



Building Schools for the Future

A Toolkit for Effective Local
Education Partnerships

Practitioner Note 3:
Developing a Shared Vision

June 2009

partnerships for schools

building schools for the future

Developing a Shared Vision

Introduction and purpose

This Practitioner Note is one of nine that make up a Toolkit to support the successful set-up and operation of a Local Education Partnership (LEP). This note covers Developing a Shared Vision

It includes the following sections:

Executive summary	3
Why is developing a shared vision important?	4
When should we think about developing a shared vision?	4
What supports the development of a LEP shared vision?	6
How do we assess how well we are doing on developing a shared vision?	6
What do we do if our visioning is not as effective as it could be?	7

Partnerships for Schools (Pfs) and Building Schools for the Future Investments (BSFI) continue to gather examples of good emerging practice from across the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme and we encourage and welcome conversations with local projects about how to make their BSF programme as effective as possible.



Developing a Shared Vision

Executive summary

The success of the LEP model depends upon the local authority and private sector partner coming together in a joint venture, both contributing knowledge, experience and resources, supported by central government and BSFI, to develop and deliver a local programme. With so many stakeholders involved, the effectiveness with which a shared vision is developed among all of the partners in a LEP is one of the key factors determining its likelihood of success.

It is important to develop a shared vision for several reasons. It will:

1. provide the opportunity for the LEP to reflect on the local authority's strategic plan and how this can be delivered;
2. provide the basis from which to develop shared objectives, a shared business plan and shared systems and processes which will form the structure that supports the LEP operation; and
3. be one of the first activities where the approach to partnership working can be tried and tested.

The Competitive Dialogue process supports the development of partnering behaviours before financial close and, as with any joint venture, the behaviours demonstrated and relationships established in these early stages can set

the tone, positively or negatively, for the long-term partnership. In the inception stage of the LEP itself, there are ten activities that have been identified in research among existing operational LEPs as being key to developing a shared vision. These are:

1. Articulate clearly the type of partner and scope of services to be procured, with reference to the Strategy for Change (SfC) and consideration of the wider local authority corporate objectives.
2. Envisage what a successful LEP will be doing at key milestones (in 6 months, 12 months, 5 years and 10 years time) and enter into dialogue with the private sector partner to understand what the opportunities and benefits of working together over this timeframe could be.
3. The local authority, BSFI and the private sector partner should consider early on in the procurement the contribution an effective operational LEP can make in achieving its parent organisation's objectives.
4. Early conversations between the local authority and private sector partner on the parent organisations' objectives, to identify areas where these align and where further discussion is needed.
5. Both the local authority and private sector partner should nominate a

lead Director to take responsibility at an early stage in the procurement process for developing consensus on the LEP vision.

6. Create a statement of joint aspiration during the dialogue phase that can be submitted as part of the final bid. This can then be shared across officers and members of the local authority, private sector partner and wider stakeholders. When financial close is reached, it can be used to inform the business planning process.
7. Ensure the governance structure created supports the delivery of the agreed vision.
8. Create a performance management system that generates relevant and timely information for use at the appropriate level within the LEP, to monitor performance against the vision.
9. Identify a strategic review function to challenge the LEP and participating stakeholders to act consistently with the agreed vision.
10. Review the shared vision on a regular basis to ensure it reflects any changes in the partner's policy during the operational phase of the LEP, to ensure the LEP continues to deliver the appropriate services at the right standard within the broader structure of the Authority.

Why is developing a shared vision important?

Development of a shared vision is crucial to providing strategic direction for the operational LEP. Achieving this is reliant upon the right people being brought together at the right time, so that they are able to work effectively in partnership. This requires both the local authority and the private sector provider to ensure that appropriate resource is available, with relevant skills and experience to focus on both the short-term and long-term objectives of the LEP. Having an agreed and articulated shared vision makes it easier for all parties to be clear about what is expected of them and what they can expect from their partners.

When should we think about developing a shared vision?

Partners should begin developing the shared vision as early in the BFS process as possible. To some extent, the framework will emerge from the local authority's strategic planning process and so the development should be well underway by the later stages of the pre-procurement phase.

