilised a coherent division of questions and a qualitative methodology with an open exploratory narrative to encourage wide response, with sector-specific and general prompts alongside

targeted sectoral and thematic events, utilising both internal expertise and understanding of sectoral change and existing research and understanding into needs, change and sectoral transformation.

The wide spectrum investigation was initially aligned across 5 areas of need and change:

1. Business Growth & Change: Needs and perception
2. Skills & Training: Understanding and utilisation of existing provision, challenges in content alignment and modes of delivery
3. Recruitment and Retention: Gaps, shortages and impact on workforce development
4. Technological Change and Industrial Transformation: Including digitalisation, changes in operational need and workforce expectations
5. Understanding of, alignment to, and needs associated with the UK's Net Zero Strategy, decarbonisation and sustainability

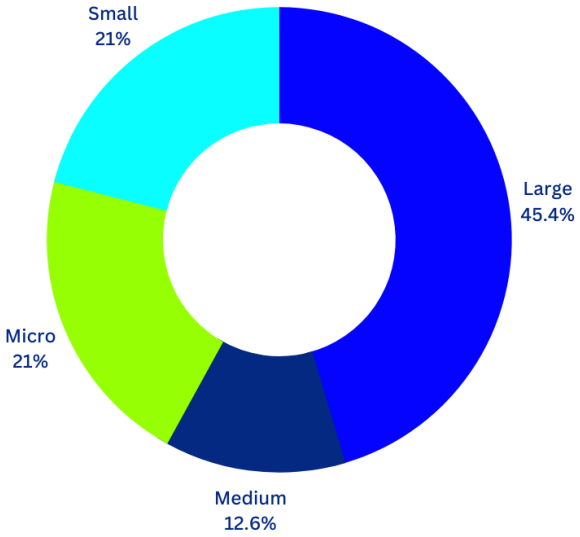
These were incorporated into our primary semi-scheduled interviews with additional topic guides and sector and business specific prompts, with research undertaken into each business prior to interview engagement. Our identified audience for primary engagements was across senior management and decision makers, operational and HR managers and within businesses ranging from SME to large organisations with alignment to both sectoral and thematic foci as outlined below:



Gloucestershire

Size of Engaged Organisations

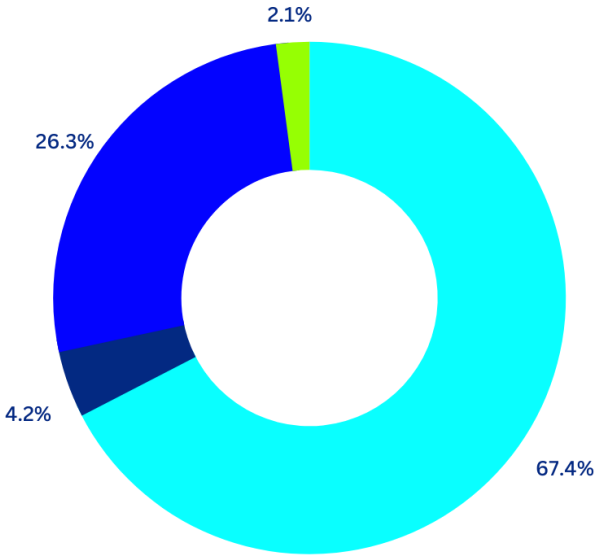
Micro	20
Small	20
Medium	12
Large	43



Gloucestershire

Job Titles

Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	64 (67.4%)
Professional Occupations	25 (26.3%)
Associate Professional Occupations	4 (4.2%)
Skilled Trades Occupations	2 (2.1%)



We divided sectoral engagements into baseline sectors (identified within each region as a priority focus), comparators (those within two designated regions and a unique sectoral focus within each region. This was alongside thematic and cross-cutting drivers of change, allowing wider engagement with those who identified relevance within essential themes without specific sectoral alignment, ensuring we could respond to and engage with any self-identified relevance.

Engagement in interview format was prioritised as a primary method for research, with the majority of communications directing potential audiences towards this, alongside attendance in the events programme. An automated portal with direct calendar and appointment booking access was developed during early delivery to help eliminate barriers to engagement.

Research and business engagement events were set up to follow sectoral and thematic alignments for the region, with some running for baseline or comparator sectors to address larger audiences and explore any

potential differences in perceived unmet skills needs. Employer and stakeholder events primarily focussed on one or more of these elements of research, to stimulate deep discussion and further analysis of employer needs. The average time of engagement was over 60 minutes interview format and 90 minutes for events.

Throughout the project we utilised an Agile methodology via adaptive and ongoing planning against current identified needs (both for employers and the project delivery as a whole) and a flexible feed-in system, with employers given the ability to engage via whatever method was most appropriate for them and multiple channels of contact developed during project delivery.

5.3 Principles, Limitations and Successes

We believe that the core methodology of in-depth direct engagement to add value to existing understanding through qualitative research and internal analysis provides maximum value from the primary task of LSIP delivery, with open access and free sharing via a publicly accessible platform reaching the maximum potential audiences and highest value in terms of those who should have regard or from whom response is expected. The set up of Priority Findings documentation for FE Providers and the 'Duty to Respond' via accountability statements (and to a degree Ofsted Enhanced Inspections and expectations within curriculum planning and strategic documentation) meant that we incorporated significant existing understanding of labour market intelligence, vacancies, expected growth and replacement needs and other trends and existing data, to help make the widest possible case for investment into regional skills needs.

