



Department
for Education

Local Skills Improvement Plans: Expressions of Interest for the designation of an Employer Representative Body for Cheshire and Warrington

Application guidance

September 2022

Contents

1.1	Purpose of this document	3
1.2	Expiry Date.....	3
1.3	Who is this publication for?	3
2	Call for Expressions of Interest	4
2.1	Background.....	4
2.2	Why should an ERB be interested in applying?	4
2.3	Who can be designated as an ERB?	5
2.4	What is the specified geographical area?	5
2.5	What does designation mean in practice for an ERB?	5
2.6	What are the expected timelines?	6
2.7	Will there be any funding available?.....	6
2.8	Stage I: Initial development funding (From point of designation to July 2023) 7	
2.9	Stage II: Ongoing review and development funding (August 2023 – March 2025)7	
3	Developing an LSIP	7
4	The Application Process	8
4.1	Process for applying to be a designated ERB.....	8
4.2	How to apply	10
4.3	Next Steps.....	11
Annexes:	12
Annex A:	Glossary.....	12
Annex B:	LSIP Geographical Areas.....	13

1.1 Purpose of this document

This document invites ERBs to apply through the expression of interest process to become the designated employer representative body for Cheshire and Warrington, for which no successful bid was identified in the initial expression of interest process launched in May 2022.

Expressions of interest must be prepared and submitted in accordance with this guidance and using the application form provided.

Selection under this expression of interest process will not constitute any commitment to funding from the department. For applicants who are successful in the expression of interest process, there will be subsequent processes to agree funding to support the development of the LSIP.

1.2 Expiry Date

The deadline for submitting applications under this guidance is 23:59 on 23rd September 2022

1.3 Who is this publication for?

This guidance is intended for:

- ERBs wishing to submit an expression of interest application to be designated to lead the development of a LSIP for Cheshire and Warrington.

This guidance may be of interest to:

- Other ERBs who may wish to support or be involved in the development of an LSIP without leading on the development and/or submitting an application.
- Individual employers who may be involved in the development of LSIPs.
- Providers of post-16 technical education and training including Further Education (FE) Colleges, Institutes for Technology, Sixth Form Colleges, institutions designated as being part of the further education sector (Designated Institutions), Independent Training Providers (ITPs) and Higher Education Institutions who will be involved in the development of LSIPs working with the designated ERB.
- Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and local authorities with an interest in the development of an LSIP in Cheshire and Warrington.
- Other local stakeholders with an interest in LSIPs.

2 Call for Expressions of Interest

2.1 Background

The Skills for Jobs White Paper set out an ambitious plan to put employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system to help ensure businesses and people have the skills they need to thrive and progress. Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) are a key part of achieving this aim.

Led by designated ERBs, LSIPs are strategic plans that will set out a clear articulation of employers' skills needs and the priority changes required in Cheshire and Warrington to help ensure post-16 technical education and skills provision is more responsive and flexible in meeting local labour market skills needs. Whilst LSIPs are not intended to cover the entirety of local provision, in developing an LSIP there needs to be a good understanding of the local labour market and drivers of future demand. In doing so, ERBs and stakeholders will need to consider local and national priorities.

By placing LSIPs on a statutory footing through the Skills and Post-16 Education Act, which gained Royal Assent in April 2022, we have demonstrated our long-term commitment to giving employer's a stronger voice in local skills planning. And, following the LSIP Trailblazers in eight areas in 2021-2022, we are in the process of rolling out LSIPs across England. An initial draft version of [statutory guidance](#) that sets out the process of developing and reviewing an LSIP, was published in August 2022.

The purpose of the call for Expressions of Interest is to identify ERBs interested in and capable of being designated the lead for developing an LSIP in Cheshire and Warrington. To do this, ERBs will need to demonstrate how they can represent the views of a range of employers in the specified area, their ability to develop a plan impartially building on their existing capability and capacity, while clearly showing how they are going to respond to the challenge of playing a much stronger role in their local skills system.

