



Government
Economic
Service

Government Economic Service Strategy

2024-2027

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Government Economic Service Strategy 2024-2027



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Chapter 1

Introduction from Sam Beckett, Head of the GES



The Government Economic Service's reputation for excellence and influence is the hard-earned result of consistently delivering high quality analysis. I am incredibly proud to lead a profession which brings insight to so many crucial issues across the breadth of government.

This year we celebrate 60 years of the GES and the huge contribution that government economists have made to policy-making. We also mark three years since launching our previous strategy in 2021 and I am proud of our achievements in that time. There is more to do, and I am excited about driving positive change over the next three years, as well as about what the profession will deliver over the next sixty.

This Strategy is the outcome of an in-depth consultation exercise with GES members, including GESDAP apprentices, junior economists, Grade 7 and 6s, SCS and Chief Economists. Thank you to all of you who contributed your thoughts and ideas.

The Strategy provides a guide to our priorities over the next three years, with a focus on three areas: **developing our community, building our skills and capability and modernising our recruitment**. These priorities are widely shared across the economics family in government. Getting them right will improve the experience and careers of GES members and improve our diversity in terms of people, place and thought. This will enable us to deliver even more high quality, high impact analysis.

This is a collaborative effort and I ask you all to play your part.

Sam Beckett
Chief Economic Adviser, Head of the GES and
Second Permanent Secretary to HM Treasury

Chapter 2

What is the GES?

2.1 The GES is the professional body of economists working across the UK Civil Service. It is a community and co-ordinating body, supporting around 3500 economists, working in over 70 government departments and agencies.

2.2 GES members are civil servants ranging from apprentices to permanent secretaries. They work in a wide variety of roles, drawing on the full range of economics skills and methods.

2.3 2024 marks the 60th anniversary of the GES. The profession has grown and changed in that time, but throughout it has retained a focus on high-quality, high-impact economic analysis. We are proud of the six decades of service from generations of GES economists in informing and improving policy-making in government.

2.4 The Head of the GES is Sam Beckett, Chief Economic Adviser and Second Permanent Secretary to HM Treasury.

2.5 Leadership of the GES is provided by the Head of the GES together with the GES Corporate Board. The Corporate Board focuses on the development of the profession and is attended by Chief Economists from all departments with more than 100 members, as well as member representatives who sit on the GES Shadow Board. A larger Strategy Board is made up of senior representatives of all GES departments and agencies. This meets quarterly and focuses on strategic discussions on major analytical issues.

2.6 The GES and its leadership are supported by the Government Economic and Social Research team (GESR), based in HM Treasury. The work of the team is funded by all departments who have GES members through an annual membership fee.

2.7 The GES recruits hundreds of new economists into government every year, through central schemes and direct departmental appointments. The GESR runs four central recruitment schemes, aimed at graduates, apprentices and current undergraduates (for both year-long placements and summer internships). A fifth scheme, the GES Fast Stream, is led by the Cabinet Office with support from GESR and GES assessors who volunteer their time and expertise.

2.8 The GES co-ordinates structured learning programmes through the award-winning GES Degree Apprenticeship Programme (GESDAP), the Level 7 Economics Master's Apprenticeship Programme (EMAP) and, working with the Cabinet Office, the GES Fast Stream.

2.9 The GES also provides learning opportunities for all members including through the annual conference and events programme.

Working with other analytical professions

2.10 The GES is part of the family of analytical professions in government, who all share a mission to improve the quality and impact of analysis to inform decision-making. The GES works with other professions on areas of common interest and with the Analysis Function, which provides a forum for analytical collaboration across government and champions best practice including the Analysis Standard. The Analysis Function is open to all civil servants who work in analytical roles.

2.11 The GES supports the work of the Analysis Function by sharing information and good practice through established GES channels and working together where we identify areas that benefit from working across analytical professions.

