



Building Schools for the Future

A Toolkit for Effective Local
Education Partnerships

Practitioner Note 5:
Mobilising the LEP

June 2009

partnerships **for schools**

building schools for the future

Mobilising the LEP

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 mobilising the LEP.

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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.



Mobilising the LEP

Executive summary

LEPs need to be operating efficiently as quickly as is practical, but the move from the planning to operational stage can be challenging. A well thought-through mobilisation plan that takes into account the varying roles of all involved and supports the changes in behaviour that may be needed as they move from acting individually to working co-operatively, is crucial to the success of the project.

This Practitioner Note looks at how to mobilise operational LEPs effectively. It reviews the practical issues that exist during the final stages of the BSF procurement process and looks at how they can become barriers to successful partnership if not properly addressed.

It is not a step-by-step guide to the systems, process and tasks that the LEP will need to undertake in mobilisation but, instead, it shows how the right resources, capacity and good partnering behaviours are key to enabling the systems and processes to operate effectively.

It suggests when in the procurement process to start thinking about mobilising the operational LEP and the key factors to consider in setting up an operational LEP. Finally, it provides a suggested timetable for the process.

The experiences of operational LEPs so far have identified 10 key activities that can support the successful mobilisation of an Operational LEP. These are:

1. **Create a plan/timeline** that demonstrates the contributions from key groups of stakeholders at each phase, from Selected Bidder through to Financial Close and LEP operation. We refer to this as a 'Transition Strategy'.
2. **Ensure the LEP clearly understands the strategic requirements of the local authority** and reflect these appropriately within its business plan.
3. At the Selected Bidder stage, **create a 'Transition Team'** with responsibility for planning and setting up the internal operating structures of the new LEP. Ensure membership of this team is from both the client and bidder organisations, but not people dealing with the commercial aspects of the transaction.
4. **Ensure key roles within the LEP are described and resourced effectively** with the right people at the right time. Do not assume that all the members of the Transition Team are necessarily the right people to lead the LEP later in the process but do bear in mind the need for continuity across the programme.
5. **Set up an operational management structure** that ensures good governance within the organisation and promotes effective decision making at the right level.
6. **Put in place a performance management structure** that dovetails with the operational management structure and effectively manages activities from an individual perspective through to the LEPs achievement against the business plan and Strategic Partnering Agreement.
7. **Create an identity and communications strategy for the LEP early on** so that it influences how it is perceived within the BSF environment and with wider stakeholder groups.
8. **Co-locate the teams** to 'live and be' the new identity of the LEP.
9. **Review the effectiveness of plans as they are executed.** This should be carried out by the LEP Board or external SPB members to ensure the systems and processes to allow the organisation to operate effectively are in place and working.
10. Ensure the **progress made towards mobilising the operational LEP is reviewed** on a regular basis.

Not surprisingly, the earlier this work is begun the more effectively the LEP is likely to be mobilised. However, realistically it may not always be possible and so the guidance in this Note can also be applied to “re-mobilise” an already-operational LEP or as a basis for reviewing the effectiveness of existing structures. For specific concerns about partnering effectiveness, you may also find Note 6: Effective Partnering Behaviours useful.

Why is effective mobilisation important?

The LEP’s success hinges on the development of an effective and co-operative working relationship between public and private partners, who may have significantly different cultures and approaches to how they operate. Having a Transition Strategy, rather than relying on things “sorting themselves out” reduces the risk of tension entering the relationship between the partners. Experience has shown that there are several factors that contribute to a successful partnership between public and private organisations. These can form the basis of a Transition Strategy and include the following:

- an agreed set of aligned objectives that covers both shared objectives and individual organisational objectives;
- agreed collective partnering targets;
- agreement on the standards that everyone must meet and how all parties will need to work together to maintain quality and build on it;
- commitment from all parties to supporting a shared governance, decision-making, management and resource structure that will maximise efficiency;
- effective organisational and personal relationships at all levels between the partnering organisations. This could include some basic practical issues such as co-location of teams and a single organisational structure;
- an appropriate framework for planning, performance monitoring and performance management;
- a shared understanding of each organisation’s strengths and weaknesses, ambitions, values and risks;
- a shared knowledge of each partner organisation’s culture and what drives the activities of its business and how it undertakes them; and
- an open and honest approach between individuals which builds trust.