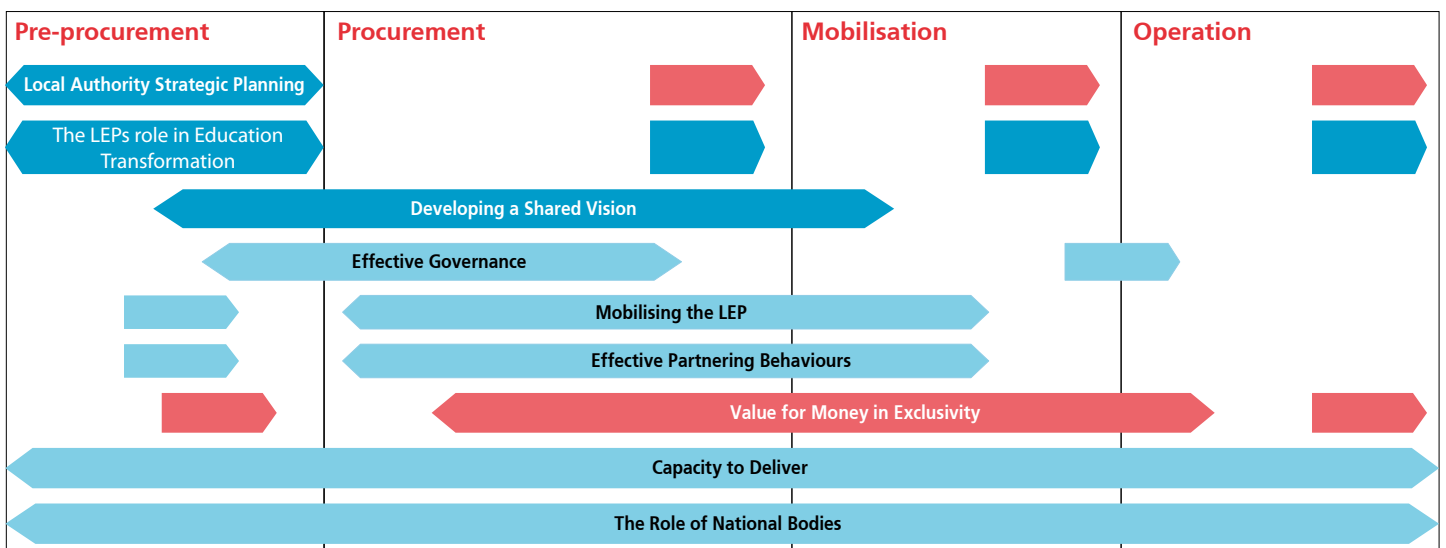
What is crucial is that the relevant partners allocate sufficient time to considering some of the higher-level questions that will provide the context for the joint venture. From these considerations, a shared understanding of each other's needs and priorities will provide the basis of a shared vision for the LEP.

As the diagram below shows, the shared vision would be expected to evolve through the procurement phase and be embedded with the LEP during the mobilisation phase.

During the pre-procurement phase, the local authority should, at a corporate level, have thought through how the LEP will link coherently and be integrated with other priorities, initiatives and delivery structures within the local area. By the time the Selected Bidder stage is reached, both they and potential private sector partners should be in a position to illustrate how their strategies are aligning. This will then be tested through the practical delivery of projects.

During Dialogue and from the Selected Bidder point onwards, the organisations coming together must be clear on the following:

- the objectives of each organisation (local authority, PSP, BSFI) at the 'parent' level above the local LEP;
- how those organisational objectives come together at the LEP level in a way which is complementary, adds value to the delivery of the programme and, in turn, helps each organisation at the parent level to be successful;
- an agreed set of strategic objectives or outcomes for each LEP ("How will we know that we have been successful?"); and
- a high level understanding of how the LEP will operate and be managed to deliver these objectives (this should include agreement on governance, decision-making, performance management and resourcing).



Set out in the table below are some suggested actions to inform this process.

