

101431215

Revision 01

## EMPLOYMENT, SKILLS AND EDUCATION WORKING GROUP

### NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Meeting:	15 <sup>th</sup> January 2025
Location:	MS Teams
Chair:	Michael Gray (SCC)
Attendees:	SZC – Chris Young (CY), Fiona McMillan (FM) – Obs, Guy Hazlehurst (GH) – Obs Johnathan Reynolds (JR) – Obs ESC – Jo Probitts (JP) SCC – Michael Gray (MG), James Chandler (JC), Chris Dashper (CD) – Obs
Apologies:	

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#### Meeting Notes:

#### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF PREVIOUS ACTIONS

#### Actions raised during the previous meeting:

#### Resourcing Change:

- JC represents the Regional Skills Coordination Function

#### Safety message

- Group discusses the safety message around diet and nutrition, and how to encourage a healthier lifecycle across workforce, on site, and at home.

#### Minutes and Actions from Previous Meeting

Date Raised	Ref.	Description	Lead	Date Due
5/09/2024	1	RW to share Protocol Document with the group once finalised	SZC	Sep 2024
5/09/2024	2	RW to confirm SZC preference for protective marking and to ensure this is set out in the protocol document	SZC	Sep 2024
5/09/2024	3	NFM to add line to the ASIP that the first action is to establish the thematic group for Q4 2024 with grant process to be launched Q1 2025. Everything else to then be shifted accordingly	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	4	NFM to add comment around 'in accordance with data sharing protocol' in NEET information	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	5	Future workshop to be arranged to lift the lid on what we are asking contractors to report on, how we are doing it through the portal and how we are doing it alongside ESG.	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	6	NFM to update wording in relation to apprenticeships to clarify the 540 for Suffolk is the hard target and the 2/3 for the East Region as a whole is an ambition	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	7	MG recommended that while ASEC eligibility should consider regional needs, the wording should be revised to prevent the implication that the fund is universally applicable	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	8	MG to revisit wording on projects eligible for the ASEC Fund and skillsets	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	9	Group have agreed to two construction phases of ASEC being opened to allocation but need to agree on the amount to be transferred from the project to SCC	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	10	Confirmation of amounts identified to be released and allocated from Employment Outreach Fund	ESEWG	Next meeting
5/09/2024	11	Regional skills need assessment to be finalised and sent to the ERG next week	ESEWG	September 2024

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- Action 2: Meeting minutes are marked as 'Not Protectively Marked' as default.
- Action 11: Regional Skills Need Assessment will be made public once finalised

#### ESEWG Plan Review (JC)

- JC provides update on the annual ASIP plan, stating that the group is slightly behind schedule on some matters, such as launching the ASEC, but there are no materials concerns.
- Since the last meeting, they the ASEC fund has been soft-launched, making funding available for the first two phases and welcoming stage 1 project proposals, as well as the first outreach thematic group being held. Recent resource changes have increased the ESEWG's capacity and expertise, boosting momentum in the Regional Skills Coordination Function.
- The ASEC soft launch aims to promote funding and idea generation by targeting potential projects that could benefit from the fund (particularly colleges). A comprehensive communications plan for the hard launch is being developed to convey important information such as deadlines and regional needs.
- Strong connections have been established with colleges regarding curriculum planning and ASEC requirements, enabling effective coordination to align with the needs of the colleges.
- JP inquired about ESEWG's strategy to prevent timeline slippage and ensure colleges prioritise applications without a deadline, seeking a balance between managing application volume during the soft launch, and also generating interest; JC responded that discussions are ongoing to address colleges' challenges with ASEC requirements, emphasising the need for timely support as stage 1 applications begin, starting with curriculum planning and extending to broader risk assessments.
- JP inquired about getting the other two funds back on track. JC explained that ASEC is the most intensive as it is a grant program, while the other two funds follow more familiar processes.
- MG emphasised the importance of ongoing dialogue with potential ASEC applicants, urging them to submit their ideas for funding as soon as possible. The soft launch aims to create a pipeline of ideas for collaboration with various applicants, regardless of whether they end up receiving ASEC funding. Ideas submitted through the expression of interest (Eoi) may end up being directed toward other funding sources.

#### Skills Funding Programmes Update (CY)

##### ASEC Fund

- CD noted that the ASEC will provide insights into future interest in this and other programs. Applicants will be directed to the appropriate programs during the filtration process, making this a useful tool for the delivery process.
- The soft launch has been acknowledged by principal FE colleges, indicating early interest.
- Preparation for Phase 2 is crucial, with a focus on gathering all necessary documents for the transition from the Eoi stage to the formal process.
- CD is ensuring readiness for grant management processes and addressing potential internal challenges, such as subsidy control and VAT, to prevent complications later on.

##### Employment Outreach

- CY acknowledged that the Employment Outreach is behind schedule, but progress is being made in preparing for outreach, with ongoing discussions about procurement arrangements.

##### Bursary Fund

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- The Bursary Fund will be shaped by the intent and content emerging from the EoI process, which will provide insights into its structure.
- A program plan is currently being developed.
- By the next meeting, the goal is to provide more details on all three funds and to have cleared the EoI for the first couple of ASEC applications, outlining expectations moving forward.

