

**Marketing Strategy**

**v1 (May 2020)**

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9. **Aims & Objectives**

* To support the aims and objectives that have been identified in the LEP Business Plan 2020/21 by focusing on delivering the following (*see plan for further details)*:  
  + **LIS Publication** – to be finalised and promoted
  + **LIS Implementation Plans** – ensuring outputs are communicated and promoted effectively
  + **Annual Delivery Plan 2020/21** – to be produced and promoted
  + **Partnership Development** – communicating and promoting the strong links with our partners (which we aim to strengthen) and the functions they deliver
  + **Business Engagement** – promoting and communicating who the LEP are and how they can help local businesses through their constituent parts including Make It and the Growth Hub and partners like the Chambers of Commerce and further and higher education establishments.

It is important that the LEP partners work closely together with its stakeholders in pulling together strands of work to ensure that business intelligence aligns and that businesses of all levels are aware of the opportunities open to them. As future funding strands and initiatives develop, joined up engagement activity will increase in importance.

* + **Bespoke Campaign activity –** bespoke campaign activity may be identified which helps to increase awareness of the LEP and its presence when the partnership considers such action is required, for example during the COVID-19 crisis**.**
* To grow the voice of the LEP through promoting its vision and values to the business community *(please see vision and values document for details)*

1. **SWOT Analysis**

**Strengths**

* Renewed board/Chair and a fresh energy to deliver that has come with this
* A more representative board in terms of business and geographical spread
* Good delivery record and strong governance base to work from
* Engaged local universities actively working with industry and businesses
* A strong existing work programme, and LIS identified opportunities to grow programmes and activities
* A diverse economy with a healthy SME sector, located at the heart of the UK, with strong connectivity via road and rail which helps especially in building business confidence and with inward investment programmes

**Weaknesses**

* The perception of the LEP (historic) as underperforming or not relevant
* Historic low levels of collaboration and engagement
* A general lack of awareness of the LEP among the business community
* Low levels of economic growth and below average productivity over the past decade
* Socio-economic diversity across LEP geography, wealth and needs
* Low skills level in the SSLEP and relatively high levels of insecure employment
* Internal connectivity issues across the region

**Opportunities**

* Greater collaboration and partnership working
* Creating greater awareness and understanding of the SSLEP and its work among stakeholders
* A new Government and future funding streams/investment opportunities
* New MPs have the capacity to learn about and support the SSLEP and LIS
* Developing strengths and innovation in sectors through LIS Implementation that will be vital to driving higher levels of gross value added and productivity.
* Building a more innovative economy through digital and innovation programmes and projects
* A more coherent and effective support offer for local businesses, closely reflecting the characteristics of the businesses’ base and growth aspirations.

**Threats**

* National and global economy and policy shifts may impact on SSLEP work
* Lack of awareness from new MPs and Government of SSLEP work and its recent progress
* Barriers to the delivery of new employment land have the potential to constrain inward investment and business expansion.
* Insufficient resources (money, time within business community) available to deliver on LIS momentum
* Internal connectivity constraints impact upon the quality and vibrancy of urban and rural/market town areas.
* Skills challenges (both at higher and lower levels) have the potential to constrain growth in identified priority sectors and activities.
* Social inclusion challenges within certain communities and groups have the potential to limit the extent to which the benefits of economic growth are shared by all.

1. **Target audiences**
2. **Businesses** – SSLEP and partners need to engage with businesses of all sizes in order to achieve targets for jobs growth, higher level skills for the workforce and productivity. SSLEP also need to be seen by the business community as a strong collaborative force that is driving growth in the area.   
     
   Business audiences and activity includes:

* the attraction of new national and international businesses into the area;
* working with existing businesses to raise the profile of the LEP as an organisation serving their interests and signposting opportunities for future support and engagement
* working with local businesses and SMEs to identify opportunities to increase growth and development and assess skills and innovation gaps that exist
* Working with partners and businesses to identify solutions to make sure the area continues to be attractive for all investing businesses

1. **Public Sector** – SSLEP needs to work with local authority, police, fire & health partners at all levels in order to ensure that strategies and programmes are aligned, and communication is streamlined around the collaborative growth and productivity agenda.
2. **Further and Higher Education Providers** – key partners leverage funds in skills and innovation and in working with local businesses to upskill the workforce and partner in the delivery of growth activities.
3. **Governmen**t – strong relationships with central government through BEIS in particular are essential in order to ensure that Stoke and Staffordshire and the LEP remain at the forefront of considerations as new funding streams are developed by government and implemented.
4. **Local MPs** – it is essential to continue to build relationships and raise awareness of SSLEP work among the 12 Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire MPs. The SSLEP needs to ensure that local MPs are fully aware of the LIS priorities and support this and the LEPs activities.
5. **Current Market Place**

**Benchmarking – The LEP Network**

The 38 nationwide LEPs are at varying stages in their lifecycle and operate according to differing models, economic landscapes and priorities. However many have faced similar issues and themes. It is important that SSLEP enhances relationships and synergies with local LEPs in connection with cross border projects, programmes and issues.