Stage	Actions	
Pre-procurement	<p>Local Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the SfC to ensure the local authority's education priorities are at the forefront of the visioning process. • Articulate the impact you would expect a LEP to make to the way the local authority delivers its services to the local community. Identify how sharing a vision will contribute to this success. • Be clear about the local authority's objectives and the current/future delivery plan to achieve them. • Identify and understand how the LEP will assist in contributing to achievement of the local authority's priorities and strategic objectives, i.e. the scope of the LEP in the short and long-term. • Consider how the operational LEP will work with existing local authority structures to complement the overall delivery of services. • Undertake market testing to seek views from the private sector about what has worked well, when and how. • Discuss with peer organisations their approach to creating a shared LEP vision. 	
Procurement	<p>Local Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate clearly the local authority's objectives. • Describe the strengths and gaps in the existing authority structure to achieving successful delivery of the local authority's strategic objectives. • Listen to and understand the objectives of the private sector provider organisations. • Build in the opportunity for some early conversations around creating a joint vision for the LEP. • Provide opportunities for strategic directors from each organisation to meet in a structured discussion about visioning which can become part of bid evaluation. • Capture and discuss throughout procurement the resources required to deliver the BSF programme and who will provide them to clarify mutual organisational expectations. • Create a statement of joint aspiration at Selected Bidder, which can be referred back to, that crystallises ambitions and aspirations. 	<p>Bidders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know, understand and be able to articulate the parent organisational objectives. • Listen to the local authority to understand its strategic direction and views on the role the LEP can play in delivery. • Bring and share experience from other projects about what has worked well, when and how and what has been less successful and why, provide examples. • Challenge the authority's visioning about what the LEP could do. • Demonstrate that the consortia has the capacity, skills and expertise to deliver the vision created. • Show how the LEP would work with the existing authority structure to assist overall delivery of strategic objectives. • Create and agree a statement of joint aspiration at Selected Bidder, which can be referred back to, that crystallises ambitions and aspirations. • Begin production of the LEP business plan in consultation with the local authority.
Mobilisation	<p>Local Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the work undertaken during procurement to confirm the scope of the LEP, to ensure there is a very clear understanding of its role in contributing to delivery in line with the local authority's strategic planning. • Undertake a visioning exercise with the Selected Bidder to think about what the LEP will look and feel like over the coming years and what it will be doing. 	<p>Selected bidder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the work undertaken during procurement to confirm the scope of the LEP to ensure there is a very clear understanding of its role in contributing to delivery against the parent organisation objectives. • Develop performance and reporting mechanisms that link the LEP vision back to the parent organisation. • Complete production of the LEP business plan that interfaces with the authority's Strategic Planning, reflects the programme of activity and describes how it will be delivered. • Undertake a visioning exercise with the local authority to think about what the LEP will look and feel like over the coming years and what it will be doing.

Stage	Actions
Operational	<p>Operational LEP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the vision developed during set-up phase is reviewed, updated, shared and understood throughout the LEP organisation. • Communicate the vision to stakeholders and partner organisations. • Review and update the LEP business plan to ensure it reflects the shared vision. • Review LEP performance against the LEP vision and objectives. • Review the contribution the LEP is making towards both the wider authority and private sector partner strategic objectives. • Dialogue with the local authority on a regular basis to ensure the LEP business plan reflects their strategy and business objectives.

A shared vision needs to be jointly owned, but it is important to bear in mind that each partner will bring not only its own needs and priorities but also its own experiences to the development of the vision and its successful implementation

In its development, it is therefore right that the vision will be significantly influenced by the local authority's priorities for its local communities as defined at the pre-procurement stage. In addition, it will need to take account of the private sector partner's skills, experience and appetite. It is therefore important to ensure that sufficient opportunities are available within the procurement and operational phases to allow the private sector partner to contribute to its shaping by sharing experiences from previous and existing projects. This will also help to ensure the vision, and ultimately delivery of it, is realistic, achievable and demonstrates good value for money.

What supports the development of a LEP shared vision?