The intention to investigate sectoral needs via a baseline, comparator and unique sector focus, to identify regional difference in skills needs, did not yield any robust distinctions in skills needs across the three designated regions outside of unique foci: where there were outlier reported needs, these did not make it into the report or findings documentation, but may have yielded additional foci for Stage 2 delivery. It is the author's current impression that as these three LSIPs are physically and economically aligned as part of the Northern end of the wider South West region, with similarities in economic and socioeconomic geographies, the distinctions in skills needs will be minor if at all and represented more within larger employers with specific remits. It will be of interest to Business West in the initial Stage 2 planning stages (July – August 2023) to investigate other regional LSIP outputs attached to similar sectoral and thematic alignments and see whether there are significant differences or potentially gradual reprioritisations of needs through geographic dispersal on a wider basis. There may also be value in identifying other regional clusters, such as within Aerospace, and comparing and contrasting findings to assist in shaping Stage 2 delivery.

SME engagement remains more difficult than larger employers, with a lower proportion of SMEs engaged than during the trailblazer period, but still a total of 54% of engagements were with SMEs within the Gloucestershire LSIP. Further partnership activity with stakeholders and sub-contractors is intended for Stage 2 delivery to attempt to address this – we believe that to a degree, having completed the first stage of delivery, being able to highlight findings so far and the initial rollout of new LSIP communications in both Case Study and 'you said we did' formats will go some way towards ensuring greater representation.

There is significant potential to collaborate on wider regional basis for direct project outputs (particularly from our perspective in the more galvanic and awareness raising events) and there could be benefit to all designated ERBs if there are identified synergies in Stage 1 findings and Stage 2 delivery expectations.

5.4 Engagement

The primary employer engagement period took place for 21 weeks, between 17th October 2022 and 13th March 2023, to allow time prior for planning, stakeholder engagement and awareness activities, and following this for the report and roadmap production. During the LSIP Trailblazer project we had a larger Business Engagement team and budget per region, but a shorter delivery and less lead time and awareness

of the LSIP and its place within the wider skills system, including alignment with other research projects, planning processes and intended impacts on provision outside of that delivered via the West of England Plus Institute of Technology, with whom we coordinated activities for replicability, mutual benefits and outputs via the Strategic Development Fund.

Our application for LSIP designation outlined our core objective as a minimum of 80 in-depth engagements from relevant businesses based within the Gloucestershire region or with a self-declared interest in the region via employment, learning or commercial activity. Total engagements incorporated into the Gloucestershire LSIP primary research was 172 that met our criteria, with these being included in analysis towards the Priority Findings and employer needs statements, with just 17% with existing Business West members. Please note that for some events we were unable to allocate sectoral or thematic alignments to registered attendees, therefore providing some input from unknown sectors, but the registration process for events ensured that attendees self-identified their interest with engaging with the topic. Please note too that these statistics do not include engagement via networking, short contact, survey completion, presentations or other contact, solely via the in-depth engagement methodology established prior to delivery as our core method of engagement.

Sectoral Representation via In-depth Engagements

Total # of Engagements (Gloucestershire)	Digital Industries	Agriculture, Agri-tech...	Construction	Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering	Digitalisation	Net Zero	Core and Transferable Skills	Non-Sectoral Aligned	Gloucestershire Total Engagements
Business / Employers only	39	21	10	5	12	7	1	0	88
Other Stakeholders *	8	18	33	9	17	4	1	4	84
Businesses and Stakeholders combined	47	39	43	14	29	11	2	4	172

*Including providers and supporting bodies

NB: all columns include cross-sectoral engagements, to cover where an employer self-identified alignment within more than one LSIP priority sector, other than the 'Gloucestershire total engagements (all sectors)' column, which includes the total number of individual engagements only.

Employer Size Representation (where known) in LSIP In-depth Engagements

Size of Organisations	Digital Industries	Agriculture, Agri-tech...	Construction	Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering	Digitalisation	Net Zero	Core and Transferable Skills	Non-Sectoral Aligned	Gloucrstershire Total Engagements*
Micro	6	7	6	1	0	2	1	0	20
Small	5	5	3	2	0	8	0	1	20
Medium	3	3	4	4	0	0	0	0	12
Large	5	24	10	7	1	1	1	3	43
Total	16	39	23	14	1	11	2	4	95

* All sectors combined

Please note that where applicable, the above figures include cross region and cross sectoral engagements, some of which employers and/or stakeholders self-declared for more than one region and or events that did not record sectoral alignment or were pan-region or multiple sector. The total number of engagements across all three designated regions was 359.

Audience Identification, Outreach and Other Engagement Activity

Alongside the primary interview and events methodologies, a number of additional 'routes to market' were identified, planned and rolled out, with varying degrees of success; experience and existing understanding, including during the trailblazer, suggested that employers were undergoing an element of 'survey fatigue', with significant numbers of supporting organisations simultaneously requesting input prior to and during this period, however both a short survey (designed to both provide direct input and as a route to further engagement) and a self-reporting questionnaire were developed.

