



LSP Learning Programme on Sustainable Communities

Final report to the Academy for Sustainable Communities, Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

February 2006

A report to the **Academy for Sustainable Communities, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister**

February 2006

CAG CONSULTANTS

Gordon House
6 Lissenden Gardens
London NW5 1LX
Tel/fax 020 7482 8882
hq@cagconsult.co.uk
www.cagconsultants.co.uk

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CENTRE

Warwick Business School
University of Warwick
Coventry CV4 7AL
Tel 024 7657 2546
Fax 024 7657 2545
lgc@wbs.ac.uk
<http://users.wbs.ac.uk/group/lgc>

For direct enquiries about this proposal please contact:

Joan Bennett
Tel 01663 766 906
jb@cagconsult.co.uk



Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 4 |
| Key Research Findings | 5 |
| Implications for the Learning Programme | 6 |
| Learning Programme Objectives and Outcomes | 8 |
| Draft Learning Programme Objectives and Outcomes | 8 |
| Filling the gaps in current LSP Provision | 8 |
| Delivering the Learning Programme | 10 |
| Delivery options agreed by the Advisory Group | 10 |
| The Delivery Activities | 12 |
| Targeting the Programme | 27 |
| The implementation sequence | 29 |
| Involving LSPs and their supporters | 30 |
| Evaluation | 31 |
| Options for the evaluation | 32 |
| Costs | 34 |
| Quality management | 37 |
| A self-sustaining learning programme | 40 |
| Appendices | |
| 1 - Draft Learning Programme objectives and outcomes | 42 |
| 2 – Options for an ASC standard on LSP competencies | 47 |
| 3 – Current arrangements for regional LSP support | 50 |

Introduction

CAG Consultants and the Local Government Centre were commissioned to develop a Learning Programme on sustainable communities (SC) for Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). Two earlier reports presented the findings from our research with LSPs and presented options for inclusion in the Learning Programme. This report presents the final indicative LSP learning programme.

The **remainder of this document**:

1. Summarises:

- a) The key research findings
- b) The options agreed by the Advisory Group

2. Presents the Indicative Learning Programme in terms of:

- a) Objectives and outcomes
- b) Delivery
- c) Evaluation
- d) Quality management
- e) Becoming self-sustaining

The **appendices** contain:

- 1. Draft Learning Programme objectives and outcomes
- 2. Options for an ASC standard on LSP competencies
- 3. A summary of current regional arrangements for supporting LSPs

Key Research Findings

For the first and second phases of this project CAG and the Local Government Centre undertook:

- An initial mapping of learning support available to LSPs
- An email and telephone survey of LSP support staff about their current learning practice
- A telephone survey of regional bodies that provide support to LSPs

The findings from this research have important implications for the design of the Learning Programme. The key findings were presented in an earlier *Report of the Research Findings*. In summary the findings were:

General LSP learning and support

1. There is limited learning by LSPs with little capacity for more
2. External capacity building and support for LSPs is mainly from government bodies (Government Offices and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit)
3. Regional LSP support is very variable (see appendix 3)
4. A wide range of capacity building techniques are used by LSPs and most are found useful by LSP staff
5. Learning by LSP members mainly occurs as a bi-product of LSP workshops to discuss key priorities for LSPs
6. Much LSP learning and support has focused on LSP management and processes rather than outcomes.

Capacity building and support on sustainable communities

7. Capacity building on sustainable communities is limited and usually around social issues that are mainstream to LSPs' work. Environmental / resource related topics are given much less attention.
8. The resources and support available to LSPs on outputs (as opposed to LSP management) are predominantly focused on social and economic issues that reflect floor targets and the four Local Area Agreement (LAA) blocks.

9. There are significant **gaps** in current LSP learning and support, in particular: (1) integrating social, economic and environmental objectives; (2) meeting the needs of future generations; (3) addressing global issues in local decisions; (4) the first 3 priorities in *Securing the Future* (sustainable consumption & production; climate change & energy; natural resources and environment.)

The proposed Learning Programme

10. There are mixed views on what a Learning Programme should entail, but widespread agreement that it should not duplicate existing provision
11. There are constraints on the extent to which LSPs can be persuaded to engage in learning that is solely focussed on the current gaps in SC learning while they are driven by other priorities.

Implications for the Learning Programme

These findings led to some important conclusions regarding two questions asked in the original brief. The first asked:

Will it be necessary to incentivise LSPs to undertake the learning programme? If so, how should this be established and what form should it take?

The research indicates that:

- LSPs are driven by national drivers such as Local Area Agreements (LAAs), floor targets, and Performance Management Systems. Therefore LSPs are most likely to be persuaded to improve their SC learning if this is promoted within government guidance to LSPs, including advice on LAAs, floor targets, and performance management.
- LSPs have little capacity for additional learning. Therefore the Learning Programme should be integrated into current national and regional LSP support, rather than delivered as a separate Programme. It should also focus on the gaps in current SC learning rather than duplicating existing support.

The second question asked:

What are the optimal delivery mechanisms for the learning programme which will ensure maximum impact across all LSPs?

The research found that: a) LSPs use a wide range of capacity building techniques; b) LSP staff and partners learn in different ways; c) existing provision is different for NR and non NR LSPs; d) existing provision varies in nature and quality between regions. Consequently there is almost certainly more than one optimal delivery mechanism.

LSP staff primarily use: national and regional on-line and written guidance, and regional and sub-regional provision for more direct learning opportunities. The optimal national delivery mechanisms for LSP staff are therefore likely to be:

1. National bodies that provide national guidance, advice and resources to LSPs. This is primarily the ODPM local government and NRU sections and the IDeA.
2. Regional bodies that provide support to LSPs, primarily Government Offices (GOs), providers contracted by GOs, Regeneration Centres of Excellence and Regional Assemblies. However, regional LSP support is very variable. (See appendix 3.) Therefore it may be sensible to select the most effective regional delivery mechanism in each region, and to commission or encourage them to lead on delivery of SC learning in their region.

As noted above, the best way to reach *LSP partners* is to find ways of integrating discussion of gaps in SC learning into internal interactive workshops held with LSP partners. This could be done by offering ideas for best practice, training or other materials that could be fed to LSP co-ordinators and used by other advisors that work directly with LSPs, such as Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors.

These conclusions have informed the choice of activities that have been included in the Learning Programme, and which are described below.

Learning Programme Objectives and Outcomes

Draft Learning Programme Objectives and Outcomes

Appendix 1 presents draft objectives and outcomes for the Learning Programme. The proposed Learning Programme objectives are:-

- 1. Develop the capacity of LSPs to deliver sustainable communities, as defined in Annex A of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy.**
- 2. Develop the generic skills of LSPs which are essential to their effective functioning and the delivery of sustainable development.**
- 3. Develop the capacity of government and other LSP support agencies to provide effective, engaging and informative learning opportunities that will embed the delivery of sustainable communities into the work of LSPs.**
- 4. Continuously improve the effectiveness of the learning programme.**

A list of LSP learning outcomes is also included in appendix 1. This covers key knowledge and skills which are essential for the achievement of the first two objectives.

Filling the gaps in current LSP Provision

A number of providers already offer support to LSPs, particularly NRF LSPs. (See appendix 3.) This support tends to focus on the second objective in the list of objectives above, namely developing LSP's generic skills.

The research for this project found that there are significant **gaps** in current LSP learning and support, in particular: (1) integrating social, economic and environmental objectives; (2) meeting the needs of future generations; (3) addressing global issues in local decisions; (4) the first 3 priorities in *Securing the Future* (sustainable consumption & production; climate change & energy; natural resources and environment.)

A further research findings is that LSPs have little capacity for additional learning. Therefore the Learning Programme should be integrated into current

national and regional LSP support, rather than delivered as a separate Programme. It should also focus on the **gaps** in current SC learning rather than duplicating existing support.

Consequently, while the proposed Learning Programme objectives are broad, the next section, which discusses how to deliver the Learning Programme, focuses on activities to **fill the gaps** in current provision.

Delivering the Learning Programme

Delivery options agreed by the Advisory Group

After undertaking the above research, CAG Consultants and the Local Government Centre prepared a report on *Options for the Learning Programme*. The delivery options were discussed by the project Advisory Group on 1st December 2005. The key conclusions for the Learning Programme (LP) are summarised below.

General points

1. Sustainable communities must be treated as a cross-cutting issue, not as a single issue. The LP should therefore be built around Local Area Agreements. This approach is also more likely to attract interest from LSPs.
2. The LP should include a positive message that LSPs are already doing a lot on sustainable communities.
3. The LP should consider the different ways of reaching NRF and non NRF LSPs. It may be appropriate for the LP to be slanted towards non NRF LSPs as they currently have less learning capacity.
4. The LP is only one component of achieving change. Leverage also needs to be applied elsewhere in the system. As long as sustainability is an optional extra it will be difficult to persuade LSPs to take it on.
5. LSPs should be consulted on the content of the Learning Programme.

