

PROTECTIVE MARKING

EMPLOYMENT, SKILLS AND EDUCATION GROUP

Meeting Type:	DoO Governance Group Meeting
Date:	26 th June 2025
Venue:	MS Teams
Meeting Chair:	Michael Gray (SCC)
Attendees:	SZC: Guy Hazlehurst (GH), Jen Mills (JM) – Observer, Fiona McMillan (FM) – Observer, Johnathan Reynolds (JR) – Observer SCC: Michael Gray (MG), James Chandler (JC), Chris Dashper (CD) – Observer ESC: Jo Probitts (JP)
Apologies:	
Meeting Record produced by:	Caitlin Murphy (SZC)
Next Meeting Date:	18 th September 2025

Summary / Key Discussion

Meeting Notes:

Safety message

- Group discussed mobile use when on the move

Open Actions raised during previous meetings:

Date Raised	Ref.	Description	Lead	Date Due
05/09/2025	1	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
04/04/2025	2	ESEWG to have an offline discussion regarding the creation of a developer forum and determine the best approach	ESEWG	Closed
04/04/2025	3	CD to share an updated record of conversations with potential ASEC applicants to provide an overview of the status of Eols and the progression of leads	SCC	Closed
04/04/2025	4	ESEWG to refresh existing ASEC slides to better outline the benefits and funding opportunities	CD	Closed

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04/04/2025	5	Group to discuss how to better emphasise and communicate expectations for deadlines associated with ASEC fund Eols	ESEWG	Next meeting
04/04/2025	6	JC to continue embedding of the quarterly review process as per the Deed of Obligations ensuring a consistent reporting framework	JC	Closed
04/04/2025	7	ESEWG to determine how they will report back to ERG, what objectives they aim to achieve with these updates, and ensure they are meeting the requirements outlined in the DoO	ESEWG	Closed
04/04/2025	8	A discussion will be held at the next informal ESEWG session to address the risk register and the process for formalising it into an official document	ESEWG	Next meeting

- **Action 1:** The group agrees that workshops on data monitoring and supply chain obligations would be beneficial. GH will coordinate the content, and JC will handle the scheduling.

Action – GH to coordinate the content for the data monitoring and supply chain workshops, while JC will manage the scheduling

- **Action 2:** covered in meeting
- **Action 3:** covered in meeting
- **Action 4:** covered in meeting
- **Action 5:** ongoing
- **Action 6:** closed
- **Action 7:** closed
- **Action 8:** ongoing

ESEWG Forward Plan Review:

- The end of the first annual plan is approaching, with the Q3 review scheduled as the transition to Q4 begins. A critical deadline is set for late August to early September for ASIP approval by the ESWG and ERG, along with the Regional Skills Needs Framework.
- The employment outreach and skills thematic groups have conducted their initial meetings, yielding several valuable outcomes that will inform the development of the Employment Outreach Fund.
- This ESEWG session serves as the last formal meeting to review and comment on the draft ASIP and RSNF before approval deadline.
- Funds: timeframes have been adjusted
- JC emphasised the importance of maintaining a rolling 12-month planning cycle, with a detailed lookahead to be drafted before September.
- FM suggested involving the FEH forum to gather feedback on the ASIP to ensure their buy-in. JC concurred, noting its relevance for both FEH and Employment Outreach. This raised the question of how to effectively collate feedback and incorporate it into the ASIP.

Action – Group to schedule ESEWG meetings in the calendar for post-September 2025

Discussion around ASIP and RSNF

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- Rationale for ASIP revisions:
- JC identified key themes from the informal ESEWG discussions on how to enhance the second ASIP:
 - Enhance knowledge, specificity, and visibility of project skills needs over the next 12 months, shifting from a high-level strategic document to one with clear outputs and detailed information.
 - Reduce fragmentation of evidence on skills needs regionally and by NSIP project, consolidating various sources effectively.
 - Include retrospective and prospective analyses to capture successes, challenges, and lessons learned for iterative development.
 - Improve transparency and accountability of ASIP actions.
 - Align more coherently with regional skills needs.
- The group agreed that the ASIP should address both national and regional skill needs, acknowledging that skills gaps in the SZC are indicative of broader national trends; it should integrate a high-level national perspective with detailed regional analysis to provide a well-rounded view of skill requirements.
- The group agreed that the ASIP needs to include mechanisms for retrospective and prospective evaluation of targets, ensuring clarity on data sources and consistency in defining key data points.
- GH highlighted that the ASIP should include clear allocations of stakeholder responsibilities to ensure that the delivery does not rest solely on the SZC and councils, potentially involving thematic groups.
- JR raised that the ASIP must align with the updated education economic partner MOUs, ensuring coherence in delivery, responsibility, accountability, and evaluation, while also considering social partner MOUs that will require review soon. The ASIP should establish linkages with ongoing initiatives, such as the skills charter and collaborations with CITB and ECITB, focusing on labour market intelligence and information sharing.
- MG adds that there is a need to assess whether the timelines for writing the ASIP and the MOUs align to ensure feasibility in the planning process. Additionally, a workshop is essential for all parties to gain a shared understanding of data sources and monitoring, which will clarify evaluation processes in the ASIP.
- JC added that existing protocols and principles should be integrated into the ASIP, MOUs, and skills charter to ensure coordinated stakeholder activities.