The survey allowed a minimum time commitment for those whom capacity was extremely limited but still wanted to engage with the LSIP process, which was sent primarily via FE providers, but also requested by a number of different stakeholder organisations to share via their marketing channels. This resulted in 73 responses across the 3 LSIP geographies (of which 26 included Gloucestershire as a regional alignment) and these converted into 5 additional interviews for Gloucestershire prior to the Stage 1 delivery deadline. The self-reporting questionnaire followed the same outline structure as the interview schedule and was developed at the request of a small number of employers and training providers but was then not utilised by any of those who requested it or was sent to.

Events Programmes

Business West ran a series of 9 events for the Gloucestershire region - including those which covered more than one region through sectoral investigation – between November 2022 and March 2023, engaging employers, training providers and stakeholders. These events were separated into three distinct strands of activity:

- Employer Engagement (primary research, Stage A)

- Collaborative Codesign (translating needs, Stage B)
- Producing a Regional Roadmap (actioning priorities and developing a plan for multi-agency delivery, Stage C)

The average event length was 90 minutes of direct engagement time, with the primary format for each stage of activity structured around focus groups and immersion events to encourage deep and granular discussion on specific topics or themes within our foci, as well as larger forum style events covering wider topics and themes in our sectors with breakout style research sessions. Stage B events for co-design and addressing needs were held as collaborative forums to translate the business needs gathered in 121s and focus groups into actionable priorities. The regional roadmap events were held alongside individual stakeholder presentations and meetings (not outlined here but approximately 3 per week during 2023) to plan Stage 2, prepare the roadmap and multi-agency response and keep track of future progress and performance.

Events and themes

- Stage A - Agriculture and Agri-Tech Industry Forum
- Stage A - Agriculture, Agritech and Your Future Skills Needs
- Stage A - Gloucestershire LSIP Business Forum: Constructing a Sustainable Future
- Stage A - Skills and Sustainability: Shaping the Future of Advanced Manufacturing
- Stage A - Journey to Net Zero: The Future of your Workplace (Gloucestershire)
- Stage A - Gloucestershire LSIP Focus Group: Digitalisation and the Workplace
- Stage B - Preparing for the Future: Advanced Engineering and Construction
- Stage B - Preparing for the Future: Agriculture, Agri-Tech and Digital Industries
- Stage C - Gloucestershire Skills: Developing a Regional Collaborative Roadmap

Delineation of Events Programmes and Phases

Event Type	Purpose	How it worked	Date range
Business Forums/ Immersion events Stage A	• Discuss the topic and associated skills needs • Gather and record business intelligence • Integration of providers to help translate needs and provide additional Post 16 provision expertise and response	• In-person • Businesses and providers • 90 mins – 120 mins • 15 – 20 attendees • One on each sector and cross cutting theme per region	November 2022 – January 2023
Focus Groups Stage A	• Discuss the topic and associated skills needs • Gather and record business intelligence • Businesses able to discuss freely with peers • Open format	• Virtual on MS Teams • 5-15 attendees • 90 mins – 120 mins • Businesses only • One or two on each sector or cross cutting theme per region • Some were cross-region for comparator sectors (e.g., Health and Social Care, and Agri)	November 2022 – March 2023

Collaborative Co-Design Events Stage B	• Translating business needs into potential response and action • Ensuring the right audience could work together towards interventions and responses	• In-person within FE venues • Providers, businesses and stakeholders • Sharing existing research, discussion of response, issues and intervention • 120 – 180 minutes • More than one sector within each event, with divided and guided discussion	January 2023 – February 2023
Creating a Collaborative Regional Roadmap Stage C	Thinking about how we, as a region, can work collaboratively to make a support employer with skills gaps to identify appropriate solutions, understand changes and find suitable providers and advice, we will discuss how we can make one single coherent system for employers, create awareness of this plan and how we can monitor our progress as well as record success.	• In-person events • Providers, businesses and stakeholders • Outputs focussed on regional response and towards Stage 2 delivery • 120 – 180 minutes • Overview of key findings • Response to problem statement, three areas of discussion: ○ Collaboration & communication ○ Governance ○ Measuring success	February 2023 – March 2023

Marketing & Communications

Following the methodologies laid out in our application and above, a 21-week marketing and communications plan was developed alongside primary activities from October 2022 to March 2023 with the intention to share awareness of and increase involvement in the LSIP via:

- direct call-to-actions (CTAs) in the form of events attended and interviews booked
- awareness-raising of intent and deliverables to pre-identified stakeholders and businesses
- awareness raising and engagement CTAs towards employers that Business West had not previously engaged with
- a survey to help steer focus for each region and identify the learner demand and priority response for Stage C activity

Due to the short timeframe to identify the audience, plan deliverables and implement, the LSIP team again used agile methodologies in communications, to trial different ways of reaching KPIs for a higher return on investment (RoI); if/when a method or mode of communication did not show an effective RoI within 2 weeks, this communication method was no longer be utilised, and the team refocussed efforts on deliverables that gained better responses. Direct, individual and targeted communication was in the form of direct emails, event invitations, and invitations to interview or focus groups.