Key elements for delivering the Learning Programme

The key elements for delivering the learning programme were identified as:-

1. An **ASC standard supported by a self-assessment / diagnostic tool** that can be used by LSPs within their performance management systems, and also by Government Offices when they are assessing LSP performance
2. A **toolkit of resources** that is available to LSPs and any organisations that are supporting LSP learning

3. **LSP advisors to promote sustainable communities learning**, including Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors for NRF LSPs and other advisors for non NRF LSPs
4. **Route the Learning Programme through regional LSP support structures** and where necessary reinvigorate regional LSP support

The 17 activities that were selected to deliver the Learning Programme are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: The seventeen activities selected to deliver the Programme

| |
|--|
| An ASC standard supported by a self-assessment / diagnostic tool |
| 1. An ASC standard and self-assessment / diagnostic tool |
| 2. Promote the use of the ASC standard within new ODPM guidance on LSPs and Sustainable Community Strategies |
| 3. Integrate the ASC standard into LSP Performance Management Systems |
| 4. Integrate the ASC standard into the LSP Peer Challenge |
| A toolkit of resources |
| 5. A model Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and action plan <i>or</i> a Community Strategy checklist |
| 6. Best practice case studies available on-line |
| 7. Visits to best practice case studies |
| 8. Opportunities for shadowing or mentoring |
| 9. The Plan-it Scenario Game |
| 10. A learning pack on sustainable communities for LSPs |
| 11. Make the toolkit available on IDeA Knowledge and other websites |
| LSP advisors to promote sustainable communities learning by LSPs |
| 12. Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors |
| 13. Non NRF LSP Advisors |
| Route the Learning Programme through regional LSP support structures |
| 14. Route the LP through regional providers of LSP support |
| 15. Reinvigorate regional LSP support |
| Other |
| 16. Integrate LP into the Local Government Capacity Building Programme |
| 17. Target environmental theme groups / sub-partnerships |

The Delivery Activities

This section discusses the 17 activities that were selected by the Advisory Group to deliver the Learning Programme. It considers:

1. Each activity in more detail
2. Whether or not the Programme should be targeted at all or just some LSPs
3. The preferred sequence for implementation
4. How to involve LSPs and their supporters in the design of the Programme

The table

Table 2 below describes the seventeen delivery activities in more detail.

The **partners** column describes partners that would need to be involved.

The **short-term progress** column describes measures that could be regularly used to monitor **take-up** of and **satisfaction with** individual components of the Learning Programme. These output measures are designed to assess how well different aspects of the learning programme are being used. This information can inform planning around:

- the effort / approach needed to promote different activities
- revisions to activities to attract more interest from LSPs.

These progress measures are insufficient to judge the long-term impact of the whole programme on the skills and knowledge of LSPs. The options for evaluating the full Programme are discussed in the next section.

The categories used for **costs** describe *additional* costs over and above contributions from existing sources, such as GOs, Regeneration Centres of Excellence, Regional Assemblies and the NRU Skills and Knowledge Programme.

Low cost – less than £30,000

Medium cost – £30,000 to £100,000

High cost – more than £100,000

Table 2: The seventeen delivery activities in more detail

| Description | Partners | Issues | Cost | Short-term Progress Measures |
|--|--|--|------|--|
| Element 1: An ASC Standard supported by a Self-assessment / Diagnostic tool | | | | |
| 1. An ASC standard and self-assessment / diagnostic tool | | | | |
| <p>Publish an ASC standard for sustainable communities learning, and a self-assessment tool to help LSPs assess their performance against the standard and their learning needs.</p> <p>This is discussed further in appendix 2.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASC •DEFRA •ODPM (NRU and LAA.) | <p>At present there is no standard list of “outcome” competencies against which LSPs can assess their performance.</p> <p>There are two options for the ASC standard:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It lists all of the essential competencies for LAAs to promote sustainable communities. 2. If focuses on the gaps in LSP learning on integration, the needs of future generations, global issues and the first three priorities in <i>Securing the Future</i>. <p>There are pros and cons for each option. See appendix 2.</p> | Low | % of LSPs that use the ASC standard and self-assessment tool. |
| 2. Promote the use of the ASC standard within new ODPM guidance on LSPs and Sustainable Community Strategies | | | | |
| <p>Include advice to LSPs to use the ASC standard and self-assessment tool within the ODPM guidance on LSPs and Sustainable Community Strategies that is expected to be published in 2006.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASC •DEFRA •ODPM | <p>ODPM has just published a consultation document <i>Local Strategic Partnership: Shaping their future</i>. Following the consultation, new guidance is expected to be issued to LSPs in 2006. This will have an important influence over the direction of LSPs and Community Strategies.</p> <p>Chapter 4 of the consultation document discusses the skills need by LSPs and existing training and support. It notes the gaps in current LSP learning. It does not propose solutions, but asks for comments.</p> <p>It is likely that the new guidance to LSPs will also contain advice on building LSP capacity on sustainable communities, and that this could encourage LSPs to identify their learning needs using the ASC standard and self-assessment toolkit.</p> | Low | Inclusion of paragraph on ASC standard and self-assessment toolkit in new ODPM guidance to LSPs. |

| Description | Partners | Issues | Cost | Short-term Progress Measures |
|---|---|--|------|--|
| 3. Integrate the ASC standard into LSP Performance Management Systems | | | | |
| <p>Promote the use of the ASC standard within LSP Performance Management Systems:</p> <p>a) Include: i) advice to use the ASC standard in the <i>LSP Performance Management Framework</i> - section 2.6 <i>Learning and development</i>; ii) identified learning needs within section 3 on <i>improvement planning</i>.</p> <p>b) Include a reference to the ASC standard in advice on LAA performance management systems.</p> <p>c) Use the ODPM's annual advice to GOs on LAAs and the NRF LSP review process to promote the use of the ASC standard in LSP performance management.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASC •DEFRA •ODPM (NRF and LAA) •GOs | <p>LSPs are unlikely to apply the ASC standard unless it is seen as integral to their functioning.</p> <p>At present NRF LSPs are required to undertake an annual LSP self-assessment based on the NRF's <i>LSP Performance Management Framework</i>. This gives little guidance on how LSPs should assess their learning needs.</p> <p>In future LSPs' performance will be assessed through the LAA process. The LAA performance framework for LAAs described in the <i>Local Area Agreements Guidance</i> is currently entirely outcome based, and does not consider learning needs. This could be revised in the round 3 LAA guidance and toolkit.</p> <p>ODPM issue annual advice to GOs on reviewing NRF LSPs and LAAs. This could include advice to promote the use of the ASC standard for LSP self-assessments and to use this assessment to inform the LSP improvement plans that are agreed with the GO.</p> | Low | % of LSPs that use the ASC standard and self-assessment tool in their annual performance management self-assessment. |
| 4. Integrate the ASC standard into the LSP Peer Challenge | | | | |
| <p>Incorporate the ASC standard within the LSP Peer Challenge managed by the IDeA.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASC •DEFRA •ODPM •IDeA | <p>The research found that peer reviews were considered very effective for capacity building. The current peer challenge framework includes a review of learning & development, but would benefit from a clearer standard for assessing LSPs. The IDeA have expressed an interest in incorporating the standard within the LSP Peer Challenge.</p> | Low | % of LSP Peer Challenges that use the ASC standard and self-assessment tool. |

| Description | Partners | Issues | Cost | Short-term Progress Measures |
|--|--|--|------|--|
| | | <p>Currently take up of the Peer Challenge is very low due to LSPs being preoccupied with other task. Take-up may improve in future, but even if it does not, this activity is likely to require little additional work once the ASC standard and self-assessment tool have been developed.</p> | | |
| Element 2: A Toolkit of Resources | | | | |
| 5. A model, checklist and / or guidance on preparing Sustainable Community Strategies (SCS) | | | | |
| <p>Collaborate with the IDeA to develop and publish on IDeA Knowledge one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Guidance on preparing a Sustainable Community Strategy and action plan •A model example of a Sustainable Community Strategy and action plan •A checklist to help LSPs assess if sustainability issues are adequately addressed in their Community Strategy and action plan <p>This could be published to coincide with the ODPM's new guidance on LSPs and Sustainable Community Strategies that is expected in 2006.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASC •DEFRA •ODPM •IDeA | <p>There are three possible options, not necessarily mutually exclusive. They are: guidance, a model, or a checklist.</p> <p>The IDeA is already thinking of developing guidance on preparing a Sustainable Community Strategy to coincide with the publication of the ODPM's new guidance. Their aim is to simplify the process for local authorities and particular audiences, such as councillors - explaining their role and what sorts of things they ought to be doing to develop and pull together a strategy, rather than giving them an ideal one. The IDeA think it would be an excellent idea to work together with ASC and co-badge any future supporting material.</p> <p>Another option is to develop a model Sustainable Community Strategy and action plan. But given the very different circumstances of LSPs it may not be appropriate to have a single model. There might need to be models for say: urban growth areas; urban areas with low demand; rural areas. Alternatively their might be one model, but with links to alternative case studies that are relevant to different localities.</p> <p>But there is a potential danger that a model could lead to the development of generic Community Strategies with little relationship to the circumstances and needs of</p> | Low | <p>% of LSPs that make use of the guidance, model or checklist and find it helpful when revising their Community Strategy.</p> |