#### Funding Position (MG)

- Currently, no new transfers are needed beyond what has already been agreed upon, as there are no active projects with allocated funds. The transfer between the project and SCC (Schedule 7) is scheduled to occur soon. This is a significant milestone as it will be the first transfer of actual funds related to Schedule 7.
- GH expressed concerns about addressing funding gaps and avoiding duplication in projects. MG clarified that the ASIP will help outline funding priorities annually, allowing for a flexible approach to requests and preventing unwanted commitments. FM noted that thematic and FEH groups should contribute to identifying and discussing these funding needs.
- MG highlighted that employment outreach aims to fill gaps and prepare individuals to work through a coordinated thematic group.
- GH highlighted that a key measure of success for expressions of interest (EoIs) is their ability to attract supply chain contributions, as bids lacking this support will be weaker. MG added that EoIs will prompt analysis of supply chain needs and initiate discussions for effective fund utilisation.
- JC highlighted that there is a detailed workflow for assessing applications based on their strategic fit, which triggers support from the Regional Skills Coordination Function. Projects that do not fit can be directed to other funds, while ESEWG will assist with those that have partial fit.
- Pre-application discussions will ensure open communication with training providers, colleges, and universities to address gaps and clarify questions before submissions
- GH and JC emphasised the importance of facilitating connections between suppliers and projects, making it a priority for ESEWG and the coordination function to ensure that these relationships provide value to suppliers to encourage their support.
- MG highlighted the need for investment to align with both the ASEC investment piece and the needs of incoming projects. He noted the necessity of communicating potential synergies between supplier capabilities and project requirements. By identifying needs in ASEC expressions of interest, opportunities can arise for discussions with the supply chain regarding investment. MG recommends coordinating with JC to clarify the implementation of this approach.

#### **Action – MG and JC to coordinate on the approach of identifying needs in ASEC expressions of interest, to facilitate discussions with the supply chain regarding investment.**

- Establishing connections with alliances and supply chains is a priority for ESEWG and the coordination function.

#### ASIP Annual Cycle

- September: Finalisation of the ASIP agreement
- December: Review funding applications and agree projects to support
- March: review progress of funded projects
- June: Agree ASIP priorities for coming year. Review updated early workforce information

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- MG highlighted the need for a quarterly review of funding applications and project performance, rather than relying solely on an annual cycle. He emphasised that responding to needs will not follow a coordinated annual pattern. Instead, it is essential to recognise that each quarter will require a review of the applications and pipeline as they develop.
- Additionally, understanding the monitoring of project performance is crucial. Therefore, to make this information manageable, it should be segmented into quarterly monitoring rather than waiting for an annual review to approve funding applications, as the current cycle suggests. While some elements, such as the approval of the ASIP and regional skills assessments, occur annually, a more dynamic approach is needed.
- JR emphasised the necessity of incorporating the assessment of regional needs and formal evaluation monitoring into the ASIP process. He suggested that these evaluations should ideally align with the September and June timelines to inform the September approval. Additionally, JR expressed a willingness to further develop the ASIP review process outside of the meeting to ensure it is more detailed and effective.

#### Action – Group to further develop ASIP review process to ensure it is detailed and effective

##### ASIP Q1 Update – Establishing the Review Process

- JC presented the review process, and emphasised the need to establish a formalised quarterly review process for ASIP as the main priority of the meeting
  - ASIP review process content: quarterly KPI reviews, funding project reports, stakeholder involvement, and actionable insights.
  - KPI content: skills funding, and broader socio economic KPIs (outcomes).
- JR emphasised the need to clarify roles and responsibilities for those supporting the review, ensuring that the Regional Skills Coordination Function serves as the lead author while maintaining a proper review structure. This will be the first official quarterly review since the ESWG's launch, and it was noted that there are currently no KPIs or projects available for assessment.
- CY suggests adding extra steps into the review process to evaluate both the delivery and outcomes of projects, while FM recommends including measures to assess the impact of these initiatives. MG stated that as discussions progress and the proposal pipeline develops, performance and impact of funded projects will be assessed, as well as the overall review process.

##### Decision

- MG presented the ESEWG's decision to approve the Regional Skills Coordination Function principles and protocol document, which aims to clarify the operation and objectives of regional skills coordination for current and future members.
- Approving the document acknowledges its existence but allows for future revisions.
- MG requested feedback and proposed minor language changes:
  - Change "support region's major infrastructure projects" to "support SZC and regional infrastructure projects" to emphasise the focus on SZC.
  - Update "regional skills coordination function governance and operational board" to "regional skills coordination function-led groups" for broader applicability.
- Next steps include creating an externally facing summary of the document and developing an internal delivery plan to clarify roles and timelines for the Regional Skills Coordination Function.
- The group agreed to proceed with the protocol document.

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#### ESEWG Forward Plan

- JC presented the working plan for the year, focusing on outcomes for the upcoming ESEWG meetings in March, June, and September.
- For the March meeting, the goals are to finalise the composition of the remaining thematic groups, ensure effective mobilisation of these groups, and position the remaining funds effectively.
- They should be close to procuring the Outreach Fund and advancing partnerships for the Bursary Fund, with hopes of receiving a few ASEC applications.
- The June meeting will have a significant agenda, addressing the ASIP plan, the quarterly review process, and setting priorities based on the regional skills needs assessment, along with updated early workforce information.
- JR emphasised the need to clarify the ASIP annual cycle and its impact on ESEWG governance and meeting delivery, requesting offline refinement of this plan.

**Action – Group to refine the ESEWG forward plan to clarify the ASIP annual cycle and its impact on governance and meeting delivery**

#### AOB

- Terms of Reference: The ToR have been signed off by Economic Review Group.

#### Actions raised during the meeting:

Date Raised	Ref.	Description	Lead	Date Due
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15/01/2025	1	MG and JC to coordinate on the approach of identifying needs in ASEC expressions of interest, to facilitate discussions with the supply chain regarding investment.	ESEWG	06/03/2025
15/01/2025	2	Group to further develop ASIP review process to ensure it is detailed and effective	ESEWG	06/03/2025
15/01/2025	3	Group to refine the ESEWG forward plan to clarify the ASIP annual cycle and its impact on governance and meeting delivery	ESEWG	06/03/2025

**Author: Caitlin Murphy (SZC)**