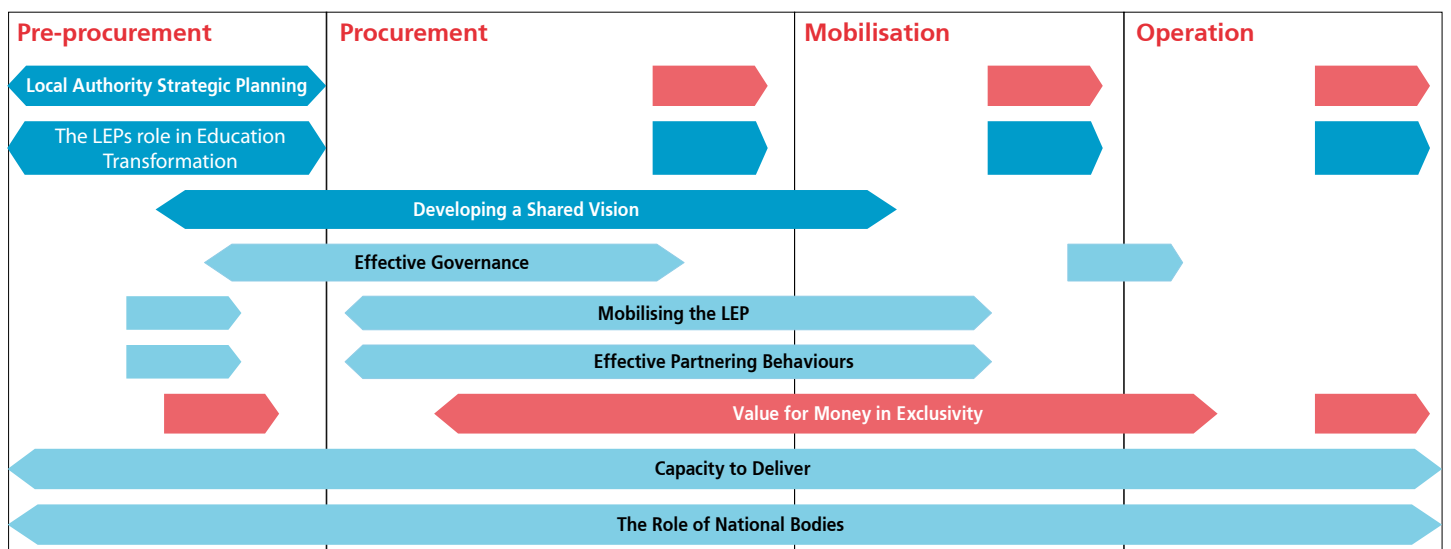
Where the local authority and bidders can discuss these issues successfully during the procurement, they are more likely to forge a long term commercial partnering relationship which:

- pools resource and expertise to deliver projects;
- has the capacity to be flexible and deal with change;
- delivers continuous improvement in terms of quality, time and cost; and
- shares risk and reward appropriately.

The likely result will be a highly effective operational LEP.

When should we think about mobilising the operational LEP?

The best time to think about the creation and mobilisation of the LEP is at the early part of the Procurement phase, as reflected in the diagram below. Once the LEP has been set up, expectation builds quickly. If the LEP is not fully mobilised prior to the operational phase, there is a risk that the programme will get off to a slow start, with an understandable impact on enthusiasm and commitment.