ASIP Content:

- JC highlighted the need for informal sessions in the coming months to coordinate efforts and support ASIP development.
- A structured plan should accompany the ASIP's development, with assigned sections to ensure targets are met.
- MG raised the need for a section on local delivery infrastructure, which would address the role of the FEHE forum and outline expectations. This would reinforce the message that the responsibility for delivering the ASIP extends beyond just the SZC and councils.

Rationale for RSNF revisions

- Static model: Initially framework was not designed to continuously evolve.
- Evidence gaps: some skills were identified as high level, without clarity on specific requirements making it difficult to shape targeted provision.
- Fragmented Intelligence: There was no centralised mechanism to track which evidence supported specific skills or to identify areas requiring further investigation.
- Lack of Actionability: The original RSNF was not structured to generate actionable steps to address evidence gaps or to proactively enhance system understanding.

How the new RSNF will be utilised

- Part One: Establish a Regional Skills Evidence Repository to provide a centralised and structured evidence base.
- Part Two: Conduct a Skills Delivery Analysis to evaluate existing training, identify providers, and pinpoint gaps.

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- Part Three: Create a Skills Needs Record, which will compile and summarise findings related to skills needs in a profile-style format.
- Part Four: Implement Skills Intelligence Actions (SIA), consisting of short, defined tasks aimed at enhancing evidence where skills needs are weak, outdated, or unclear.
- There is potential for this framework to serve as a linking document, connecting various.
- The outcome of these components will be insights that enhance the understanding of skills needs.
- Regarding timelines, the inputs for this framework are dynamic, allowing it to adapt to emerging skills needs as required. This flexibility helps prevent bottlenecks and enables prioritisation of skills needs effectively.

ASIP and RSNF Development Timeline

- Approval is anticipated in early September.
- In August, the focus will be on finalising the draft and navigating the necessary approval channels.
- Between now and early August, the first draft should be developed, feedback incorporated, and the needs framework enhanced with a clear rationale. Stakeholder feedback should also be gathered for inclusion in the report.
- Formal ESEWG Role and Input
 - Validate the rationale and approach for the ASIP and RSNF.
 - Identify priorities, gaps, and refinements.
 - Assist in finalising the ASIP for September approval

Quarterly ASIP Report

ASIP Objectives for the Year

- Skills Development and Enhancement: Implement a structured approach to improve the skills of the local workforce.
- Funding Allocation and Management: Efficiently manage funding from ASEC to the employment outreach fund and bursary programs.
- Partnership and Collaboration: Strengthen partnerships to enhance collective efforts.
- Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish robust mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives.
- Employment Opportunities: Maximise employment opportunities for local residents.

Key Achievements

- Strategic Coordination: Operationalised the RSCF Principles and Protocols, integrating the coordination function into local planning processes.
- Improved ASIP and RSNF Development: Enhanced development processes based on lessons learned and feedback.
- Mobilisation of Skills Funds: Progressing with ASEC Expressions of Interest, distributing the bursary fund to colleges, and refining the employment outreach specification and ASEC mechanisms.
- Increased Stakeholder Engagement: Expanded engagement with developers and authorities beyond Suffolk.
- Provider Coordination: The FEHE forum has refined its processes, with the assistant principal group evolving into a formalised entity.
- Outreach and Thematic Repositioning: Focused on skills infrastructure, youth engagement, and apprenticeships.
- Refocus of the FEHE Forum: Clarified the forum's purpose and aligned it with the assistant principal group.

Challenges

- Testing RSCF's Convening Power: The effectiveness of RSCF's convening power is still under evaluation, with ongoing efforts to engage developers and stakeholders while building credibility and demonstrating value.

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- ASEC Application Process: The application process for ASEC needs to be clarified to ensure it is clear for applicants.
- Supply Chain Alignment: Strengthening connections with the SZC supply chain, particularly regarding ASEC commitments, is a challenge.
- Monitoring and Evaluation Limitations: Current monitoring is hindered by a lack of quantitative outputs. Establishing a reporting mechanism for quarterly reviews and the ASIP will improve clarity.
- Alignment of Project Needs and Regional Ambitions: Clarifying the region's goals and ambitions, especially for the SZC and other NSIPs, is essential for ensuring alignment.