| Description | Partners | Issues | Cost | Short-term Progress Measures |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| | | <p>their local area. This may be reduced by the proposals in the ODPM consultation document <i>Local Strategic Partnership: Shaping their future</i>, that in future Sustainable Community Strategies must be grounded in analysis of performance and local conditions. The model should be based around this and other advice in ODPM's new guidance.</p> <p>Another alternative would be a checklist to help LSPs assess if sustainability issues are adequately addressed in their Community Strategy. This could be based on the format used in the <i>Guidance to help Sussex Local Authorities and other organisations incorporate the environment into their plans and strategies</i>, developed by the Sussex Environmental Reference Group.</p> <p>Whatever option is chosen, it should:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover the common gaps in LSP support and learning, in particular: (1) integrating social, economic and environmental objectives; (2) meeting the needs of future generations; (3) addressing global issues in local decisions; (4) the first 3 priorities in <i>Securing the Future</i> (sustainable consumption & production; climate change & energy; natural resources and environment.). • Include links to other Learning Programme resources, such as the best practice case studies. (See activity 6.) | | |
| 6. Best practice case studies available on-line | | | | |
| Publish best practice case studies on-line (probably on IDEa Knowledge). The case studies to be structured around the prevailing LAA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASC •DEFRA •ODPM •IDEa | GOs and RCEs who provide support for LSPs have expressed an eagerness for one site where they can find best practice examples that are directly related to the LSP drivers, i.e. floor targets, narrowing the gap and LAA blocks. | Medium in first year. Low to medium in future | % of LSPs that look at the case studies and say that they find them useful. |

| Description | Partners | Issues | Cost | Short-term Progress Measures |
|---|----------|---|--------|------------------------------|
| <p>framework (currently 4 blocks plus cross-cutting issues and not expected to change for LAA round 3) and the floor targets within these.</p> <p>Links could be made to the case studies from the ASC standard and model Sustainable Community Strategy.</p> | | <p>Best practice examples are already available based around the floor targets on Renewal.net, but these generally do not address the gaps in SC learning. The case studies developed for the Learning Programme should therefore focus on these gaps, and illustrate, for example, how energy conservation projects can be promoted as part of healthy living and worklessness initiatives.</p> <p>But existing on-line resources are not widely used by LSPs. To encourage LSPs to use the case studies they will need to be promoted through other parts of the Learning Programme – particularly the ASC standard and the model Sustainable Community Strategy, and linked to the LAA Toolkit hub (see activity 11). They could also be promoted by providers of regional LSP support. (See appendix 3.)</p> <p>To be taken seriously the case studies need to meet a high standard and be: transferable; up to date; evidence based and not anecdotal; include evidence that they can contribute to “narrowing the gap” and achieving LAA outcomes.</p> <p>Although there are many case studies available on good SC practice from public agencies and NGOs, these are not necessarily adapted to the needs of LSPs, and are often anecdotal and do not meet the high standards outlined above. Many of the available case studies would therefore need to be adapted, and new ones would have to be found and regularly updated. It is also debatable whether sufficient case studies exist that would meet these more demanding standards.</p> | years. | |

| Description | Partners | Issues | Cost | Short-term Progress Measures |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| 7. Visits to best practice case studies | | | | |
| Organise visits for LSP staff and members to best practice case studies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASC •DEFRA •ODPM •Case studies chosen for visits. •Regional providers of LSP support. | <p>The research found that visits to best practice examples were thought effective for LSP staff and visits can be more inspiring than written resources. At present visits to best practice examples are usually only organised for NRF LSPs.</p> <p>This scheme could operate rather like the local government Beacon scheme. A few outstanding case studies could be requested to host visits from other LSPs. Pre-arranged dates for visits could be advertised through regional LSP support networks, and either regional providers or the ASC could administer the arrangements.</p> <p>However, there remain several uncertainties about the viability of this activity, and it would need to be piloted and then reviewed. The uncertainties are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Can suitable case studies be identified that can be illustrated through visits? •Would the case studies be willing to host visits? •Will LSP staff and members have time to make visits? •Will LSP staff and members be willing to travel outside their region to visits, which may be necessary given that regional examples are often familiar? •Would LSPs have the resources to pay for travel, or would this have to be funded through the Learning Programme? | Difficult to predict. Depends on take-up and if LSP travel is paid for. | % of LSPs that participate in visits and say that they find them useful. |
| 8. Opportunities for shadowing or mentoring | | | | |
| Organise opportunities for LSP staff to shadow best practice examples or to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASC •DEFRA | The research found that shadowing and mentoring were thought effective for LSP staff and are likely to be more successful at embedding new practice. At present these | Difficult to predict. | % of LSPs that participate in shadowing or |

| Description | Partners | Issues | Cost | Short-term Progress Measures |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| <p>receive mentoring from best practice examples.</p> <p>The best practice examples could be of two types:</p> <p>i) Best practice around achieving outputs, linked to the best practice case studies under activity 6.</p> <p>ii) Best practice around LSP learning and capacity building on sustainable communities.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ODPM •Case studies chosen for shadowing or mentoring •Regional providers of LSP support. | <p>are usually only organised for NRF LSPs. To date shadowing and mentoring has mainly been about LSP management processes rather than LSP outputs.</p> <p>Opportunities for shadowing or mentoring could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •advertised to all LSPs <i>or</i> •made available to LSPs that are identified by GOs, through LSP performance management systems, as having a particular need <p>There remain several uncertainties about the viability of this activity, and it would need to be piloted and then reviewed. The uncertainties are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Would LSP staff feel that they had the time to commit to shadowing / mentoring around just one of the LSP's many activities? •Can case studies be identified that are suited to shadowing or mentoring? •Would the case studies be willing to be shadowed or provide mentoring? •Will LSP staff have time to make visits? •Will LSP staff be willing to travel outside their region? | <p>Depends on take-up and if LSP travel is paid for.</p> | <p>mentoring and say that they find it useful.</p> |
| 9. The Plan-it Scenario Game | | | | |
| <p>Offer all LSPs a free session of the Plan-it Scenario Game, developed by PixelFOUNTAIN.</p> <p>The Plan-it Game is a one-off session that helps participants to see the implications of their decisions on other sectors.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASC •DEFRA •ODPM •PixelFOUNTAIN | <p>Our research found a very positive response from LSPs to workshops that were held in NW and Y&H. It generated a degree of excitement and new interest among LSP partners in sustainability. It is one of the few tested techniques that appears to reach LSP partners</p> <p>PixelFOUNTAIN are shortly going to be updating the Scenario game, to link more directly to <i>Securing the Future</i> priorities and to the context of LAAs.</p> | <p>10 sessions Low</p> <p>25 sessions Medium</p> <p>50</p> | <p>% of LSPs that run sessions and say they found them useful.</p> <p>Level and mix of attendance at sessions.</p> |

| Description | Partners | Issues | Cost | Short-term Progress Measures |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| <p>It can be combined with sustainability appraisal frameworks. It has already been used by LSPs in the NW and Y&H regions.</p> <p>The following delivery options would be possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PixelFOUNTAIN deliver training • PixelFOUNTAIN work in partnership with one or more local consultancies to deliver workshops • PixelFOUNTAIN train SCA advisors (see activity 13) to deliver workshops • PixelFOUNTAIN provide train the trainer sessions for LSP staff to deliver within their own LSPs | | <p>Although the Plan-it Scenario Game appears a good way of enthusing LSP members, alone it is insufficient to embed changes in practice. The Game is probably therefore best combined with an introduction to the other Learning Programme resources available to LSPs, probably by introducing the learning pack (activity 10) at the end of the session.</p> <p>The quality of delivery is very dependant on the quality of the trainer. PixelFOUNTAIN would monitor trainer quality</p> <p>Any local tailoring of the Game, e.g. to regional objectives or local floor targets and LAA outcomes, would add to costs, but make the sessions more credible to LSPs. Planning sessions may also be required prior to workshops. In the North West these were held with all LSPs to ensure a very high level of recruitment (41 out of 44) and also that the LSP officers understood how to sell it successfully to their partners. This also enables workshops to be planned for needs of the individual LSPs, but would add to the cost of delivery.</p> | <p>sessions High</p> <p>Discounts available for bulk purchase of sessions.</p> | |
| 10. A learning pack on sustainable communities for LSPs | | | | |
| <p>Issue a learning pack on sustainable communities to all LSPs. It would contain:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •A video aimed at LSP members introducing the concept of sustainable communities and the Learning Programme •The ASC standard and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASC •DEFRA •ODPM | <p>The Learning Pack would be one way of launching the Learning Programme. However, alone it is unlikely to be sufficient to persuade LSPs to use the resources. LSP staff are already swamped with advice and many will not read more. Therefore the learning pack will need to be supported by other mechanisms for raising the profile of the Learning Programme, e.g. by ensuring that the ASC standard and self-assessment is integrated into the LSP performance management framework and that GOs check that LSPs are identifying their learning needs</p> | <p>Medium to high.</p> <p>(Not including the cost of other LP resources</p> | <p>% of LSPs that say that they have looked at the pack and the video and that it persuaded them to use other parts of the Learning Programme.</p> |