Our core CTAs included the below, listed in order of priority to the project:

1. Interviews booked in with engagement executives
2. Focus group events booked in

3. Collaboration and co-design events with stakeholders and FE providers
4. Learner demand roundtables with ERBs, stakeholders and FE providers
5. A short survey on Smart Survey in which respondents provide their thoughts on the most pressing skills needs and find ways to get involved with the LSIPs
6. Awareness of the project to share with key networks that can be pushed towards our core CTAs

Mass communication channels as below were utilised to achieve both awareness of the project and direct CTAs:

- Mailers to pre-existing Business West organisations listed on Unity and other procured lists
- Social media posts, specifically on LinkedIn and Facebook, using the Business West account for paid and organic advertisements
- Individually created posts and directed messages to selected identified potential audience members
- Website content – written, video and resource
- Promotional videos utilising various platforms
- Press releases, with a focus on changes to Post 16 Educational Provision

Seven newsletters were sent for the Gloucestershire region and four 'prospect' mailers for lead generation. Personal invites/outreach, direct outbound marketing and word of mouth were reported as the highest single channels that lead to LSIP engagement so will be increased during Stage 2 activities, with targets to be set across the team for outbound identification and contact rates. LinkedIn post impressions and reactions increased by 10% over comparable trailblazer period activities, as did mailer receipt and opening rates. Sign-ups for LSIP specific marketing and communications via Business West increased during Stage 1 delivery, with an increase of 11% across the three regions between October 2022 and May 2023.

LSIP outreach and networking activities were undertaken both by all relevant employees within the LSIP team and via representation of the LSIP through other departments within Business West, including via Chambers & Membership and the Skills Delivery team. Mass marketing was undertaken through both direct LSIP-specific identified audiences and the incorporation of LSIP updates into wider communications channels, as well as the production of tailored content for partner organisations via both existing and new mailouts. Numerous external events were attended for widening LSIP participation and awareness, and as mentioned previously, only 17% of in-depth engagements were undertaken with existing members of Business West.

Stage A, Summary and Analysis

Stage A activity (Articulating employers' skills needs) took place as outlined via both primary LSIP research and secondary data analysis, for incorporation into Priority Findings processes and to guide the research narrative. The secondary analysis was via existing Labour Market Intelligence and existing regional, sectoral and national data on change and skills needs, alongside analysis of existing provision within the region and nationally.

Our agile project methodology allowed us both pre and during delivery to identify the categorisation of skills needs and distinction between the areas identified; core and soft skills, core digital skills (which were further delineated throughout initial phases of employer engagement towards a new distinction in skills

needs), sector specific and technological change and needs within sustainability and decarbonisation. We utilised the Priority Findings process too for some incorporation of other systemic needs identified by employer engagement.

Although the primary qualitative analysis created a significant level of granularity, the commitments in terms of time for those who may have reduced capacity is significant; Business West will incorporate further higher volume shorter engagement research methods into Stage 2, with an expectation to utilise surveys sent internally and via partners, as there was greater than expected uptake through this in Stage 1.

Stage B summary and analysis

Business West worked comprehensively throughout Stage 1 Delivery towards the intentions outlined for Stage B (co-design and response to employers' needs) and we recognised the benefits of incorporating providers and stakeholders into LSIP delivery from pre-designation forwards, to ensure greatest replicability, alignment and buy-in. Significant capacity was designated towards providers from senior management to co-develop both the narrative for regional audiences and to ensure recognition of LSIP's potential value-add to those with both the formal duty to respond and those who may find benefit through regard.

Skills Needs and Occupational Priorities were shared with partial alignment to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) occupational pathways and maps, but there were some difficulties in some sectors with recognition of appropriate pathways and correspondence to post 16 technical provision due to the employer led narrative attached to skills needs rather than educational standards, employers perceived issues with categorisations and lack of understanding of relevance and change, and a number pointed towards the slow development of standards and lack of awareness in employers as areas that will need reinvestigation. Business West has potentially identified an additional workstream for Stage 2 attached to understanding of educational standards and frameworks as the basis for in-depth discussion of those engaged/involved, potentially in partnership with FE providers. At present there is no precise direction for incorporation into delivery, but will be incorporated into stakeholder and provider conversations within the initial Stage 2 planning process.

Providers were engaged prior to Priority Findings release, in both Stage B and C, to soft start understanding of the delineation and suggested format of Priority Findings, and the narrative, layout and intentions were discussed both at events and during meetings to attempt to find the maximum benefit; illustrative and precise without being prescriptive about response. General and direct feedback from those with the Duty to Respond has been positive, with a number of accountability statements shared and discussed in advance of submission deadlines.