SSLEP is also in a position to learn from these LEPs and establish best practice for its own work and processes. Those LEPS initially identified as sharing similar economic and growth background and challenges include:

* D2N2 – Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
* SEMLEP – South East Midlands
* Thames Valley Berkshire
* CWLEP – Coventry and Warwickshire
* New Anglia – Norfolk and Suffolk

SSLEP will work with these LEPs, benchmarking key activities to ensure continuous improvement in its own work programme.

1. **Marketing & Communications Initiatives**

The following elements currently exist as marketing and communications tools and will be updated and utilised as indicated. Specific activity will be embedded into the finalised marketing and communications strategy which will communicate:

* Activity under our business roles to key audiences; and
* highlight and report on delivery under our targeted aims and objectives.

1. **Digital** 
   1. **Website -** The website is functional and will be redesigned to aid navigation and user experience. Images and content too will be more reflective of SSLEP delivery and partners collaborative work in the local area.
   2. **E-Marketing -** SSLEP has a database of circa 3,000 stakeholders and a regular newsletter (bi-weekly) is scheduled to these contacts. Content will focus on updates from the Board, funding programmes, partner projects and activity updates, case studies, upcoming events. The new CRM platform Evolutive, to be shared across the partnership, will be in fully utilising this platform by August 2020 and will be a tool to aid this process across all constituent parts of the LEP.
   3. **Social Media –** SSLEP has a presence on Twitter and LinkedIn and will do more to engage with businesses and partners via these channels. Other channels will also be considered in terms of delivering communication e.g. YouTube & Facebook.
2. **Marketing Collateral -** Excluding Board papers and other statutory documentation, promotional and evidentiary publications that are produced, SSLEP also produces an Annual Report, Annual Delivery Plan, Local Industrial Strategy and funding/programme calls. Additional collateral may be required to support specific campaigns.
3. **Events –** SSLEP holds an Annual AGM & Conference. The 2020 AGM will be in June and usually aligned with the Annual Conference (2020 Conference date to be confirmed later in the year). Here there will be a renewed push to invite a wider range of businesses from across the SSLEP area. The focus will be LIS Implementation Plans, projects & programmes with the aim of raising awareness of these among businesses. As delivery activities are rolled out there are further opportunities to develop workshop activity, with and through partners and also to shape existing partner events programmes with LIS content.
4. **PR –** Press Releases and Marketing & PR activity will be deliveredto raise the SSLEP profile among target businesses and through other targeted audiences and channels, to heighten awareness of SSLEP work.
5. **Marketing Planning & Programme**

The next stage is to create a marketing delivery plan based on the above information. It is suggested that in order to have the greatest impact and reach that the LEP should appoint a Marketing/PR organisation.

This organisation will be supported & managed by the LEP office team to ensure the most effect programme is delivered.

In order to appoint such an organisation the opportunity will be tendered in line with accountable body procurement rules. The successful organisation will then need to outline a 12-month plan and proposal to be approved by the Board. This will then be monitored monthly in terms of what is delivered and reported back.

The organisation will be then evaluated after 6 months in terms of its effectiveness.

1. **Budget**

There is an annual budget of up to £40,000 to deliver this strategy and plan, part of which will cover the costs of the selected marketing organisation that will produce a budget costing detailing what and how they plan to deliver, in accordance with the budget for approval by the board as part of the overall delivery plan.

1. Timescales

The below timetable outlines the timescales for developing the Marketing Delivery Plan based on the above which will take place over the next 18 months.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| DATE | ITEM | STATUS |
| 14th May 2020 | Board Approval of strategy |  |
| May 2020 | Tender Outline Approved |  |
| June 2020 | Tender Process |  |
| July 2020 | Organisation Appointed |  |
| August/September 2020 | Delivery Plan Produced for Approval |  |
| February 2021 | Organisations 6 month review |  |