2.2 Why should an ERB be interested in applying?

The rollout of LSIPs is an opportunity for ERBs to take a central role in ensuring the provision of skills is more aligned to the needs of their local economy. The role draws on ERBs' long-held experience of working closely with employers to understand and represent their skills needs.

By leading the development of an LSIP, the designated ERB will benefit local employers who will have increased access to the skills required to grow their businesses and increase their productivity. This will help to ensure employers are fully utilising the provision available and able to navigate the system. It should also drive more employers' engagement in the skills system and support learners, who will benefit by gaining the skills they need to secure well-paid employment.

LSIPs will form just one part of the new local skills infrastructure. In addition to rolling out LSIPs across the country, DfE is developing a number of measures that will ensure the LSIPs developed by ERBs have traction and lead to changes on the ground. These include:

- Rolling out new funding and accountability reforms (including a duty in the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022) that will require providers to have regard to local priorities, including those set out in LSIPs.
- Introducing a new 'Local Skills Improvement Fund' from financial year 2023-24 to support providers to collaborate and collectively respond to priorities identified in the LSIPs.

While it is DfE's intention that LSIPs have traction, ERBs are not being asked to take a direct role in funding or commissioning skills provision. Those powers will remain with the ESFA and bodies with devolved powers, including MCAs.

2.3 Who can be designated as an ERB?

We are looking for a range of ERBs to apply to the expression of interest process. An eligible ERB is:

- a body corporate that is both independent of Government and not a public authority or undertaking the functions of a public authority; for this reason, we do not consider bodies established by the LEP (or indeed the LEP itself), MCA or GLA as ERBs;
- capable of developing and keeping under review a local skills improvement plan for the area, in an effective and impartial manner; and
- reasonably representative of employers in the specified area.

In determining designation of an ERB, the Secretary of State may also consider whether the body corporate is a business membership organisation, predominantly representing employers and businesses and is accountable to that membership.

The ERB will also need to be able to demonstrate that it can meet the criteria set out in detail in section 4.1 but summarised below.

- Criterion 1: ERB is reasonably representative of the employers operating in the specified area.
- Criterion 2: ERB's ability to work in partnership with colleges, Institutes of Technology and other providers
- Criterion 3: ERB's ability to work with MCAs/LEPs and engage with other stakeholders
- Criterion 4: ERB has the necessary strategic capacity, capability and leadership

2.4 What is the specified geographical area?

As with most other parts of the country, where the specified areas for the rollout of LSIPs are based on the current functional economic areas that providers and other stakeholders recognise and operate across, the specified area for the Cheshire and Warrington LSIP, will be based on the existing Cheshire and Warrington LEP geography.

2.5 What does designation mean in practice for an ERB?

The Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 does not place legislative duties on designated ERBs, however it does set out general provisions for LSIPs, which will

impact the way in which designated ERBs should undertake the role of developing the LSIP. It outlines that an LSIP:

- is developed by a designated employer representative body (ERB) for a specified geographical area;
- must draw on the views of employers operating within the area, and other evidence, to summarise the skills, capabilities or expertise required now or in the future in the area; and
- must identify actions that relevant providers of post-16 technical education and training can take to address those needs.

To be designated, an ERB needs to agree to terms of the designation which are: having regard to the statutory guidance, having in place a conflict of interest policy, and compliance with monitoring requirements set by the DfE. Once designated, ERBs will be responsible for producing and submitting the LSIP to the Secretary of State for approval and publication as well as keeping the plan under review.

2.6 What are the expected timelines?

We expect to be able to designate ERBs for specific areas of the country from early autumn 2022 onwards. The designation is expected to last approximately three years until 31 March 2025. At this point there will be a review of the geographies and the designation of ERBs to continue to develop and review LSIPs.

We expect by summer 2023, most of the country will have an LSIP developed and approved by the Secretary of State.