At this point, the partners will still be establishing their working relationships and there may be some behavioural changes as they move from, for example, client-bidder roles into a co-operative structure. In these early stages of mobilisation, it is important to plan the involvement of (and interaction with) each of the stakeholder groups very carefully.

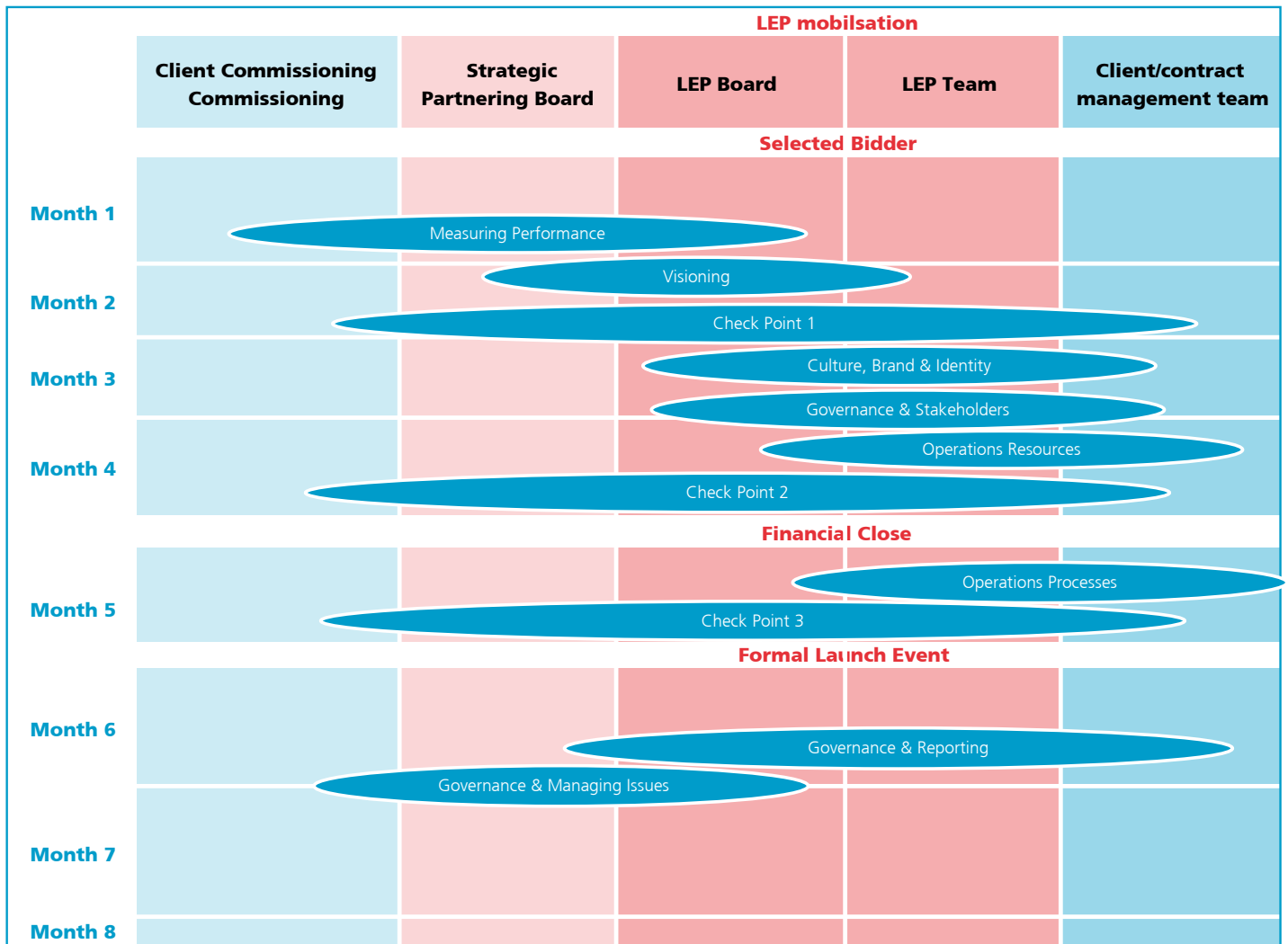
Outlined below is a suggested timetable of activities across the main stakeholder groups. This should be used as a guide only and will be dependant upon the readiness of the partners. Some of

the tasks outlined below will run over consecutive months while others are dependent on previous tasks and will need to be slotted in as those tasks are completed.