Stage C summary and analysis

Although Stage C (identifying a regional roadmap for change and addressing learner demand) has been delineated in the project as a separate activity and phase of delivery, the requisite conversations for developing a regional roadmap in a whole-systems approach, to both improve access and awareness for employers and to simultaneously address other issues within the wide skills system, such as learner demand and greater integration of those on the periphery of post 16 education (including but not limited to CEIAG, DWP and those working with SEND or addressing barriers to learning and employment) have been held throughout Stage 1, from pre-designation and ensuring stakeholders had similar ideas of LSIP primary intentions following differing interpretations of various sections of the Stage 1 guidance25. This

meant that Business West had clear intention and idea for what would be formally incorporated into Stage C delivery and how to delineate foci in meaningful engagement with stakeholders and training providers.

Events during this period were held in roundtable format around three distinct areas for incorporation into the roadmap:

- Collaboration and Communication
- Governance
- Metrics and Measures of Success

These tangible outputs allowed us to focus on ensuring rational and strategic intentions as a region, including the additional needs attached to identifying the existing supporting infrastructure available to employers to both identify and support against skills needs. Each of these areas could be discussed from the perspective of providers, employers and stakeholders, to ensure a whole-systems approach of relevance via a multi-agency response that will be governed externally as decided and set up in Stage 2 planning (June – August 2023), to ensure this set of tasks and outputs aligns too with wider regional skills planning and strategy.

Roadmap events: 3 total (one per region), alongside numerous meetings and sessions with individual stakeholders, providers and via existing groups and structures representing regional stakeholders, in particular via the LEP and County Council.

Green Skills, Green Jobs, Green Economy: Alignment to the UK Net Zero Strategy

As elucidated in the May 2023 LSIP Approval Process Guidance (not publicly available), "Green skills" means the skills, capabilities or expertise needed to support jobs that contribute directly or indirectly support the net zero target contained in section 1 of the Climate Change Act 2008, adaptation to climate change or meeting other environmental goals. This element of skills need has been incorporated into every output within Phase 1 LSIP activity, and will be further integrated against identified priorities for Phase 2.

Business West is a certified B Corp and one of the largest Chambers of Commerce in the country, with the purpose to:

> *"help businesses of all sizes take advantage of the opportunities and address the problems created by this new world so they may successfully start, grow, export and innovate"*

As such, Business West aims to ensure the region we operate in is the best place for all to live, work, learn and prosper and we have long been focussed on more than just economic prosperity. Business West is committed to safeguarding the environment and addressing the Climate Crisis. We are signed up to the International Chambers of Commerce Climate Coalition and incorporate sustainability, decarbonisation and alignment to the UK's Net Zero Strategy into all activities undertaken, both internally and in our engagement with businesses and stakeholders in the region.

Decarbonisation and sustainability were incorporated into the heart of the West of England Plus LSIP Trailblazer, and further expanded within each of the three region's Business West was designated as ERB for in the LSIP national rollout, with our methodology incorporating discussion and awareness of skills' needs for futureproofing growth through decarbonisation and sustainability, within core functions, technological change and legislative and policy change. These findings are separated out within each

sector in the Priority Findings documentation, summarised in Section 2 of the report and initial expectations of Stage 2 research within this Annex.

Our intended deep dives and refinements of skills need understanding aligned with green growth have been incorporated into every sector specifically for future activity, driven by our Stage 1 research, for further analysis and understanding of employer's expected needs, with the core investigative activity attached to Green Skills and Green Growth to be retained throughout Stage 2. We are aware of both existing and upcoming strategic documentation aligned with sustainable growth and skills needs.

Providers

Through and prior to Stage 1 delivery, Business West have developed meaningful collaborative relationships with FE providers in Gloucestershire, including continuation of those established during the LSIP trailblazer period. All FE Colleges have been integrated into LSIP delivery, although there are some FE providers with additional capacity and ability to engage on a more significant and equal footing – we would like to bring all relationships with Providers of Post 16 Technical Education to a certain level of partnership, transparency and integration into LSIP and believe the LSIF is a potentially beneficial additional method to do so, ensuring alignment and certainty of purpose and partnership. There is however some implicit potential via the LSIF application process and expectations of explicit support to LSIF applicants for the deprioritisation of any providers not directly involved. Business West will therefore need to ensure that (if applicable) non LSIF providers are not marginalised or excluded from the LSIP process and treated evenly outside of LSIF support elements in terms of employer signposting and information.

We believe that through Stage 2 delivery we can encourage greater recognition of the Business West LSIP team as a direct asset for both internal and wider employer engagement, ensuring alignment of needs and activities within FE and post-16 education.

Gloucestershire – FE Colleges, Post 16 Education Providers and Higher Education Institutes

FE	Cirencester College
FE	Gloucester College
FE	Hartpury University and Hartpury College
FE	SGS College (South Gloucestershire and Stroud)
HE	Royal Agricultural University (RAU)
HE	University of Gloucestershire
Other Education Provider	AccXel Construction Accelerator
Other Education Provider	Ministry of Building Innovation and Education (MOBIE)
Other Education Provider	Prospect Training Services
Other Education Provider	Seetec Pluss
Other Education Provider	Tewkesbury School
Other Education Provider	The Development Manager (TDM)
Other Education Provider	Gloucestershire & Wiltshire Partnership (GWP, representing ITPs)
School Sixth Forms and Sixth Form Colleges	Cheltenham College Westonbirt School Sixth Form Wycliffe School Clevedon School