Chapter 3

Our vision for the GES

3.1 The vision of the GES is: *'to champion economics in government, and to promote the use of high-impact, high-quality economic analysis provided by excellent economists. The GES is also committed to the core values of the Civil Service: integrity, honesty, objectivity, and impartiality, and aims to realise these values through cooperation and collaboration across government and beyond.'*

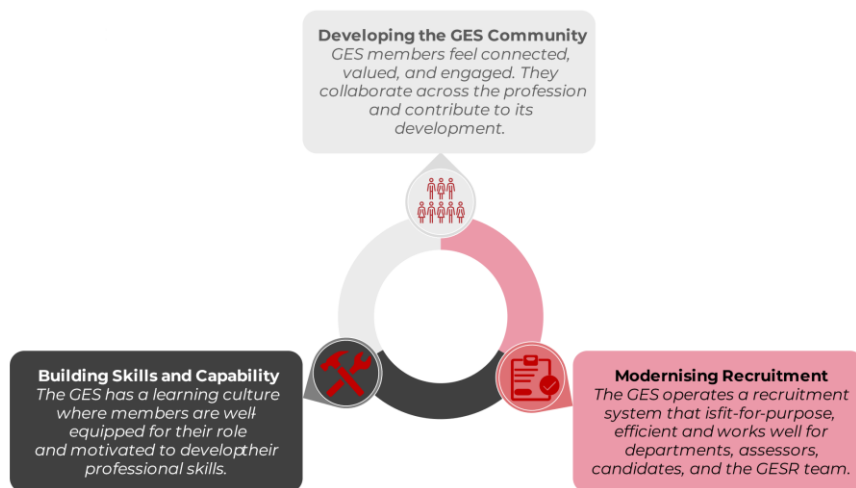
3.2 We want all our members to feel proud to be part of the GES, supported in their professional development and to engage with our vision and values. We want members to have a clear understanding of what they can expect from their profession, and what their role is in promoting and shaping the GES.

3.3 The aim of this Strategy is to further this vision and set direction for our profession for the next three years.



Chapter 4

Our strategic objectives



GES Strategy 2024-2027 Strategic Objectives and Vision Statements

Strategic objective 1: Developing the GES Community

Vision statement: GES members feel connected, valued, and engaged. They collaborate across the profession and contribute to its development.

4.1 The GES works best when our members can connect to, collaborate with and learn from each other. All members should expect a strong offering from the GES that helps them to feel they belong, are valued and enables them to develop and progress. They understand that they also have responsibilities, including acting as assessors within recruitment and promotion processes and engaging with the economics community.

Over the Strategy period, we will:

1. Create opportunities for collaboration, sharing good practice and social engagement with the GES community.

2. Ensure that all members can access a high-quality offering from the GES regardless of their department, location and working pattern.
3. Set clear roles and expectations, so that members are aware of the responsibilities and benefits that come with being part of the GES.
4. Provide regular communications of a consistently high standard that reflect the interests of all members.
5. Celebrate the best of the profession including through our annual John Hoy and Chris Thomas awards.
6. Support members to feel connected to the wider economics community, in and out of government, including through institutional membership of the Royal Economic Society.

Strategic objective 2: Building Skills and Capability

Vision statement: The GES has a learning culture where members are well-equipped for their role and motivated to develop their professional skills.

4.2 GES members work on some of the most high-profile and important issues facing society and need the right tools and capability to perform at a high standard. This is a collective responsibility for the whole GES, where all must play their part as learners, teachers, managers, mentors and advisors.

4.3 As professional economists, GES members should invest in their own development to keep their skills up to date. The GES expects everyone to undertake at least 100 hours of continuous professional development every year (pro rata for those who work part time), with at least half of that on economics, and the rest on broader Civil Service skills.

4.4 Over the Strategy period, we will:

1. Identify a small, focused set of priority skills for GES economists and roll out a learning programme that supports members to develop and grow those skills, whatever their career stage.
2. Create opportunities for the sharing of expertise across the profession, including through conference breakout sessions and the GES events programme.
3. Promote the value and importance of working effectively with civil servants from all professions, particularly other analysts. We will help economists to identify and articulate the unique role and value of economics.

4. Provide opportunities for members with external partners to support skills development, provide experience and share expertise between sectors. This will include the GES-CAGE fellowship programme and places at the Festival of Economics. We will also provide members with guidance to engage effectively with academia and other external organisations.
5. Promote diversity of thought and constructive challenge within the profession, including through the GES Shadow Board and a diverse speaker programme.
6. Conduct horizon-scanning to better understand the changing skillset required of economists and to inform central and departmental learning programmes.