In bringing together the cultural factors listed on page 4 and the timetable of practical outputs above, the framework for the detailed Transition Strategy begins to emerge. The four key questions that this detailed strategy should answer are:

1. What is to be achieved in mobilising an operational LEP?
2. When is it to be achieved by?
3. Who needs to be involved?
4. How are we going to use our resources to achieve our aims on time?

The Transition Strategy can be shared with wider stakeholder groups so that they understand what the partners are trying to achieve and can be used as the over-arching guide for the mobilisation itself.



What contributes to an effective operational LEP?

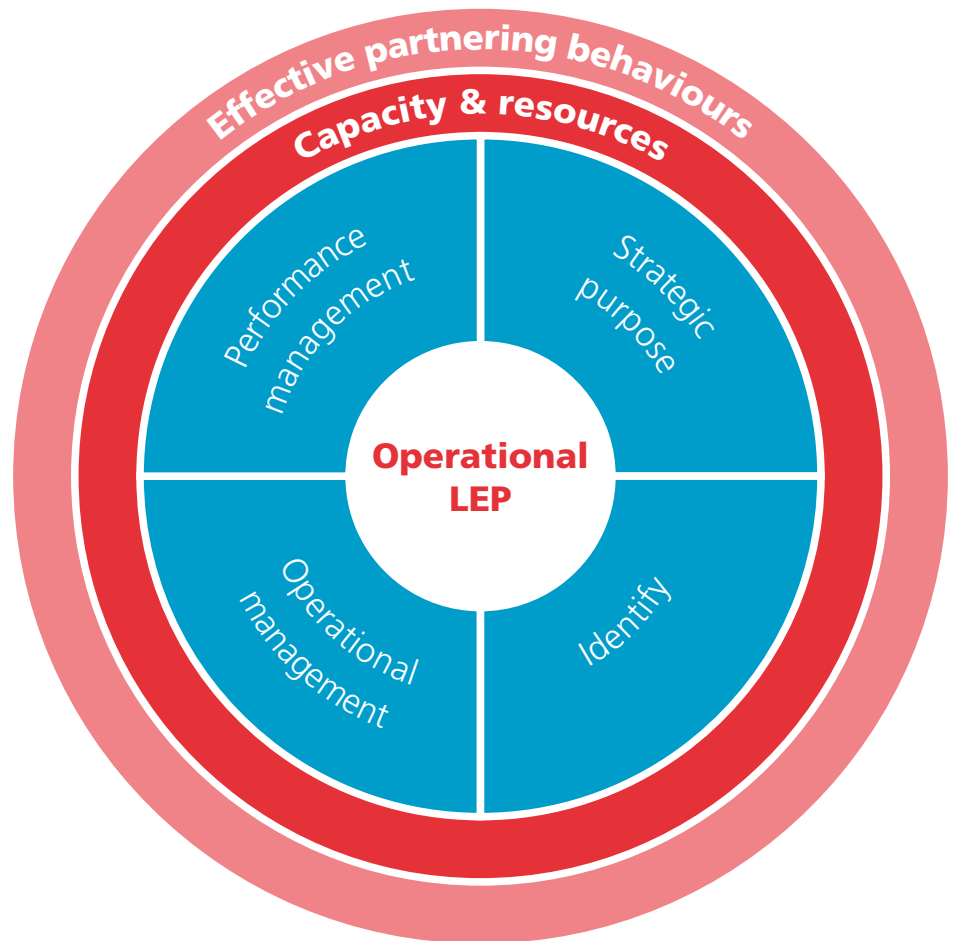
LEP mobilisation occurs most effectively when activity is undertaken little and often rather than in a single phase. The process of forming relationships, building and co-locating teams and agreeing governance structures and processes needs to start at Selected Bidder, but will take time to develop for practical reasons. As we see with other aspects of the BSF process, it can be helpful for some of the necessary activities to begin in “shadow form” before final decisions are made so that the partnership can move quickly to mobilisation once the partner(s) have been finalised.