| Description | Partners | Issues | Cost | Short-term Progress Measures |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <p>self-assessment toolkit, with links to LSP performance management and improvement planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •A best practice note on effective learning mechanisms •Advice on how to access other resources: model community strategy or checklist, case studies, visits, shadowing & mentoring, Plan-it Game. | | <p>and building this into their improvement plans.</p> <p>The Learning Pack may become out of date as the Learning Programme evolves, but it may not need to be reissued if the Learning Programme is successfully integrated into LSP improvement activities.</p> | that are sign-posted in the Pack.) | |
| 11. Make the toolkit available on IDeA Knowledge (LAA Toolkit hub) and other websites | | | | |
| <p>Host the Learning Programme Toolkit of resources on IDeA Knowledge</p> <p>Link the LP Toolkit into the planned LAA Toolkit hub.</p> <p>Links could also be made from other websites to the Toolkit, e.g. the ASC website and Renewal.net.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASC •DEFRA •ODPM •IDeA | <p>The research found that IDeA Knowledge was the mostly commonly used website by LSPs.</p> <p>IDeA Knowledge host the LAA Toolkit on behalf of ODPM. For round 3 LAAs it is proposed to develop an LAA Toolkit hub containing links to other resources. This is expected to be available from March 2006.</p> <p>The resources in the Learning Programme Toolkit could be linked to the LAA Toolkit hub. This will increase the likelihood that LSPs are aware of the LP Toolkit resources and make use of them.</p> | None or Low if the IDeA charge for hosting the toolkit. | % of LSPs that have looked at the resources on-line and found the site easy to navigate. |
| Element 3: LSP advisors to promote sustainable communities learning by LSPs | | | | |
| 12. Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors | | | | |
| <p>Train Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors (NRAs) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Better understand how | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ODPM (NRU) •ASC | <p>Advisors who work directly with LSPs are likely to be the most successful at embedding learning. It is also important that they are not contradicting messages that are coming from other parts of the Learning</p> | Medium for one day compul- | % of NRAs that attended training session and say that they found it |

| Description | Partners | Issues | Cost | Short-term Progress Measures |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <p>LSPs can promote sustainable communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To use and encourage LSPs to use the LP Toolkit of resources. <p>Target training at NRAs that provide advice around achieving floor targets (as opposed to performance management and partnership working).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEFRA | <p>Programme.</p> <p>Training could be run jointly with the NRU and comprise a one or two day session drawing on the resources developed for the LP Toolkit.</p> <p>NRAs work directly with NRF LSPs, but not all NRF LSPs use NRAs, and may only use them for a very specific task.</p> <p>NRAs will not reach non NRF LSPs. An alternative approach is proposed for the latter – see activity 13.</p> <p>There has just been a new NRA recruitment round, with 149 NRAs appointed. A session could be provided for NRAs that provide advice around floor targets. In future the training sessions could be tied to the induction training for new NRAs.</p> <p>There are two options:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory training that NRAs must attend Voluntary training that NRAs are invited to attend <p>NRAs are paid 50% of their normal day rate to attend compulsory training. They are not paid to attend voluntary training and are therefore less likely to attend, although an ASC / NRU badged event may attract interest.</p> | <p>sory training.</p> <p>Low for one day voluntary training.</p> | <p>useful.</p> <p>% of NRAs that say that they have used the LP Toolkit resources in their advice to LSPs.</p> |
| 13. Non NRF LSP Advisors | | | | |
| <p>Advisors to non NRF LSPs to be trained to give advice on promoting sustainable communities.</p> <p>There are two options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Use the proposed ASC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ASC DEFRA ODPM | <p>The role of ASC regional skills advisors has still to be finalised. They may be appropriate to provide direct advice to LSPs on promoting sustainable communities. On the other hand their role may be to help LSPs to identify their learning needs – not to provide direct advice. In the latter case there will be a need to find other routes for providing direct advice to LSPs.</p> | <p>Depends on who fulfils the role of non NRF LSP advisors.</p> | <p>% of Non NFR LSP Advisors that attended training session and say that they found it useful.</p> |

| Description | Partners | Issues | Cost | Short-term Progress Measures |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| <p>regional skills advisors for this role</p> <p>2. Identify other advisors who do / could work directly with non NRF LSPs</p> <p>In both cases the advisors would need to receive training in:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How LSPs can promote sustainable communities •How to use and encourage LSPs to use the LP Toolkit of resources. | | | | <p>% of Non NRF LSP Advisors that say that they have used the LP Toolkit resources in their advice to LSPs.</p> |
| Element 4: Route the Learning Programme through regional LSP support structures | | | | |
| 14. Route the LP through regional providers of LSP support | | | | |
| <p>Ensure that regional providers of LSP support are fully aware of the Learning Programme, make use of the resources, and promote these to LSPs.</p> <p>Activities could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Promoting the LP through: the ODPM's periodic GO LSP network meetings; the ODPM's monthly GO newsletter on LSPs; the NRU Skills & Knowledge newsletter for GOs. •Providing speakers for | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASC •DEFRA •ODPM (LSPs and NRU) •Regional providers of LSP support. | <p>Arrangements for regional LSP support are very variable. However providers all expressed enthusiasm for access to resources and speakers.</p> <p>But the research found that LSPs are more likely to attend sub-regional than regional events. They are only likely to attend regional events where this is directly related to their current needs.</p> <p>If speakers are to provided it may be sensible to ask regional providers to first survey LSPs to determine the level of demand around particular topics.</p> <p>There is no readily available pool of speakers. Further work would be needed to identify suitable speakers. Speakers would need to have a good appreciation of the LAA outcome on which they are presenting, and how it is being progressed by different LSPs.</p> | <p>None for promotion through ODPM news-letters & meetings.</p> <p>Difficult to predict for speakers – depends on take-up.</p> | <p>% of regional providers of LSP support who: are aware of the LP; have used the resources; say that they find them useful.</p> |

| Description | Partners | Issues | Cost | Short-term Progress Measures |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| regional LSP events. Speakers to focus on how to achieve SC within particular LAA outcomes and sign-post related LP resources. | | | | |
| 15. Reinvigorate regional LSP support | | | | |
| <p>Reinvigorate regional LSP support, especially for non NRF LSPs, where this appears to be weak.</p> <p>This would entail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Monitoring regional LSP provision and monitoring where it appears weak. •Working with the ODPM and relevant GO to reinvigorate provision. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASC •DEFRA •ODPM (LSPs) •GOs | <p>Regional support for LSPs has changed recently (see appendix 3). In many regions efforts have become more focussed around NRF LSPs and supporting needs identified through their performance management system. Consequently support for non NRF LSPs has weakened in some regions, and this has reduced the opportunities for routing the Learning Programme through regional providers (activity 14.)</p> <p>There is therefore a need to reinvigorate regional LSP support, especially for non NRF LSPs, where this appears to be weak, and to continue to monitor the situation.</p> | Low – staff time only. | % of regions where regional support for LSP (especially non NRF LSPs) appears healthy. |
| Other | | | | |
| 16. Integrate LP into the Local Government Capacity Building Programme | | | | |
| <p>Collaborate with the regional and sub-regional Improvement Partnerships (IPs) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the LP resources toolkit • Involve groups of LSPs in action learning sets around aspects of sustainable communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ASC •DEFRA •ODPM (LG Capacity Building) | <p>Capacity Building Improvement Partnerships are being formed at regional, and in some cases sub-regional level. Improvement partnerships will normally have a board composed of senior representatives from local authorities. There will be a lead authority that acts as banker for the partnership.</p> <p>The partnerships have submitted bids for funding, and these are currently being approved by ODPM. Once funding is approved the Partnerships are free to spend it as they wish. The funding will continue until 2007/8.</p> | <p>None for promoting the LP through IPs.</p> <p>Difficult to predict for action learning</p> | <p>% of IPs that circulate LP promotional material to their members.</p> <p>% of IPs that form LSP action learning sets.</p> |