Friday 23 rd September 2022	Expressions of Interest Close
Mid October 2022	ERB designated
Summer 2023	LSIP approved
By Spring 2024	First annual review and update of LSIPs completed to ensure LSIP are still current
By Spring 2025	Annual review and update of LSIPs completed to ensure LSIP are still current
Spring/Summer 2025	Review of geographies for the specified areas and redesignation of ERBs to continue to develop and review LSIPs.

2.7 Will there be any funding available?

The Department for Education is making available up to £550,000 of programme funding to support designated ERBs during the development, implementation and reviews of a LSIP for their specified area. The grant funding will be available in two stages.

2.8 Stage I: Initial development funding (From point of designation to July 2023)

This funding supports the initial development of the LSIP up to and including the period that it is submitted to the Secretary of State for approval and publication.

The objectives of this funding are to mobilise and engage with a range of relevant employers, providers and other stakeholders, to take forward the role, as outlined in stages A, B and C in section 5 of the [statutory guidance](#); and to develop the LSIP report as set out in section 6 of the [statutory guidance](#).

This will be the most resource intensive period of the LSIP lifecycle and consequently it is envisaged that the designated ERB will spend approximately £365,000 of the £550,000 total available funding during this period. The designated ERB will be required to submit an application to the DfE for approval before they can draw down the funding.

However, to enable the designated ERB to start the process of developing the LSIP quickly, the DfE will provide £50,000 of the initial development funding for mobilisation as soon as possible following designation. The £50,000 will be deducted from the agreed total for initial development funding.

2.9 Stage II: Ongoing review and development funding (August 2023 – March 2025)

In spring 2023, the designated ERB will be invited to submit an application detailing its proposed spend for the period after the initial development of the LSIP. This would be for activities including the review of the LSIP. The total of the funding from all stages, must not exceed £550,000. The objective of this funding is to review the LSIP to ensure that it is still relevant and reflects the skills needs of the specified area, as set out in section 4 of the [statutory guidance](#).

Further information on funding is available from DfE upon request (see section 4.2).

3 Developing an LSIP

[Initial draft statutory guidance](#), which sets out the processes for the development and review on of an LSIP by a designated ERB is published on Gov.uk.

The guidance also sets out the nature of the role we expect stakeholders, including local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and local authorities (LAs) to play in the process.

Potential applicants are invited to review this guidance before submitting an expression of interest. Final statutory guidance will be published on Gov.uk in

4 The Application Process

4.1 Process for applying to be a designated ERB

Eligibility Check

Section 2.3 above sets out what features of an organisation would meet the criterion of being designated an ERB. The eligibility check will consider whether the application is from a body corporate that is both independent of Government and not a public authority or undertaking the functions of a public authority. Any applications from corporations not meeting this criterion will be deemed ineligible for the designation and will not be considered further.

Assessment Criteria

If eligible, applicant ERBs will need to demonstrate that they are building from a strong starting point in terms of their existing capability and capacity, while clearly showing how they are going to respond to the challenge of playing a much stronger role in local skills systems.

For the purposes of this expressions of interest process, all references to “the specified area” mean Cheshire and Warrington.

Applicant ERBs will be assessed against the following criteria.

Criterion	Evidence required
Criterion 1: ERB is reasonably representative of the employers operating in the specified area	The ERB can demonstrate that it is reasonably representative of the employers operating in the specified geography. By: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• describing how the body is reasonably representative of employers operating in the specified area including how the characteristics of the body's membership compare to the overall employers in the specified area• demonstrating its degree of experience (including evidence of impact) of engaging with employers and representing their views in local policy development as well as working with other ERBs for common objectives;• demonstrating the strength of its plans to engage effectively with the range of employers and sectors (including hard to reach SMEs) in the specified area and reflect their views impartially;• demonstrating the breadth of knowledge of its local economy and labour market.
Criterion 2: ERB's ability to work in partnership	The ERB can demonstrate that with respect to local providers, its