Outlined below are a number of key themes that, if considered and developed during the procurement and mobilisation phase with the Selected Bidder, would enable the LEP to become operational within 4-8 months.

Strategic Purpose – it is important that during the procurement phase of the project the partners of the LEP start to talk about the shared vision of the organisation and specific objectives required to help them achieve it. (See Note 1: Local Authority Strategic Planning and Note 3: Developing a Shared Vision).

Identity – A sense of the organisation’s own identity, articulating how it sees itself and how it wants to be seen externally, particularly by customers and clients, helps foster commitment and pride in the project. An effective communications strategy can support the visible behaviours that will create this identity.

Operational Management – ensure an appropriate Governance Structure is in place to provide the LEP with leadership and a system to make decisions at the right level and execute them appropriately. (See Note 4: Effective Governance)



Performance Management – create a performance management framework that will enable the LEP to monitor its delivery against the business plan. This should reflect the governance structure in place. (See Note 4: Effective Governance)

To be successful, the systems and processes noted above need to be documented and communicated. They must also be backed by the necessary resources to put them in place and the partnering behaviours that will allow them to operate effectively.

Who needs to be involved?

The LEP has many stakeholders, some of whom will have specific roles to play in establishing its Strategic Purpose, Identity, Operational Management and Performance Management systems.

The table on page 7 shows the key systems and processes to put in place early on and suggests a number of questions that should be considered during the mobilisation phase of the project. It also lists documents for recording outcomes. These will be part of communication with wider LEP stakeholders which, in turn, will contribute to its future operational success. Finally it suggests the fora and/or individuals likely to be responsible for undertaking the process and production of the associated documents.

	Theme	Question	Documented Outcome	Forum/Who
Strategic Purpose	Organisational objectives	What are our objectives as an organisation?	Business Plan	Board Workshop
	Programme Objectives	What is our role in the delivery of the Southwark Schools for the Future (SSF) programme?	Business Plan	Engage with SSF/Council
	Vision	What will we be doing in 6 months, 12 months, 5 years if we are successful?	Business Plan Target Construction Programme	Board Workshop Team Launch Event
Identity	Culture, brand and identity	How do we want to operate and how do we want to be perceived?	Partnering Charter Communications Strategy Branding	Board Workshop Team Launch Event Local Authority CEO involvement
	Stakeholders	What are our key relationships and how do we need to influence?	Relationship Map Engagement and Comms strategy Engage with Stakeholders	LEP GM/BSF PD
Operational Management	Operations – Resources	What do we need to do all of this (people and infrastructure)?	Business Plan	Review Bid Board workshop LEP GM/BSF PD
	Operations – Processes	How do we need to go about our business (processes/ reporting/ communication)?	Partnering Charter Protocols Terms of Reference for Bodies/Groups Job Descriptions Organisational Chart	Teams using STAC LEP GM/BSF PD
Performance Management	Measuring performance	How will we know if we have been successful?	Business Plan CPTs/KPIs/ CIP	Board Workshop Operational teams
	(Continuous) Improvement	How will we take stock and learn?	Business Plan	SPB
	Reporting	What will our partners want us to report to them?	Reporting Structure	External stakeholders/SPB/ Council
	Managing issues	What will we do if it starts going wrong?	Issue Protocol/ (Partnering Charter)	LEP Board/SPB
End game	Exit strategy	How would we end the relationship?	Business Plan	LEP Board/SPB/Council

Key to the success of achieving these tasks and ultimately creating the operational LEP, is the demonstration of effective partnering behaviours (See Note 6: Effective Partnering Behaviours) and the ability of the partners to commit the required resource during the Selected Bidder stage of the procurement process (See Note 9: Value for Money in Exclusivity). Without these factors the systems and processes outlined in the table may be leading-edge in design terms but ineffective in operation.