| Description | Partners | Issues | Cost | Short-term Progress Measures |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| in which they have an interest. | | <p>The Improvement Partnerships offer another route for promoting the resources available through the Learning Programme.</p> <p>Improvement Partnerships could also be encouraged to form groupings of LSPs that are interested in building capacity around some aspect of sustainable communities. Action learning sets could be run to identify and try out different solutions. Support could be provided by ASC advisors, either free of charge, or paid for out of the Improvement Partnership's budget.</p> | sets. Depends on take-up and if IPs would be willing to pay for support. | % of participating LSPs that found the action learning set useful. |
| 17. Target environmental theme groups / sub-partnerships | | | | |
| <p>Use sustainability or environmental theme groups or sub-partnerships as a "way in" to LSPs, e.g. by asking them to champion and publicise the resources available through the Learning Programme</p> <p>Activities could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send a promotional leaflet directly to the chairs of these groups • Hold regional workshops for the chairs or representatives of these groups to introduce the Learning Programme and provide taster sessions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASC • DEFRA • ODPM | <p>Environmental or sustainability theme groups are likely to be more sympathetic to SC concepts and the Learning Programme. They could therefore be used to promote the use of the Learning Programme.</p> <p>Some potential drawbacks are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all LSPs have sustainability or environmental theme groups • The LSP research suggested that it is difficult to engage LSP members with learning resources • The possibility that this might give the message that the Learning Programme is only relevant to one part of the LSPs, and not across the whole of the LSP's activities. (This would be less of a problem if the theme group is represented on the LSP board, but this is not always the case.) • A list of LSP group chairs is not available and would have to be assembled. <p>One option might be to target environmental or sustainability theme groups in LSPs where other</p> | <p>Low to send a promotional leaflet to theme groups.</p> <p>Medium to High if theme groups representatives are invited to regional workshop</p> | % of LSPs with environmental/sustainability theme groups; % of these promoting SC learning in their LSP. |

| Description | Partners | Issues | Cost | Short-term Progress Measures |
|-------------|----------|---|------|------------------------------|
| | | methods for persuading the LSP to use the Learning Programme have failed to work. | | |

Targeting the Programme

Currently non NRF LSPs receive substantially less support than NRF LSPs. One option would be for the Learning Programme to be targeted specifically at non NRF LSPs.

We have proposed above that the structuring of resources should be around the LAA framework, and that the Toolkit of resources should be linked to the LAA Toolkit hub. From 2006 all metropolitan, unitary and county LSPs will have agreed an LAA. District LSPs are involved in the LAA process through the county agreement. This approach therefore targets all LSPs, regardless of whether they receive NR funding.

Many of the activities in the Programme would be suitable for all LSPs and there would be no additional cost for targeting effort at NRF as well as non NRF LSPs. However, for some activities there are opportunities to primarily target non NRF LSPs. These are explained in table 3 below.

Table 3: Opportunities for Targeting the Programme at non NRF LSPs

| Activity | Opportunities for Targeting |
|--|--|
| 1. An ASC standard and self-assessment / diagnostic tool | Not relevant. |
| 2. Promote the use of the ASC standard within new ODPM guidance on LSPs and Sustainable Community Strategies | Not relevant. |
| 3. Integrate the ASC standard into LSP Performance Management Systems | Focus on including advice in LAA Guidance. Disregard the LSP Performance Management Framework which is aimed purely at NRF LSPs. |
| 4. Integrate the ASC standard into the LSP Peer Challenge | Not relevant. |
| A toolkit of resources | |
| 5. A model Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and action plan <i>or</i> a Community Strategy checklist | Design the model / checklist so that it primarily meets the needs of non NRF LSPs. |
| 6. Best practice case studies available on-line | Best practice case studies are confined to examples that have not received NR funding. |

| | |
|---|--|
| 7. Visits to best practice case studies | Visits only to best practice examples that have not received NR funding. Funding to support visits only available to non NRF LSPs. |
| 8. Opportunities for shadowing or mentoring | Shadowing and mentoring only available with best practice examples that have not received NR funding. Funding to support shadowing and mentoring only available to non NRF LSPs. |
| 9. The Plan-it Scenario Game | Available free only to non NRF LSPs |
| 10. A learning pack on sustainable communities for LSPs | Sent only to non NRF LSPs |
| 11. Make the toolkit available on IDeA Knowledge and other websites | Not relevant. |
| LSP advisors to promote sustainable communities learning by LSPs | |
| 12. Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors | Remove this activity as it is only relevant to NRF LSPs. |
| 13. ASC regional skills advisors | Target ASC regional skills advisors at non NRF LSPs |
| Route the Learning Programme through regional LSP support structures | |
| 14. Route the LP through regional providers of LSP support | Promote the Learning Programme through ODPM newsletters and networks that are about all LSP activities and not just NRF LSPs. Only offer speakers for events that are aimed at all or non NRF LSPs. |
| 15. Reinvigorate regional LSP support | Concentrate on regional provision for non NRF LSPs. |
| Other | |
| 16. Integrate LP into the Local Government Capacity Building Programme | Not relevant. |
| 17. Target environmental theme groups / sub-partnerships | Only target groups in non NRF LSPs. |

The implementation sequence

Many of the Learning Programme activities are best implemented when others are in place. Some are dependent on the date at which other events happen. An implementation sequence for the Learning Programme is suggested in the diagram below.

Phase 1 - immediately

- Start developing:
 - o ASC standard and self-assessment toolkit
 - o Best practice case studies
 - o Model / checklist for sustainable community strategies
 - o LSP Learning Pack on Sustainable Communities
- Incorporate the ASC standard into the LSP Peer Challenge
- Agree with ODPM inclusion of references to ASC standard in: round 3 LAA guidance; LSP performance management framework; and new guidance on LSPs and Sustainable Community Strategies
- Agree with IDeA and ODPM the hosting of Learning Programme Toolkit resources on IDeA Knowledge linked to the LAA Toolkit hub.
- Reinvigorate regional LSP support where necessary



Phase 2 – round 3 LAA Guidance and Toolkit published (March 2006 & beyond)

- Publish:
 - o ASC standard and self-assessment toolkit
 - o Best practice case studies available on-line
- Include reference to ASC standard in guidance to GOs about round 3 LAAs
- Train NRA and ASC advisors
- Promote the Learning Programme to regional providers of LSP support



Phase 3 – publication of new ODPM guidance on LSPs and Sustainable Community Strategies (summer 2006 and beyond)

- Publish:
 - o Model / checklist for a Sustainable Community Strategy
 - o LSP Learning Pack on Sustainable Communities
- Target sustainability and environmental theme groups
- Make available:
 - o Plan-it Scenario Game
 - o Visits
 - o Shadowing / mentoring

Involving LSPs and their supporters

Although a sample of LSPs and providers of regional LSP support were asked about their views on an LSP Learning Programme, they have not been consulted on the final format of the Learning Programme, as described above.

If the ASC, DEFRA and ODPM wish to put in place a Learning Programme to coincide with key events in 2006 (see implementation sequence above) it may be too late to revise the overall content of the Learning Programme. However, there would still be opportunities to involve interested representatives in the development of various components, such as the best practice examples, the Sustainable Community Strategy model or checklist, and the Learning Pack. The ASC, DEFRA and ODPM might therefore consider forming an advisory group for the development of the Learning Programme.

We have also suggested under quality management that a panel of volunteer LSPs and their supporters might be formed to periodically feed back on the quality of activities.

Evaluation

The original brief posed the following question:

Through what mechanisms may both the learning programme and its delivery be evaluated? Given the inadequacy of evaluation of training programmes through performance indicators, what innovative approaches are proposed?

In table 2 above the **short-term progress** column describes measures that could be regularly used to monitor **take-up** of and **satisfaction with** individual components of the Learning Programme. These output measures are designed to assess how well different aspects of the learning programme are being used. This information can inform:

- the effort / approach needed to promote different activities
- revisions to activities to attract more interest from LSPs.

These short-term progress measures are insufficient to judge the long-term impact of the whole programme on the skills and knowledge of LSPs. The options for evaluating the full Programme are discussed in this section.

The evaluation will need to address issues such as:

- How effectively is the Learning Programme: filling the current gaps in SC learning; meeting the learning programme objectives and outcomes (appendix 1) and meeting the proposed new ASC standard (appendix 2)?
- Which activities are most effective in operationalising and embedding learning widely and long-term within the LSP (and key partners)?
- Which activities are most cost effective?
- Which providers offer best value (quality and cost effectiveness)?
- What organisational changes may LSPs (and key partners) need to introduce to enhance their learning capacity and ensure that learning leads to outcomes and impact?

Experience in other evaluations (such as the National Evaluation of LSPs) suggests that a theory of change approach, which 'models' the steps through which learning is acquired and embedded (e.g. initial learning by individuals, including reaching the 'harder to reach' parts of the LSP, generalising the learning in the LSP and key partners, getting the messages into key LSP strategies and action plans, achieving outcomes, sustaining the learning as

priorities and individuals change, etc) should inform the design of the evaluation.

Given the findings of the LSP research, the evaluation, at least in the earlier stages of delivering the learning programme, should have a strong formative component.