Strategic objective 3: Modernising Recruitment

Vision statement: The GES operates a recruitment system which is fit-for-purpose and efficient, and works well for departments, assessors, candidates, and the GESR team.

4.5 Recruitment is both an essential part of maintaining the profession and a huge operational undertaking. Considerable efforts have been made to make the recruitment process smoother and steps taken to make it more inclusive, but we know there is scope to make further improvements. The candidate journey includes significant time between applications, interview and allocation to departments. This increases the risk of losing good candidates.

4.6 The existing selection process is tried and tested, but the emergence of generative AI has raised questions about its robustness. Assessment centres and end of scheme assessments make considerable demands on our pool of trained and committed assessors, who volunteer their time.

4.7 Departments sometimes lack clarity about the rules and procedures, as well as the respective roles and responsibilities around recruitment, particularly outside of central schemes.

4.8 Like all parts of the Civil Service, the GES is committed to attract, retain and invest in talent wherever it is found.

4.9 Over the Strategy period, we will:

1. Improve the operation of GES recruitment schemes to ensure that they are resilient, robust and fit-for purpose in an age of generative AI, and that they provide good value for money. The GESR team will develop a suite of KPIs and report on performance to the GES Recruitment and Progression Sub Board.

2. Develop more reliable data on recruitment outcomes to help diagnose whether the selection and assessment processes support candidates from all backgrounds.
3. Evaluate the candidate experience of GES recruitment and develop KPIs to track improvements.
4. Explore the use of membership data to understand retention and progression pathways for existing members, and whether this varies by protected characteristics. This will inform a wider evaluation of the attractiveness of the GES offer and our ability to attract and retain high quality candidates.
5. Continue efforts to attract a diversity of talent through, for example, supporting schools outreach, maintaining different entry routes including the degree apprenticeship, and committing to the Disability Confident Scheme and the Veterans Initiative.
6. Grow the pool of trained and active assessors to reduce the load on committed individuals.
7. Provide guidance on rules, roles and responsibilities in both central and departmental recruitment campaigns.

Chapter 5

Delivering the Strategy

5.1 This GES Strategy has been designed with the profession and will be delivered by the profession. There are important roles for Boards, Heads of Profession, networks and members from across the profession, as well as for the central GESR team.

5.2 The GESR team is the central support unit for the GES and will have direct responsibility for many aspects of the Strategy, including delivery of central recruitment schemes and the annual GES Conference.

5.3 Departments play a pivotal role in developing their own GES community and supporting their staff to build skills and take up opportunities, particularly in the areas most relevant to their work. Chief Economists and Heads of Profession play leadership roles both in their departments and as active members of the GES Corporate and Strategy Boards.

5.4 Every member at every grade should expect being part of the GES to be worthwhile and valuable. However, capability and community cannot be delivered from above alone and GES members must play their part too. They should take ownership for their own learning and career development and contribute to the community as peers, mentors, managers and assessors in GES recruitment schemes.

5.5 The GES is stronger as an outward looking professional body. We will continue to collaborate with the Analysis Function, with other professions and with external economics organisations such as the Royal Economic Society.

5.6 The GESR Team will run engagement events to familiarise members with the strategy and encourage them to get involved in its delivery.

5.7 A delivery plan will be shared with the GES Boards, setting out in more detail how the objectives contained in the Strategy will be realised.

5.8 The GESR Team will monitor progress in delivering the Strategy, and report to the GES Corporate Board on an annual basis.

ANNEX A

Developing the Strategy

A.1 This Strategy has been developed after thorough consultation with the GES membership and leadership. This has involved discussions and focused panels with Chief Economists and Heads of Profession and engagement with GES networks and members, including through focus groups and review panels.

A.2 These consultations provided an opportunity to understand the wishes of the GES membership and senior leadership. These have been distilled into a coherent set of strategic objectives.

Annex B

Reflections from the 2021-2024 Strategy

B.1 In producing the 2024-2027 Strategy, we reflected on progress made as a result of the [2021-2024 Strategy](#). This was ambitious and set out a programme of work across three themes: becoming a community of greater diversity and inclusion; understanding members and building our offer around them and engaging more effectively with external expertise.