How can involvement happen?

Throughout mobilisation, different individuals with specific roles and skills will be needed to play their part in delivering the operational LEP. While the need for continuity of strategy should be acknowledged, the evolution of the

project means that only a small number of individuals is likely to be involved at all phases.

For example, there is a 'doing' role to designing systems and processes and there is a review role, likely to be conducted by the LEP Board or external SPB members, to ensure the systems and processes will allow the organisation to operate effectively. In other words, there is a team to deliver and a team to oversee.

Similarly, in the Competitive Dialogue process, the resource available is used to close the transaction, agreeing the financial, technical and legal requirements of the deal. The skills for this part of the process may not necessarily be those needed to take the project on from this point.

To help smooth the shift from bidding to partnering working, local authorities could set up a **'Transition Team'** at Selected Bidder Stage. This Transition Team would assume responsibility for planning and setting up the internal operating structures of the new LEP. It will have representatives from all partner organisations, but these will be individuals who are not involved in the detail of the transaction and therefore have the capacity to maintain focus on setting up the LEP without being side-tracked or influenced by the finalisation of the commercial and technical agreements. These individuals should have decision-making authority to get the LEP set up but, in turn, may not be those that fulfil the roles within the new LEP structure for the long-term.

A proposed structure of the team is shown below in the context of the BSF transaction.

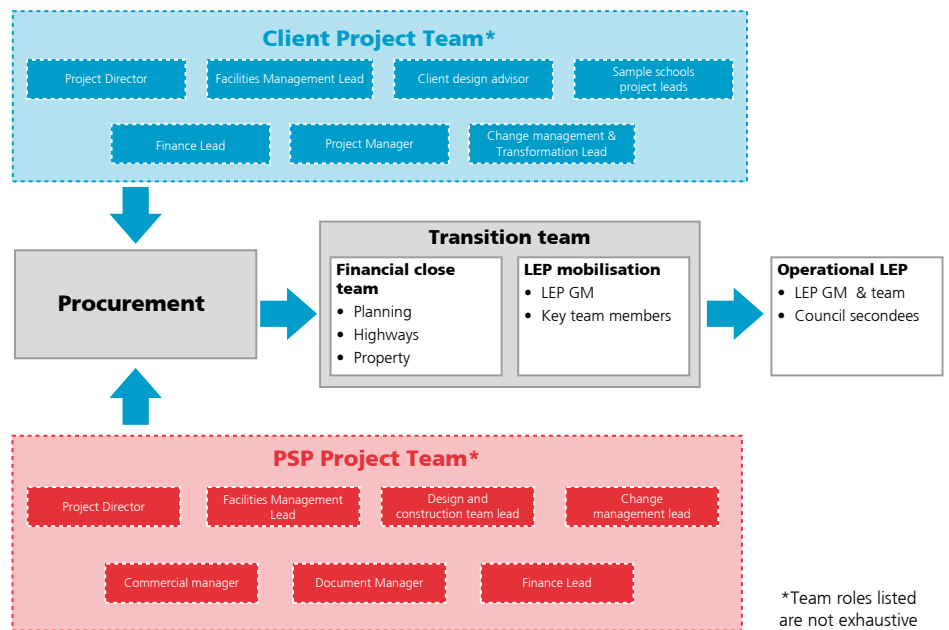
What does an effectively mobilised operational LEP look and feel like?

An effectively mobilised LEP is one that, from day one of operational status, has a clearly articulated vision and strategy that is understood and is consistent with that of all of its stakeholders, and has direction and control over the way it delivers its business.