The evaluation mechanisms could include elements such as:

- involving LSPs (staff and partners) in the evaluation of their approaches to learning – both individually and through existing LSP networks
- involving providers in the evaluation of their achievements
- quantitative elements (assessing overall progress and outcomes for example) through sample surveys
- qualitative elements (exploring the performance of different delivery methods for example).

In later stages, evaluation should be increasingly concerned with identifying approaches which are self-sustaining, and with the forms of regulation which would be most effective in assuring continued quality over time.

Options for the evaluation

The evaluation should be designed as an integral part of the learning programme. The following outlines options for a three year evaluation of the learning programme. It combines a number of evaluation methodologies (eg surveys, case studies, action research) and develops an approach in which the evaluation would work closely with both learning providers and LSPs, while retaining the capacity to provide objective assessments of progress.

A Feasibility Study

Following the appointment of evaluation consultants, an initial feasibility study could be undertaken. This would include:

- Establishment of databases – of providers, LSPs
- Development of a theory of change to guide the evaluation
- Development of performance measures and indicators
- Consultation with key stakeholders
- Preparation of detailed evaluation plan

Monitoring learning provision

A system could be instituted, in collaboration with providers and recipients of learning, to monitor:

- Learning delivered. This information would be provided by training providers according to schedules devised by the evaluation team
- Learning received. This would be provided by LSPs, using evaluation schedules developed by the evaluation team.
- Monitoring would be primarily concerned with the amount of different forms of learning provided, and who received it, but would also have a qualitative dimension concerning quality and value for money.

Output: Quarterly or six monthly monitoring reports

Annual questionnaire to LSPs

An annual questionnaire could provide a wider view from LSPs of the learning which they had accessed over the year; who received it, and a range of consequent issues such as quality and value for money, the degree of embedding and impact of learning, drivers and barriers to take-up.

Versions of the questionnaire could be developed for specific 'markets' within the LSP eg partners, councillors.

Output: Annual report of survey

Case studies

In-depth case studies could be used to explore important issues in more depth than is possible through surveys and similar means, and especially to find out more about why and how learning 'works' or does not. Case studies would be likely to have a number of different focuses:

- Of 'leading' and 'lagging' LSPs, to explore the conditions and contexts in which LSPs do or do not actively and effectively use and apply learning. These case studies would explore the organisational cultures of LSPs and their partners and would lead to findings concerning the 'learning environment' which LSPs need to create if learning is to be effective, embedded and sustainable so as to produce outcomes.
- Of specific forms of delivering learning. These would be likely to be primarily concerned with learning the lessons from forms of learning which appear to

be working well but it may also be valuable to investigate why some methods appear to be less effective.

Output: Internal case study reports leading to public good practice notes

Action learning sets

Action learning sets would bring together small groups of LSPs and/or providers to develop good practice on key issues identified in the course of the programme, facilitated by the evaluation consultants. Possible topics might concern, for example, strategies for groups such as councillors who are often hard to reach; or how to sustain learning in a context of both a changing policy environment and the fact that key individual(s) move on.

Output: Action learning set reports

Dissemination workshops

A round of dissemination workshops, possibly on a regional basis, could be used to disseminate messages from the evaluation widely.

Output: 'Key findings' papers for dissemination.

Annual and triennial reports

The findings and policy implications from the research could be brought together in an annual report and a final report at the end of the three year period.

Costs

The options above represent a flexible package which could be delivered at a variety of levels and costs. The following table presents the likely costs for implementing each option. More limited and lower cost options are indicated in the subsequent table. It should be stressed that the costs are 'ball-park figures which would need to be worked up in more detail in our final report when the incentivisation and delivery options have been selected.

Note this is an **annual costing** for each main item and is based on typical day rates for organisations that would undertake this kind of evaluation.

| Option | Tasks | Cost £000 ¹ | Comments & alternatives |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|---|
| Feasibility study | As above | 60 | |
| Monitoring learning provision | Develop, deliver, chase, analyse monitoring schedules; write report | 50 | Cost is very provisional depending on the size of the learning programme. Options include monitoring a sample rather than all activity. |
| Annual questionnaire | a) Develop, deliver, chase, analyse main questionnaire. Write report | 50 | Cost assumes 100% survey - options include sample. |
| | b) Sample survey to LSP partners | 50 | Option to delete this item. |
| Case studies | a) Develop case studies methodology b) Undertake 4 case studies annually c) Write good practice notes | 60 | Option of less case studies |
| Action learning sets | Run three action learning sets annually; write reports | 54 | Do not run action learning sets |
| Dissemination workshops | Prepare workshop material and run 9 workshops, one in each region | 66 | 3 workshops for North, South, Midlands; or one national dissemination event. |
| Annual reports | Write annual report (final report in third year) | 18 | No annual reports: short summary reports; no report in year 2. |
| Project management and client liaison | | 40 | |

Lower Cost Options

Below we set out examples of lower cost options. It should be noted that equally there are higher cost option which could offer further benefits. More case studies is an example.

¹ Costs are estimated at an inclusive day rate of £600

| Description of option | Benefits | Drawbacks | Cost saving (annual) £000 |
|---|--------------|---|---------------------------|
| Monitoring – 50% sample | Cost saving | Less full coverage | 20 |
| Annual questionnaire – 50% sample - no sample survey to partners | Cost saving | Less full coverage/robust data No knowledge of views of partners | 20 50 |
| 2 case studies not 4 | Cost saving | Potential inability to evaluate key issues in depth | 30 |
| No action learning sets | Cost savings | No engagement of LSPs/providers in developing good practice on key issues | 54 |
| 3 not 9 dissemination workshops | Cost savings | Less wide dissemination | 36 |
| Short summary reports instead of full annual reports | | | 10 |

Quality management

The original brief asked:

How should the quality of the learning programme and outcomes be assured over time?

Ensuring the quality of the learning programme (as opposed to the long-term evaluation discussed above) will need to focus on whether delivery is meeting pre-determined quality standards. Quality management is therefore mainly relevant to activities that are either delivered by more than one provider, and / or by one or more providers over time. The Learning Programme activities that fall into this category are:-

- Preparation of best practice case studies
- Visits to best practice case studies
- Shadowing and mentoring
- The Plan-it Scenario Game
- Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor
- ASC regional skills advisors
- Routing the Learning Programme through regional providers of LSP support
- Speakers for regional LSP events

Quality management mechanisms will need to be built into the learning programme to ensure that these providers meet quality standards. However, given the range of possible providers outlined in the table above, this will inevitably require a mix of approaches. Quality management will also be more difficult with volunteer delivery agents (such as mentors and Government Office staff) compared with paid delivery agents (such as NRAs and those developing best practice case studies). However, quality management systems will both increase the likelihood that the Learning Programme will be effective and should significantly increase the cost effectiveness of the programme.

Possible quality management mechanisms for each of these activities are suggested in table 4 below. Among the mechanisms, we have suggested possibly forming a panel of volunteer LSPs (sometimes also involving regional LSP supporters) to provide periodic feedback on the quality of activities.

Possible quality management mechanisms for relevant LP activities

| LP Activity | Quality Issues | Quality Management Mechanism |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Best practice case studies | Case studies are: relevant to LSPs and LAAs; transferable; up to date; evidence based and not anecdotal; include evidence that they can contribute to “narrowing the gap” and achieving LAA outcomes; and address gaps in SC learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop precise criteria for the case studies and include these in the tender specification • Each case study submitted to steering group for approval with a matrix demonstrating how the case study meets the criteria. • Annual review of contract, based on how well the case studies meet the criteria. • Periodic feedback from a panel of volunteer LSPs and their supporters on the usefulness of the materials |
| Visits to BP case studies | Visits are well organised and promote effective learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop guidance for hosts and visitors on what should be provided by the hosts / expected from visitors • Ask for feedback from visitors on how well the visit met the guidance and the visitors’ learning needs. • Hold talks with host to improve visits if the feedback suggests that the visits are not working well. |
| Shadowing and mentoring | Shadowing / mentoring is well organised and promotes effective learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop guidance for participants on what both sides would do / provide • Ask for regular feedback from both sides on how well the shadowing / mentoring is working • Hold talks with both sides to improve the experience if the feedback suggests it is not working well. |
| Plan-it Scenario Game | Facilitators: make adequate preparations and adapt materials to local circumstances where required; involve and enthuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop precise standards for the facilitation of the Game, and include this in contracts / tender specifications. • Regular monitoring of facilitators to ensure that they meet these standards. PixelFountain would take responsibility for this. |

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| | participants; reinforce key learning points around sustainable communities; make links to the rest of the Learning Programme. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic feedback from a panel of volunteer LSPs and their supporters on the usefulness of the game • Annual review of facilitators' contract, based on how well the facilitators meet the standards. |
| NRAs | Following training, the NRAs use the Learning Programme materials and promote key messages around the gaps in sustainable communities learning to LSPs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic feedback from a panel of volunteer LSPs on how well the NRAs are promoting learning around the gaps in SC learning. • Offer further training to NRAs that are performing poorly. |
| ASC skills advisors | As for NRAs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic feedback from a panel of volunteer LSPs on how well the ASC advisors are promoting learning around the gaps in SC learning. • Offer further training to SCA advisors that are performing poorly. |
| Regional providers | Regional providers use the Learning Programme materials and promote key messages around the gaps in sustainable communities learning to LSPs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic feedback from a panel of volunteer LSPs on how well regional providers are promoting learning around the gaps in SC learning. • Offer training to regional providers that are performing poorly. |
| Speakers for regional events | Speakers: have good presentation and facilitation skills; have a good appreciation of the LAA outcome on which they are presenting and how it is being progressed by different LSPs; understand and explain how gaps in SC learning are relevant to the LAA outcome; are fully aware of and make links to other LP resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop precise criteria that speakers must meet • Let contracts based on these criteria, and ask tenderers to detail how they meet the criteria • Ask participants at events to complete evaluation forms based on the criteria • Review speakers' contract if feedback is poor. |

A self-sustaining learning programme

The original brief asked:

How could the programme become self-sustaining?