	Cotswold School Archway School St Peter's High School Tewkesbury School Rednock School Churchdown School Academy Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre Chosenhill School Chipping Campden School Wyedean School and Sixth Form Centre Cheltenham Bournside School All Saints Academy Cheltenham Holmleigh Park High School Cleeve School Norton College - Tewkesbury Brimsham Green School / Chipping Sodbury School / Cotswolds Edge Sixth Form

Stakeholders

During designation and prior to LSIP Stage 1 Delivery, Business West attempted to identify all potential stakeholders and partners for the Gloucestershire region, to highlight the benefits of LSIP engagement, raise awareness and identify potential collaborators and partners. Below we have summarised both primary and secondary stakeholder organisations with whom we have identified potential synergies and included in pre- and post-designation communications and invites. Those who have been involved directly and explicitly involved some self-selection and identification, in particular with national ERBs and sectoral representative bodies. We believe during Stage 2 there will be significant benefit to a wider participatory mechanism to ensure national bodies can identify potential relevance, incorporation and similar access and awareness on a national footing.

Network	CyNam
Other	Department for Education
Other	Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
Other	Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC)
Other	Shared Intelligence
Other	The Careers & Enterprise Company
Other	UCAS
Regional Stakeholder	Forest of Dean District Council
Regional Stakeholder	GFirst LEP
Regional Stakeholder	Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Partnership (GWP)
Regional Stakeholder	Gloucestershire County Council
Regional Stakeholder	National Composites Centre (NCC)
Regional Stakeholder	Stroud District Council
Regional Stakeholder	Gloucester City Council

Regional Stakeholder	Tewkesbury District Council
Regional Stakeholder	Cotswold District Council
Regional Stakeholder	Cheltenham Borough Council
Regional Stakeholder	Heart of the South West LEP
Trade Association	Electrical Contractors Association (ECA)

Local Enterprise Partnership Integration & Involvement

Premise had been set via the LSIP Trailblazer activities for an integrated relationship with GFirst LEP, with consistent discussion, alignment and sharing of progress throughout Stage 1 delivery – this was expanded to Gloucestershire County Council through the integration of some LEP roles within the council during initial delivery, with shared remits across employment and skills. Regular project meetings were held alongside less formal or regular meetings with various departments and representatives of projects and authorities. The LEP fed into initial pre-designation application information and we have integrated where feasible alignment into every element of LSIP delivery.

We have identified priority strategic documentation currently in development and methods of ensuring the LSIP can meaningfully feed in to wider skills strategy planning and employer engagement in Stage 2. We have the declared intention to continue joint activities for the wider benefit of the Gloucestershire region, with the LSIP supporting the LEP and County Council's strategic aims and synergistic employer engagement activities. We also believe that there will be value in the inclusion of the LEP and County Council in the LSIF application and approval process, to ensure both national and regional skills funding alignments and awareness and will share intelligence around EoIs and applications towards this to ensure as much risk of duplication and gaps as possible in the permitted timescales. There is also an expectation to highlight a key number of LEP initiatives (and supporting programmes delivered by other Authorities and partners) as primary support outputs for Stage 2 delivery alongside ensuring employers are aware of existing mechanisms; please see section 3 for further information on intent and alignment.

Stage 2: Principles and Outlines

The objective of stage 2 of the LSIP is to embed the LSIP process in the local skills system. We will be expected to "galvanise collaborative action with employers, providers and local stakeholders to support the delivery of the actionable priorities and the roadmap" that we have set out in our report.