The factors contributing to the successful development of a LEP shared vision include:

- **Communication** – early communication and understanding of the local authority and private sector partner strategic objectives.
- **Leadership** – the local authority and private sector partner need to nominate a lead director with responsibility for the LEP vision

during the procurement process. Designating responsibility within each partner organisation will ensure developing a shared vision remains on the radar before and during the procurement process, and will ensure that this is not neglected when the project goes through a more transactional phase prior to financial close.

- **Timing** – at Selected Bidder develop a statement of joint aspiration which crystallises ambitions and aspirations. This can be reviewed and used post-procurement to start the business planning process. Working on the visioning early on, before and during the procurement process, will ensure the LEP has direction from operational day one and the first project is understood in the context of the wider programme.
- **Business Planning** – documenting the shared vision within the LEP business plan and communicating this within the LEP and parent organisations will ensure stakeholders share the same expectations of the operational LEP.
- **Governance** – creating a good governance structure with appropriate roles and responsibilities within the organisation will enable the LEP to deliver the vision (See PN6 - Effective Governance).
- **Effective partnering behaviours** – good partnering behaviours can be demonstrated during the

earlier stages of procurement and assist in creating a comprehensive and stretching, but achievable, vision for the LEP. They will also make developing the vision an easier process (See PN4 - Effective Partnering Behaviours).

- **Capacity** – ensure that the people at the right level within the partner organisations have the skills and capacity to develop and communicate a shared LEP vision (See PN9- Value for Money in Exclusivity).

How do we assess how well we are doing on developing a shared vision?

As with all aspects of the BFS process, it is important that progress is regularly reviewed so that action can be taken quickly to deal with any problems before they become significant.

The following questions may be useful for local authorities when considering the effectiveness of their shared vision:

1. Is the process to achieving and documenting a shared vision understood and clearly set out? Does/did the process work? Why did it work/not work?
2. Is there a good interface between the local authority and the LEP at a strategic level to support learning from the private sector provider's experience?

3. Is there a nominated local authority elected member appointed to sponsor the visioning process?
 4. Are the right people with the right skill sets and experience in the right roles?
 5. Are effective partnering behaviours evident during the development of the vision?
 6. Are structures and processes in place in the LEP to let the vision drive the business plan?
 7. Are processes in place at the local authority and private sector partner to assess the achievement of the vision by the LEP?
 8. Are processes in place to review the vision against potentially changing local authority priorities at regular intervals?
 9. Is the process to identify, manage and resolve issues coherent and transparent?
 10. Are expectations of the LEP and what it is to deliver consistent across the relevant stakeholders?
4. Run a workshop/s around the issue to review the processes undertaken to develop the LEP vision, consider what went/is going well and what is not and the different perceptions of the issue? What needs to change or be done better? In what practical ways can this be achieved?
 5. Use the knowledge networks being established by PfS and BSFI, as well as experience of other partnerships, to bring external objectivity to the local issue.
 6. Consider external third party support, such as a 4ps review, to identify and address the issues if it is too difficult to address them from within the partnership.

The need for clear communication of the LEP vision within the organisation and the local authority is crucial to ensure it flows into the LEP strategic planning process and subsequently directs the operational LEP programme of activities. It is also important that the partners are able to demonstrate to their parent organisations how the LEP vision and activities fit with their broader strategic vision to ensure that support and backing is maintained throughout the operational phase.

Following the steps outlined in this Note to develop the shared vision, together with regular reviews against progress, should ensure that the LEP successfully reflects the needs and priorities of all of its partners.

What do we do if our visioning is not as effective as it could be?

Where the local authority or private sector partner believe that the answers to some of the questions outlined above indicate that the shared vision is not as good as it could be or needs to be, an open or structured dialogue needs to take place to identify the issue or issues. Depending upon the severity, you may want to think about some or all of the following:

1. Consider whether available council resource such as Internal Audit or Partnership Management groups can be used to provide expert assistance.
2. Use a LEP diagnostic or partnering health-check tool to carry out a self-assessment of any possible issues.
3. Devote some time for the local authority and the LEP to consider the consistency of expectations