The Learning Programme combine:

- LSP incentivisation schemes
- Directly commissioned resources and provision
- Delivery through national and regional providers and advisors

The best way to ensure that **incentivisation** becomes self-sustaining is, as proposed, to incorporate the ASC learning standard into national LSP drivers, such as:

- The expected revised guidance to LSPs in 2006
- LSP performance management mechanisms
- LSP peer challenge

It will be more difficult to achieve self-sustaining resources and provision that are **directly commissioned**. There will be a continuing need to organise, host, and update this provision. It is very unlikely that LSPs will be persuaded to pay for provision.² Therefore the only option for making this direct provision self-sustaining would be to persuade another body to take on responsibility for funding these parts of the programme. ODPM, as the national body responsible for supporting LSPs would be the obvious choice.

The best way to ensure that delivery through **national and regional providers** becomes self-sustaining is to:

- Ensure that SC capacity and learning forms part of the proposed revised guidance to LSPs from ODPM and into future LSP performance management mechanisms
- Build the Learning Programme into training for NRAs and ASC skills advisors
- Build the capacity of regional LSP providers to address these gaps.

If this is successful it would also reduce the problem of regular changes in staff and LSP members, because national and regional LSP provision would continuously reinforce these messages.

² Research undertaken by Tribal Resourcing for Regeneration Exchange North East found no evidence that LSPs or other potential users would pay for RENE's services.

However, without continuing support from ASC, DEFRA, and ODPM it is possible if not probable that national and regional providers will default to the ODPM's primary messages for LSPs around floor targets and LAA blocks.

Therefore, there is almost certainly a need to continue to monitor how well national and regional provision is addressing the current gaps in SC learning, even after direct provision has ended. This could be done by intermittent reviews of this provision.

Appendix 1 - Draft Learning Programme objectives and outcomes

Draft Objectives

The objectives of the Learning Programme are to:

1. Develop the capacity (skills, knowledge, shared abilities, commitments and working practices) of LSPs to deliver sustainable communities, as defined in Annex A of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy. (See box below.)

2. Develop the generic skills of LSPs which are essential to their effective functioning and the delivery of sustainable development.

3. Develop the capacity of government and other LSP support agencies to provide effective, engaging and informative learning opportunities that will embed the delivery of sustainable communities into the work of LSPs.

4. Continuously improve the effectiveness of the learning programme.
This will be achieved by:

(i) Recognising, collating, analysing, disseminating and rewarding good practice where it exists, and minimising poor practice through the use of standards, quality management and advice.

(ii) Regularly evaluating how well the learning programme is meeting its objectives, and revising and improving the programme as appropriate.

The Learning Programme will build LSPs' capacity to understand and respond to the whole of the **sustainable communities agenda**, as defined in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*. According to Annex A of the Strategy:

Sustainable communities embody the principles of sustainable development.

They:

- ◇ balance and integrate the social, economic and environmental components of their community
- ◇ meet the needs of existing and future generations, and
- ◇ respect the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally to make their communities sustainable.

Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

Sustainable communities are diverse, reflecting their local circumstances. There is no standard template to fit them all. But they should be:

- 1) **Active, inclusive and safe** – fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities.
- 2) **Well run** – with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership.
- 3) **Environmentally sensitive** – providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment.
- 4) **Well designed and built** – featuring a quality built and natural environment
- 5) **Well connected** – with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services
- 6) **Thriving** with a flourishing and diverse local economy
- 7) **Well served** with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all
- 8) **Fair for everyone** including those in other communities, now and in the future

Draft Learning Outcomes

The learning programme has at its heart, a set of generic learning outcomes³.

- Knowledge and understanding
- Skills
- Attitudes and values
- Action and improvement
- Collaboration and cross disciplinary working

| AREA | GENERIC LEARNING OUTCOMES |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Knowledge and understanding | <p>Knowledge of and an understanding of how the following applies to the work of LSPs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing and integrating social, economic and environmental objectives. • Meeting the needs of future generations. • The link between local decisions and global issues • The Government’s four priorities for sustainable development: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Sustainable consumption and production ii. Climate change and energy iii. Natural resources and environment iv. Sustainable communities • National and regional targets for sustainable development |
| Skills | <p>1. Knowledge of approaches and techniques that LSPs can use to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate social, economic and environmental objectives in practice within an LSP context. • Achieve sustainable communities that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Active, inclusive and safe ▪ Well run |

³ The generic learning outcomes (GLOs) are adapted from the GLOs developed by Museums Libraries Archives http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/measuring_learning

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environmentally sensitive ▪ Well designed and built ▪ Well connected ▪ Thriving ▪ Well served ▪ Fair for everyone <p>2. Generic skills that are essential for the effective functioning of LSPs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership working • Strategic planning • Project management • Financial management |
| Attitudes and values | Individual commitment to taking action to deliver sustainable communities |
| | <p>Shared LSP commitment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take action to deliver sustainable communities • embed the principles of sustainable communities into the priorities, decisions and actions of the LSP now and into the future • work together to find solutions to sustainable communities, even when the solutions are not immediately obvious, or run counter to the 'current ways of doing things'. |
| Action and improvement | <p>Shared discussion about the issues and solutions for sustainable communities.</p> <p>Creative and innovative thinking to develop shared solutions for sustainable communities.</p> <p>Changes in the Community Strategy to better deliver sustainable communities</p> <p>Action taken by the LSP and its member organisations to better deliver sustainable communities.</p> |

**Collaboration
and cross
disciplinary
working**

Shared understanding of:

- the different and complimentary roles of LSP partners
- the range of skills and experience of the LSP partners which contribute to delivering sustainable communities.
- the need for collaboration to deliver sustainable communities.

Appendix 2 – Options for an ASC standard on LSP competencies

The Need for a Standard

At present there appears to be no standard list of “outcome” competencies for LSPs. The only advice available is in the NRU’s *Learning Curve* paper which has the following table.

Table 2: Summary of the Neighbourhood Renewal Learning Framework

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Building the knowledge base | • Building the knowledge base | Recognising and understanding what works in housing, education, worklessness, crime and health, reviving local economies and improving quality of life |
| | • Applying knowledge | Analysing problems, creating opportunities, designing solutions from the knowledge base, learning to learn |
| Developing core skills | • Organisational skills | Project appraisal and management, finance and budgeting, influencing mainstream services to make them work better, monitoring and evaluation, risk assessment and management research |
| | • Interpersonal skills | Community engagement, leadership, management of people, valuing diversity, communicating, conflict resolution, partnership working, communication |
| Changing behaviours | • Entrepreneurial behaviours | Problem solving, spotting opportunities, taking calculated risks, a 'can do' philosophy |
| | • Reflective behaviours | Evaluating effectiveness, exploring reasons for success, learning from failure |

The Egan Review identified the vital role of LSPs in promoting sustainable communities. *Securing the Future* provides a definition of sustainable communities which has been incorporated into the proposed Learning Programme objectives and outcomes in appendix 1.

However, none of these clearly identify a range of competencies against which LSPs can assess themselves.

Two options

There are **two options** for the proposed ASC standard:

1. It lists all of the essential competencies for LSPs to promote LAA outcomes and sustainable communities
2. It focuses on the first three priorities in *Securing the Future* and the current gaps in SC learning

The pros and cons of both options are summarised in the table below.

| Option | Benefits | Drawbacks |
|---------------------|--|--|
| All LAA outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More logical for LSPs to assess themselves against total skill requirement• Might carry more credibility with LSPs and ODPM• (Possibly) more likely to be adopted as part of LSP performance management and peer challenge | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Could become very long and unwieldy• SC gaps are forgotten in the wider assessment• Probably would need to be agreed with wider stakeholders, including ODPM, and therefore likely to take longer to develop |
| Gaps in SC learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would help LSPs to focus on gaps in SC learning• Shorter and easier to use• Could be developed fairly quickly | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May not be used by LSPs because it does not carry the weight of a widely endorsed standard |

What would it look like?