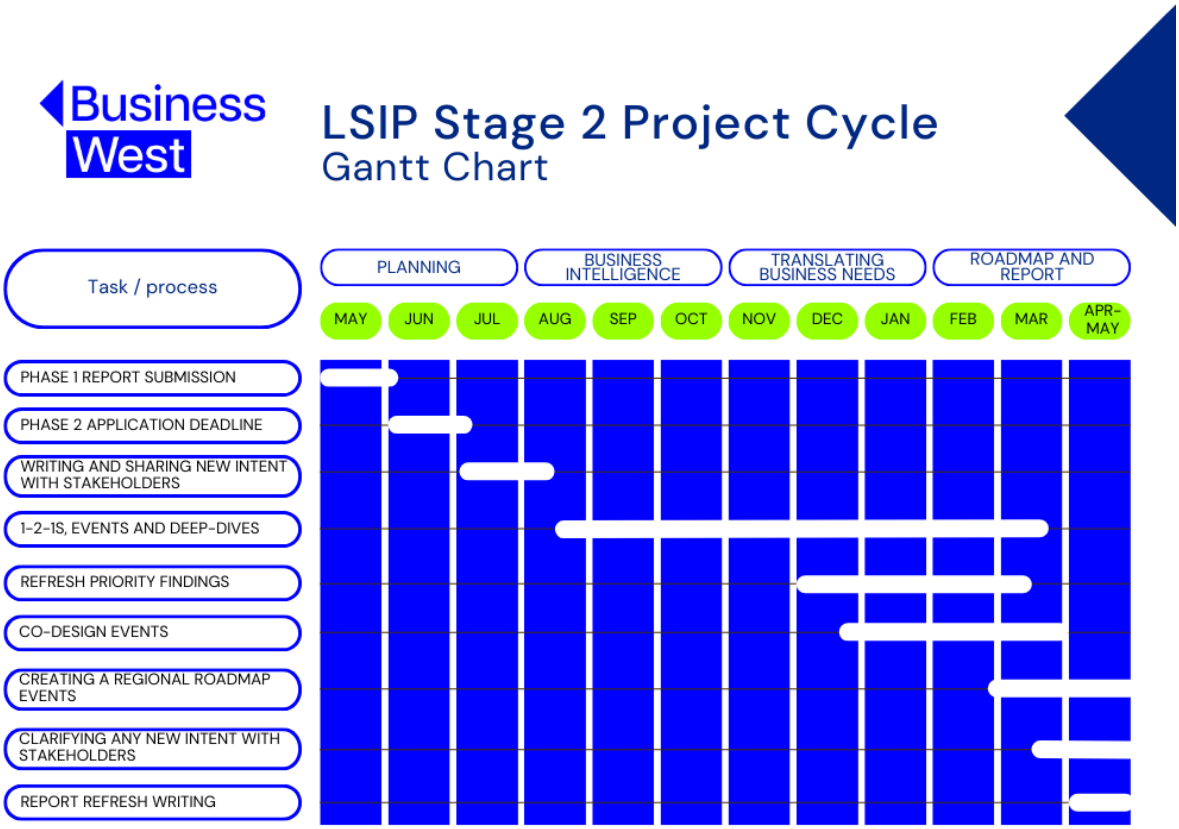
In light of this, we will be continuing with similar activities that we hosted in Stage one of the LSIP, including 40-minute 1-2-1 interviews and small focus groups on specific topics and themes within our sectoral foci, as well as the larger business forum style events where we cover wider topics and themes in our sectors.

We will also continue to host co-design collaborative forums to translate business needs gathered in 1-2-1s with local FE providers (and ITPs, etc.). In addition, we will be hosting regular regional roadmap events to plan and keep track of our actionable priorities with our engaged businesses, stakeholders and providers.

However, in addition to all of the above, this time around we will also be undertaking further deep dives into areas where we feel our research could go further within our current sectoral foci, refining topics where we know there is a requirement for change, where gaps in understanding have been highlighted and where there is a high need for skills in that topic or subsector. We will be hosting specific focus groups and galvanic information sharing events on these themes, as well as our regular 1-2-1s and focus groups.

Below we have outlined some intent in terms of changes to methodology and foci, alongside an outline of the intended delivery timescales prior to the first report refresh. We expect a significant level of additional

granularity and specificity attached to previously identified needs that will hopefully form a further meaningful basis for providers to respond against, including understanding of demand and timescales for commercial viability. We look forward to the extended (12 month) delivery timeline and believe we will achieve greater reach, engagement and granularity.



Stage 2 Intended Engagements Structure:

1-2-1 Interviews (40-minutes)

New Narrative for Core/Overarching Sector Question Route

Audience: New employers we have not engaged with

New Narrative – Sectoral Refinement Question Route

Audience: Existing employers we have already engaged with in phase one of the LSIP (and trailblazer)

Deep Dive Themes

Audience: New employers we have not engaged with

Deep Dive Themes

Audience: Existing employers we have already engaged with in phase one of the LSIP (and trailblazer)

Focus Groups / Events (90-minutes)

New Narrative of Overarching/Core Sector Focus Groups

Audience: Both new employers we have not engaged with and new employers we have not yet engaged with permitted in the same focus group

Deep Dive Themes

Audience: Both new employers we have not engaged with and employers we have previously engaged with permitted in the same focus group

Expert-led events into deep-dive topics

Audience: Both new employers we have not engaged with and new employers we have not yet engaged with permitted in the same focus group

Deep-dive themes:

These topics below are the areas which have been highlighted during Stage 1 as areas for further investigation. We have attempted to divide these into both incorporations into interview methodology and potential initial foci for events outputs in Stages A and B of Stage 2.

Baseline Sectors:

Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering *Region: West of England, Gloucestershire, and Swindon & Wiltshire*	
Deep Dive Topics (for events engagements)	**New Interview Narrative (all topics to be incorporated into Interview Question Route)**
CAD, Digital and Design Engineering	Production Roles
Data	Data Analysis
Industry 4.0	Project Management
Engineering for the Energy Transition	Mechanical Engineering
	Industry 4.0
	QA and Testing
	Automation
	Resource Efficiency
	Sales Mentorship
	In-House Training
	Electrical Engineering
	Net Zero/Green Skills set of questions surrounding each topic:

	- Energy - Waste - Policy - Legislation - Communicate change - Measurement and ROI

Construction *Region: West of England, Gloucestershire, and Swindon & Wiltshire*	
Deep Dive Topics (for events engagements)	**New Interview Narrative (all topics to be incorporated into Interview Question Route)**
Fabric First Efficiency	Carpentry, Joinery
Building Regulations and Change (Building Standards, Legislation)	Heat Pumps and Boilers
Retrofit and Decarbonisation	Solar and EVs
Sustainable Building Techniques and Modern Methods of Construction	Modern Methods of Construction
	Building Performance and Fabric First Efficiency
	Digital Design and CADs
	Upskilling and Reskilling for Plumbing and Heating
	Soft Skills and Representing the Company On-Site