with colleges, Institutes of Technology and other providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • degree of experience (including evidence of impact) of engaging with providers to achieve common aims; • strength of the plans to engage effectively with the range of providers delivering in the specified area, in an impartial manner; • breadth of knowledge of the local provider landscape.
Criterion 3: ERB's ability to work with MCAs/LEPs and engage with other stakeholders	<p>The ERB can demonstrate that with respect to local leaders and other stakeholders, its</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • degree of experience (including evidence of impact) of engaging with leaders and other stakeholders to develop and deliver to local priorities; • strength of the plans to engage effectively with leaders and other stakeholders.
Criterion 4: ERB has the necessary strategic capacity, capability and leadership	<p>The ERB will need to demonstrate that it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has the degree of leadership and governance experience to deliver a significant change programme in the specified area; • strength of the plans to deploy sufficient resource and capability to manage the LSIP programme across both the active development phase and the annual update phase, as well as ensure the benefits are fully realised.

Selection Process

All eligible applications will be assessed by DfE against the criteria and scored. Applications with a score below satisfactory, on any criterion, may be rejected as of insufficient quality. There will be moderation of the scoring. The scoring will be based on the following:

Score	Description	Criteria
0	Nil response	A response has not been provided.
1	Weak	The response clearly and significantly fails to meet the criteria and has significant omissions. It provides inadequate or no relevant supporting evidence to support the response.
2	Satisfactory	The response mostly meets the criteria with some minor omissions. Some relevant evidence is provided to support the response, but this may lack in detail in some areas.
3	Good	The response meets the criteria, explains how the applicant will satisfy the criteria in full. Relevant evidence is provided to support the response.

4	Very Good	<p>The response demonstrably meets all the criteria. It may offer additional, significant, relevant, and clearly recognisable benefits and/or desirable features over and above the level required.</p> <p>Full and relevant evidence is provided to support the response.</p>
---	-----------	--

Where there is more than one eligible and quality application for Cheshire and Warrington, the application with the highest score against the criteria will be the ERB to which the designation will be offered.

4.2 How to apply

The application, including all supporting documentation, should be submitted by the deadline of 23:59 on Friday 23rd September 2022. The department will not accept bid applications submitted after the deadline has passed.

Applicants will be required to submit the bid application via email to LSIP.Programme@education.gov.uk.

Communications and frequently asked questions will be posted through the department's Jaggaer portal. Please register at [:https://education.app.jaggaer.com/web/login.html](https://education.app.jaggaer.com/web/login.html). Questions may be asked up until 23:59 on 16th September 2022.

Questions will not be answered via email or on an individual basis.

Q&A Event

The DfE will be holding an event for interested ERBs at 11:00 on Monday 12th September. The event will be held at the Department's office at Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

If you'd like to attend, please register by sending an email to LSIP.Programme@education.gov.uk by noon on Friday 9th September.

Omissions and discrepancies

It is the applicant ERBs' responsibility to check their applications and ensure that all required information has been submitted and that it is correct.

If it becomes apparent that there are any omissions, applicant ERBs will be notified via email. The department will then allow two full working days for missing information to be submitted. The absence of any such notifications, for whatever reason does not indicate, nor must it be assumed, that an application is complete. If the missing information is not submitted, then the application will be assessed on the basis of the information that has been provided.

Freedom of Information and Data Protection

Please note that the information provided may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the relevant legislation¹ and will be stored in accordance with the Department for Education's retention policy and procedures. If a request for disclosure of the information that applicant ERBs have provided is received, the department would consider any request for release very carefully. Such requests will be considered under the relevant legislation. Therefore, the department cannot give an absolute guarantee of confidentiality to applicant ERBs. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by applicant ERBs' IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the department.

4.3 Next Steps

The preferred ERB for Cheshire and Warrington, selected by the criteria above, will be notified in writing and provided with any terms and conditions as well as details on funding. The department's decision is final.

Once an ERB has been informed of the decision to designate them, the ERB will need to consent in writing to the designation and any terms and conditions. This response should be made in writing by the required date.