In practical terms, some of the indicators of an effectively mobilised LEP are:

- the business plan is in place with structures to achieve and monitor delivery;
- the key roles within the LEP are filled with the right people;
- appointed individuals understand their roles;
- teams are co-located;
- the partners have developed a partnering protocol;
- the LEP has an identity or brand that can be shared and communicated internally and externally; and
- PFS and the BSFI LEP Director have a positive view of its progress.

All the organisations involved will need to understand the part that they play in the successful delivery of the BSF programme. While the LEP is the key agent for delivery, it cannot be effective without its partners. Therefore, operational LEPs and their partners within local authorities, schools and supply chains will need to have a degree of self-awareness about how effective their own contribution is to the BSF programme, as well as views on the effectiveness of others. Equally, feedback from project sponsors or those less directly involved in the LEP may be beneficial and useful.



It may be helpful to organise facilitated sessions during the mobilisation phase and early on during the operational life of the LEP to share perspectives on how the partnership is going. Agenda items might include:

- quality of communication;
- understanding of roles and responsibilities within and between organisations; clarity of processes and decision-making;
- evidence that strategic decision-makers value the partnership and want it to be successful;
- effectiveness of working arrangements;
- degree of understanding and trust that is developing; and,
- what is working well and what needs greater focus.

Self evaluation must be specific and as objective as possible. Organisations and individuals need to be prepared to be self-critical and to be challenged. In many cases therefore it may be sensible for such review sessions to be supported by someone who is independent of the LEP process.

In addition, direct feedback between the BSF Programme Director and the LEP General Manager, or between the LEP Board and the local authority client representative, may help to ensure that, from the strategic and management perspectives, behaviours are developing as required and expected.

How do we assess how well we are doing on mobilising an operational LEP?

When Financial Close is achieved and the BSF construction programme agreed, a potential pitfall is that the organisation starts to implement the programme without giving due consideration to how it will control its progress. It is therefore important to ensure that key organisational structures and plans exist to create an environment which promotes an effective delivery of the programme. Where this is not the case, it is crucial to rectify the situation quickly, as, once control is lost, over time it becomes more challenging to recover.

When assessing the effectiveness of a mobilisation, the following questions will be useful to consider:

1. Is there a dedicated team with appropriate authority and partner membership assigned to manage the task of making the LEP operational?
2. Is there a plan of the actions required to achieve an operational LEP and the corresponding timetable in place?
3. Is there a LEP business plan or is one being developed to provide strategic direction to the new business?
4. Do the LEP business plan and key objectives align with those of the partners?
5. Are the structures that govern and manage the LEP activity designed and agreed?
6. Are roles within the governance structure adequately resourced?
7. Is there a communications strategy to ensure all stakeholders are informed of the LEP creation and its purpose?
8. Are appropriate team working events organised to assist the creation of 'one' team?
9. Is there a partnering protocol in place to establish ways of working and ground rules for behaviours within the LEP and between the LEP and its stakeholders?

What do we do if our LEP is not operating effectively?

Where there are doubts around operational effectiveness:

1. Confirm the value of the LEP to all those involved and why it is important to the overall authority strategy.
2. Check that directors and senior managers exemplify the values and behaviours required. If they do not, consider how to deploy better role models.
3. Ensure that the internal structures of the LEP are fit for purpose and support the successful delivery of the LEP business plan.
4. Review the roles required for the structures and ensure they are appropriately resourced.
5. Ensure the LEP vision and business plan are communicated and that channels exist for two way communication.
6. If some of the practicalities around co-location or developing a brand and identity have not been possible, make them a priority.
7. Consider the use of external expertise to facilitate change if problems are widespread or are individually significant.

These actions may resolve issues in both the short and long term. However it is important that in creating a new operational LEP that sufficient consideration is provided to getting it right first time.