LSPs are driven by floor targets and Local Area Agreements. The former have been incorporated into the LAA blocks. Therefore we recommend that the ASC standard is structured around the LAA blocks (and the floor targets within these) and the other cross-cutting issues identified in the ODPM's LAA Guidance.

An example of the kind of competencies that might be included for SC learning gaps under the LAA Economic Development and Enterprise block is given below.

An awareness of:-

1. What measures are available to promote more resource efficient production, including reducing energy use and waste production by firms.
2. How to encourage reduction in freight journeys and other travel generated by firms and other employers
3. Which environmental industries are expected to grow in the future
4. Which occupations will need to acquire new skills to reduce climate change emissions, adapt to climate change, and achieve more sustainable production and consumption

The Self-Assessment Tool and Further Support

The Standard could be structured as a series of questions to help LSPs to assess their current skills and knowledge. This would then lead into an improvement planning section under which LSPs identify how to improve weaknesses in their skills and learning.

Finally LSPs could be directed to the other Learning Programme resources that are available, with advice on how to access them. The Learning Programme resources, such as best practice case studies and visits, could be structured around the competencies listed in the ASC standard.

Appendix 3 – Current arrangements for regional LSP support

The arrangements for regional LSP support are very variable as shown in the table on the next page. In some cases the Skills and Knowledge programme is targeted firmly at NRF LSPs, in other cases, generally where there are few NRF LSPs in the region, Skills and Knowledge funded events are opened up to all LSPs.

In addition to the support provided below, Government Office geographical teams provide one to one support to LSPs. This support is mainly provided to NRF LSPs, and is based around the LSP Performance Management Framework and LSPs' improvement plans.

Current Arrangements for Regional LSP Support

| | GENERAL LSP SUPPORT | SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE / NR BASED |
|----|--|---|
| SW | There is no specific GO capacity building for LSPs, but GO representatives sometimes attend county networks. There is no one person who deals with the S&K programme, it is done one to one on a geographical basis. They have geographically based teams who meet with individual LSPs to provide briefings on emerging issues, such as LAAs. Paul Jones GOSW | |
| SE | The GO used to do a lot of networking for LSPs using Skills & Knowledge funding. This included partnership events, thematic events and annual conferences. But now they must focus their S&K activities around the needs of the 4 NRF funded LSPs in the SE, although they can invite other LSPs to events. The S&K budget is also much smaller this year. Consequently they have supported a bid from 2 LAs to the ODPM capacity building fund for a local observatory, which could support LSPs as well as LAs. They have had approval in principle but are awaiting ministerial approval. The first element would be a scoping study to identify the support that exists in the region, what works and what doesn't. The most that the GO can do now for non NR LSPs is to maintain a newsletter, but this can be used to promote events and resources. ODPM may fund an LSP conference in February / March 2006. David Hobbs. | |
| LO | <i>Still awaiting a response to an enquiry to Lorraine Fisher GOL is responsible for the S&K programme. We understand that GOL have contracted Shared Intelligence to manage an LSP network.</i> | |
| WM | A range of support has been provided to LSPs through the LAA Development programme. The LGA, with funds from the regional S&K programme and also from national resources, delivered a regional support programme around the LAA themes. Support focusing on Performance Improvement processes using the Audit Commission has been provided to Round 1 and 2 LAA LSPs. In the final quarter of the year (Jan to Mar) this work will be intensified to support all Phase 2 LAAs. | GOWM use S&K funding to support NRF funded LSPs. Support is provided through L&PD –(leadership and partnership development) for Networking, “How To” digests and bulletins, a comprehensive induction pack, bespoke events and targeted one to one work with priority NR partnerships. All information is publicly accessible via the Regenwm (RCE) website. LSPs also receive support with the use of evidence/data, floor target action planning through SPAR and SELD, two S&K funded initiatives. GOWM has run a series of workshops using NRAs – including Strategic Commissioning, SSCF, Performance Management. Specialist NRA support has been used around equalities during the PMF process. Support activities are overseen by a voluntary sector secondee funded through the S&K programme. GOWM also uses NRA Assignment Managers in all (but one) NR LSPs Non NRF funded LSPs do not receive any direct support through S&K. Annette Pearson. |

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| EM | <p>GOEM are currently using the S&K fund on targeted performance improvement for NR LSPs and on LSP networks more widely. GOEM has recently appointed Regeneration East Midlands to run a LSP network. Upcoming events cover: performance management; use of data sources; information sharing; health; crime. As the contract has only just started, REM will contact LSPs to ask them about their priorities. The REM contract will be renewed annually. Janet Lowe GOEM / Susan Hallsworth REM.</p> | |
| EE | <p>There are very few NR LSPs in EE. There is an LSP network for all LSPs which is jointly run by GOEE (John Coolbear) and EERA. EERA manage the network and hold quarterly meetings. At each meeting they try to reflect the current agenda. For example the next meeting is about the new consultation on the future of Community Strategies and LSPs. They will also be looking at LAA blocks, so the January meeting will discuss economic development and enterprise. Lorna Compton (EERA).</p> <p>Inspire East (RCE) is interested in working with LSPs, but not yet doing so. Contact is Jen Windgate 0223 713 900 based at EEDA.</p> | |
| YH | <p>Last year they had a wide support network for LSPs with action learning sets, looking at shared solutions etc. Although the funding was for NR LSPs, events were available to all LSPs. The network was managed by Shared Intelligence. The GO also employed someone from the Audit Commission to help LSPs with performance management. This has all stopped due to a reduction in funding from the S&K programme and with a new focus on working with LSPs one to one to support performance improvement. GO submitted a funding bid for a new LSP network, but this was turned down. She intends to resubmit the bid to Delivery Support in the NRU. Kath Linley GOYH</p> <p>The RCE is officially located in Yorkshire Forward but is not functioning.</p> | |
| NW | <p>The GO have been running a LSP network for all LSPs and publish an LSP newsletter. However, the shift this year is for the S&K programme to be targeted on NR LSPs based on identified needs in their improvement programme. Therefore the wider LSP network is short of resources and struggling to keep going, but there are events planned. The last newsletter was published in May 2005, but another is in preparation. Groundwork has seconded someone to GONW to work with LSPs to raise environmental issues. Gillian Roberts GONW</p> | <p>As well as the wider LSP network, GONW hold workshops for NR LSPs, e.g. this year have had workshops on the Performance Management Framework and LAAs. GONW also commission RENEW (RCE contact Hazel Catt) to do particular pieces of work with LSPs. For examples they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting groups of LSPs that identified governance and diversity as areas where they would like help • Working one-to-one with LSP co-ordinators to identify and fill their knowledge gaps (Raising our Game) <p>David Lawson GONW</p> |
| NE | <p>Previously had an LSP network run by Shared Intelligence, but it no longer operates. There are self organised county networks for Tyne & Wear, Northumberland, Tees Valley and Co Durham.</p> | <p>All of the S&K programme is managed by Ignite, the new RCE that is based in One North East. Ignite will have a heavy on-line component, but there will also be direct support through a regional learning programme targeted at</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | | <p>NR LSPs. In future Ignite will be running events for NR LSPs. The aim is to fill gaps in learning provision in the region. Learning will be targeted around the identified needs of LSPs. There is a gap in SD learning provision for LSPs, but Ignite is working with Sustaine (led by NERA and Durham CC) to fill that gap. Barry Errington GONE.</p> |
|--|--|---|

Views on the Learning Programme by providers of regional LSP support

During discussions with a range of regional providers of LSP support, the following common messages emerged.

- Most LSPs will only be interested in support that helps them to achieve their floor targets or LAA outcomes
- Any case studies must include evidence that they are effective (in achieving floor targets and LAA outcomes) and not anecdotal
- Some LSP staff and members may be persuaded to participate in visits within the region, but are unlikely to travel outside of their region
- There is a shortage of good practice examples that illustrate how progress against one floor target could have spin-offs for others.
- There is a gap in support and provision around the first three priorities in *Securing the Future*.
- All regional providers expressed an interest in having access to on-line resources based around good practice for promoting sustainable communities within floor targets and LAA blocks
- All Government Offices expressed a willingness to promote the Learning Programme to LSPs, through: LSP networks; GO websites; GO LSP newsletters
- There a number of mechanisms for feeding information to GOs and NRAs, including: periodic Government Office LSP network meetings organised by ODPM; a newsletter sent to GOs once a month that highlights what is relevant for LSPs; a Skills and Knowledge newsletter; a closed Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors and Government Offices website. These could be used to make GOs and NRAs more aware of the Learning Programme.
- Some regional providers would be interested in participating in a steering group to develop resources that they could use
- Government Offices are also responsible for the local government capacity building programme and some local authorities are using this to build the capacity of LSPs.