The Secretary of State will publish a notice of the designation on gov.uk outlining the name of the body, the specified area, the effective date of designation as well as the terms and conditions to which the designation is subject.

If applicant ERBs are not content with the way in which the bid application has been handled by the Department for Education, then applicant ERBs should use the Department for Education's [complaint process](#).

¹ Freedom of information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 and the Data Protection Legislation Act 2018

Annexes:

Annex A: Glossary

Term	Explanation
CEIAG	Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance
The department	The Department for Education
EOI	Expression of Interest
ERB	Employer Representative Body
GLA	Greater London Authority
Jaggaer	Department's procurement system which will be used for FAQs for the EOI.
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LSIF	Local Skills Improvement Fund
LSIP	Local Skills Improvement Plan
MCA	Mayoral Combined Authority
SDF	Strategic Development Fund

Annex B: LSIP Geographical Areas

LSIP area	Functional Economic Area	Difference between LSIP area and established functional economic geography
<i>Combined Authorities and Greater London Authority</i>		
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	
Greater London Authority supplemented by four sub-regional LSIPs based on the following four groupings that London boroughs largely organise themselves into: Central London Forward, West London Alliance, South London Partnership, and Local London.	Greater London Authority	
Greater Manchester	Greater Manchester	
Liverpool City Region	Liverpool City Region	
North-East	North-East	
North of Tyne	North of Tyne	
South Yorkshire	South Yorkshire	
Tees Valley	Tees Valley	
West Midlands (with Warwickshire)	West Midlands	Warwickshire included
West of England (with North Somerset)	West of England	North Somerset included
West Yorkshire	West Yorkshire	
<i>LEP areas</i>		
Buckinghamshire	Buckinghamshire	
Cheshire and Warrington	Cheshire and Warrington	
Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly	Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly	
Cumbria	Cumbria	
D2N2 (Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire)	D2N2 (Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire)	
Dorset	Dorset	
Enterprise M3 (including all of Surrey)	Enterprise M3	The four district councils from Surrey (Epsom and Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate, and Banstead, Tandridge)

		should be covered as part of LSIP application for the Enterprise M3 LSIP area
Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock	South East LEP	Reflecting learning gained from the Trailblazing phase of the LSIPs, the SE LEP will be divided north and south of the Thames.
G First (Gloucestershire)	G First (Gloucestershire)	
Greater Lincolnshire	Greater Lincolnshire	
Heart of the South-West	Heart of the South-West	
Hertfordshire	Hertfordshire	
Hull and East Yorkshire	Hull and East Yorkshire	
Kent and Medway	South East LEP	Reflecting learning gained from the Trailblazing phase of the LSIPs, the SE LEP area will be divided north and south of the Thames.
Lancashire (with Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen)	Lancashire	
Leicester and Leicestershire	Leicester and Leicestershire	
New Anglia (Suffolk and Norfolk)	New Anglia (Suffolk and Norfolk)	
Oxfordshire	Oxfordshire	
Solent	Solent	
South-East Midlands	South-East Midlands	
Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire	Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire	
<u>Sussex (comprised of: Brighton and Hove, East Sussex, West Sussex)</u>	Coast to Capital	The LSIP area contains all districts in East Sussex, but no districts in Surrey.
Swindon and Wiltshire	Swindon and Wiltshire	
Thames Valley Berkshire	Thames Valley Berkshire	
The Marches	The Marches	
Worcestershire	Worcestershire	
York and North Yorkshire	York and North Yorkshire	



Department
for Education

© Crown copyright 2022

This publication (not including logos) is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

To view this licence:

visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3
email psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk
write to Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London, TW9 4DU

About this publication:

enquiries www.education.gov.uk/contactus
download www.gov.uk/government/publications



Follow us on Twitter:
[@educationgovuk](https://twitter.com/educationgovuk)



Like us on Facebook:
facebook.com/educationgovuk