Comparative Sectors:

Agriculture, Agritech, Agri-food and Land Management *Gloucestershire and Swindon & Wiltshire*	
Deep Dive Topics (for events engagements)	**New Interview Narrative (all topics to be incorporated into Interview Question Route)**
Advanced Commercial Agri-Tech (Robotics and Autonomy)	Smart Farm Management (Monitoring and Technology)
Digital Farming (Data, sensors)	Automated Farming
Smart Farm Management (Integration of Technology and Efficiency)	Agricultural Engineering
Decarbonising Farm Infrastructure	Communications and Connectivity
	Data
	Sectoral Drivers of Change (Economy, Policy, Legislation)
	"Farming 4.0" (Connectivity, Automation, Smart Farm)
	Net Zero/Green Skills set of questions surrounding each topic: - Energy - Waste - Policy - Legislation - Communicate change - Measurement and ROI

Health and Social Care and Life Sciences *West of England, Swindon & Wiltshire*	
Deep Dive Topics (for events engagements)	**New Interview Narrative (all topics to be incorporated into Interview Question Route)**
Successful Tech and Digital Adoption (In H&SC)	Health Care and Multiple Needs
Discharge, reablement and Integrated Care	Pinch Points in Provision (Health and Care)
Home Care	Advanced Digital and Remote Service
Digital, Computer and Statistical Literacy (Life Sciences)	Infection Control and Core Service Provision (Medication, Dressing, Hoisting)
Decarbonising estates and facilities / Service delivery and improving efficiency	Data and Systems Integration / Productivity and Efficiency in Systems
	Balancing Training and Work
	Gaps in Core Digital Ability
	Leadership and Management
	Life Sciences and Transferable Skills (Life Sciences, Computer Science, Maths, Statistics, Engineering and Chemistry – diagnostics, data, etc.)
	Net Zero/Green Skills set of questions surrounding each topic: - Energy - Waste - Policy - Communicate change - Measurement and ROI

Unique Sectors:

Creative Industries *West of England*	
Deep Dive Topics (for events engagements)	**New Interview Narrative (all topics to be incorporated into Interview Question Route)**
Immersive Technologies (Writing, Production)	Data visualisation, Data analytics
Software and Coding	Design Software
Marketing, PR, Comms	Videography and Motion
Sustainable Production	Project, Client Management, and Account Management
	Cloud Collaboration and Development
	Service, Sales and Pitching
	AI
	In-house and mentoring
	Net Zero/Green Skills set of questions surrounding each topic: - Energy - Waste - Policy - Communicate change - Measurement and ROI

Digital Industries *Gloucestershire*	
New Interview Narrative (all topics to be incorporated into Interview Question Route)	**New Interview Narrative (all topics to be incorporated into Interview Question Route)**
Marketing (Digital Services), PR, Comms	Data Usage, Data Science and Data Visualisations
Software and Coding: Digital Industries	Increasing Adoption of Consultancy Mindset and Client Needs Focus (Commerciality, Planning and Delivery, Evaluation and Lead Conversion)
AI and Automation	Cyber Security
Systematic Sustainability within Service Provision (Data storage)	Project Management
	Effective Software and Service Integration
	Cloud Collaboration and Development
	Net Zero/Green Skills set of questions surrounding each topic: - Energy - Waste - Policy - Communicate change - Measurement and ROI

Automotive, Transport, Logistics Infrastructure and Sustainability *Swindon & Wiltshire*	
Deep Dive Topics	**New Interview Narrative (all topics to be incorporated into Interview Question Route)**
Transports and Logistics	Coding and Software
Maintenance and Repair (Garages as well as transport and logistics)	CAD and Simulation
Electrification (EV and wider electrification and infrastructure)	Data, Analytics, Diagnostics and Interpretation
Alternative Fuels and Infrastructure	5G and Connectivity and its Impact on Transport and Logistics
	High Voltage Batteries and Longer-Term Sector Change
	Net Zero/Green Skills set of questions surrounding each topic: - Energy - Waste - Policy - Communicate change - Measurement and RO

Crossing Cutting Drivers of Change, Thematic Investigations:

Core Soft and Core Digital *West of England, Gloucestershire and Swindon & Wiltshire*	
Deep Dive Topics	**New Interview Narrative (all topics to be incorporated into Interview Question Route)**
"The Disconnect" (Employer Expectations and Assumptions)	These topics will be included in general interview question route for all Note: Rather than focusing on any Net Zero specific deep dives, this theme and green skills will be an essential focus within each of our sectoral foci.
Project Management and Leadership	
Effective Rollout of Digital Systems	

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Gloucestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan Report

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Business West

Voice your opinion

Get involved with the Local Skills Improvement Plan

For more information please contact:

Business West
Leigh Court Business Centre
Abbots Leigh
Bristol, BS8 3RA

01275 373 373
info@businesswest.co.uk