B.2 The GES has made significant progress through the work of the GESR Team, Boards, members and partners. Milestones include:

- The graduation of the first and second cohorts on the GES Degree Apprenticeship Programme, with over 95% of graduates achieving an upper-second or first-class degree. The GESDAP programme also won the 2022 Government Analysis Inclusion Award.
- Establishing a GES Shadow Board made up of GES members from across government to provide insight and challenge to GES Corporate Board decision-making.
- Producing annual membership statistical reports, providing detailed data about the diversity profile of the GES. This previously unavailable data brings understanding of who we are and has prompted important debate and action across the profession.
- Improving all aspects of GES member communication including launching a simpler and clearer GES website, with much better functionality and content including hundreds of blog posts and news articles, training resources, guidance materials and an upgraded staff directory. This enables connections across members, learning and transparency.
- Re-writing the GES Economic Assessment Centre assessor and candidate guidance to ensure that all stages are fully explained, and no prior knowledge of Civil Service recruitment is assumed.
- Funding the placement of interns with disabilities under the Change 100 programme.

- Using market research into perceptions of the GES and the careers we offer to inform clearer marketing across our recruitment campaigns. Our marketing continues to develop and we have significantly increased the social media presence for the GES. We are using events, members voice and career opportunities to bring a more complete picture of who we are and what we do.
- Producing a member compact setting out what members can expect from the GES and the contribution they can make.
- Establishing a new GES technical framework to inform members' development and learning. This was built from an extensive cross government consultation and now accurately reflects what economists do and captures the full diversity of experiences, skill sets and viewpoints across government.
- Delivering high-quality annual conferences and a packed event programme, which are run as hybrid events and are recorded to enable enduring learning.
- Gathering member experience and best practice in engagement with academia, providing members with institutional membership of the RES, places at SPE events and the Festival of Economics, the relaunch of the GES-CAGE fellowship at Warwick University, and access to a database of economics papers via EconLit.
- Developing a co-ordinated outreach programme to target schools across England, including GES ambassadors training, designing common materials, monitoring progress and building best practice.

B.3 In summary we now know more about our members and the skills needed for success as government economists. We have reached out to more potential candidates through marketing and outreach. The central GESR Team do more – with many actions brought into business as usual and enduring improvements to communications and recruitment. We have stronger links and opportunities with external partners. Members are better resourced and able to connect. However, as this new strategy sets out, we want to deepen links across the community and improve priority skills as the frontiers of knowledge, tools and techniques continue to change. We remain committed to providing an equitable offer to all our members and to those candidates who wish to join us.

Annex C

GES Diversity in People, Place and Thought

C.1 Actions to date

- Expanded direct marketing to universities and partnered with new marketing specialists who help us reach underrepresented groups.
- Continued the award-winning GES Degree Apprenticeship Programme.
- Developed a GES schools outreach programme.
- Supported interns with disabilities through the Change 100 programme.
- Interrogated our member data to understand the current make up and profile of the profession. This data brings debate and helps us target action.
- Created a Shadow Board of members to bring challenge into our governance structure.
- Re-designed the GES Technical Framework so that it accurately captures the full diversity of experiences, skillsets, and viewpoints of economists across government.

C.2 Plans for the future

- Ensuring that all members can access a high-quality offering from the GES regardless of their department, location and working pattern.
- Explore the use of membership data to understand retention and progression pathways for existing members, and whether this varies by protected characteristics.
- Promoting diversity of thought and constructive challenge within the profession, including through our GES Shadow Board and a diverse speaker programme.
- Evaluating the candidate experience of GES recruitment and developing KPIs to track improvements.

- Developing more reliable data on recruitment outcomes to help diagnose whether the selection and assessment process support candidates from all backgrounds.
- Continuing efforts to attract a diversity of talent through, for example, supporting schools outreach, maintaining different entry routes including the degree apprenticeship, and committing to the Disability Confident Scheme and the Veterans Initiative.
- Continuing effective marketing to candidates, presenting the GES offer clearly and appealingly to our target audiences.



GESR contacts

This document can be downloaded from www.gov.uk

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