Next Quarter – Key Decisions and Actions

- Priority: Approve and publish ASIP 2025 and RSNF.
- Enhance the evidence base for the ASIP.
- Decide on outcome for first tranche of ASEC projects
- Launch the Employment Outreach Fund.
- Transfer the remaining Bursary Funds.
- Reevaluate thematic groups and begin structured tracking of outputs and outcomes.
- Deliver the ITB Skills Charter.
- FM proposed the formation of an apprenticeship group to engage supply chain interests. JC emphasised the need to assess requirements and determine the appropriate format for discussions, whether as a formal group, report, or other initiative. MG highlighted the importance of exploring how to initiate these discussions in the next quarter.
- MG raised Major Infrastructure Forum, which ESEWG is intending to take part in. JC to investigate and commit clear action plan once brief has been developed

Action – JC to investigate and commit clear action plan for Major Infrastructure Forum

ASEC Fund Grant Programme Manual (CD)

- This manual is the result of an informal group focused on the processes behind ASIP, governance, decision-making, and outlining how these elements should function and flow.
- CD ran through the decision-making and governance structure, detailing the phases of the application and grant award process. He sought to align with the group on these processes.
- GH emphasised the importance of regional collaboration and sustainability in Eols. Even if bids meet regional needs, there should be evidence of collaboration and potential usage by others. He believes that full proposals should include details on regional partnerships and resilience.
- FM supported this idea and suggests incorporating the term "deliverability" to demonstrate how feasible these Eols are.
- MG emphasised the importance of recognising how the process will work between phases (civils and MEH).
- The group agreed that credible MEH bids could be considered in future rounds.
- GH asked what it would take to advance MEH funding without stifling interest. MG confirmed that they can highlight the desire to bring forward MEH funding in the next ASIP, which ERG can approve.
- MG noted the distinction between fully funding projects and preparing them for future funding, emphasising the need for careful management of project interest through RSCF.
- MG noted that the action is to finalise communication strategies within the informal ESEWG to address applicants' concerns about lead times.

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Action – Group to finalise communication strategies within the informal ESEWG to address ASEC Fund applicants' concerns about lead times

- MG noted the need to clarify what will be presented to ESEWG for decision-making. Eols will generate a longlist of projects aligned with ASEC fund objectives, followed by a detailed assessment of each program. Understanding ASEC's overall investment program is essential for informed funding decisions. CD will present this information organised by skillset and phase. JR raised the review frequency and the necessity for formal cut-offs, which MG acknowledged as important for the next round.

ASEC

- CD proposed to finalise discussions to accept the investment paper mechanism and ensure alignment on ASEC investment as a distinct entity. CD presented the flowchart for ASEC and ASEC approval and sought the group's feedback on its structure.
- JR highlighted challenges in coordinating relationships between colleges, providers, and suppliers from the SZC side. SZC are addressing these relationship challenges.
- MG stressed the need to clarify roles and responsibilities in the processes to ensure effective communication regarding the ASEC Intervention (Grant) and ASEC Investment flowchart. It's crucial to define who does what, when, and what triggers these actions.
- CD will continue developing the program manual and ensure it cross-references the ASEC investment and flowchart to create a cohesive framework.

Overview of other funds

- Current Status of EOLs: Eols have been received, and more submissions are currently awaited. CD will continue refining the submitted EOLs and will also explore mechanisms related to the MEH side.
- Employment Outreach Fund:
 - This initiative has been on hold while addressing ASEC investments, but readiness to release the outreach proposal into the mainstream is approaching.
- Bursary Fund
 - A payment voucher is ready to disburse this year's bursary to one college.
- Funding position: MG noted that no in-year transfers are required at this stage between the project and SCC.

ESEWG Forward Plan Updates

- JC emphasised the need to refresh the plan, particularly regarding the funds and their current status.
- The ASIP is on track with its timeline.
- A key focus is to look beyond September. An action item is to begin populating a rolling 12-month lookahead.

Action – Group to begin populating a rolling 12-month lookahead for the ESEWG plan extending beyond September

Actions agreed in meeting:

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04/04/2025	2	A discussion will be held at the next informal ESEWG session to address the risk register and the process for formalising it into an official document	ESEWG	Next meeting
26/06/2025	3	GH to coordinate the content for the data monitoring and supply chain workshops, while JC will manage the scheduling	GH & JC	Next meeting
26/06/2025	4	Group to schedule ESEWG meetings in the calendar for post-September 2025	ESEWG	Next meeting
26/06/2025	5	JC to investigate and commit clear action plan for Major Infrastructure Forum	JC	Next meeting
26/06/2025	6	Group to finalise communication strategies within the informal ESEWG to address ASEC Fund applicants' concerns about lead times	ESEWG	Next meeting
26/06/2025	7	Group to begin populating a rolling 12-month lookahead for the ESEWG plan extending beyond September	ESEWG	Next meeting