

Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs)

Evidence Guidance

[Supplementary guidance for the SAPs Analytical Toolkit]

February 2020

DRAFT



Department
for Education

Contents

Introduction	3
Important issues to consider	4
Role of SAPs	4
Sharing outputs	4
General Data Protection Regulation	4
A. General recommendations	5
Telling a story	5
Using summaries	5
Linking evidence and action plans	5
B. Developing an effective action plan	6
Identify actions for each priority	6
Refining the plan to be more specific and timebound	6
Example Action Plan Structure:	7
C. Example of how to structure your evidence effectively	9
1. Overview of your area	9
Overarching ambition	9
Key features of the area	9
2. Area evidence base	10
The current skills landscape	10
Gap analysis	10
Emerging priorities	11
3. Priority areas	12
Assessing priority areas	12
Outlining priorities	12
4. Action plan	13
Action plan overview	13
Monitoring and evaluation	14
Annex A: Sectoral approach	15
Explain your choice of sectors	15
Consider an occupational approach	15
Ensure your documents are joined-up	15
Consider developing a single action plan	15

Introduction

This document has been designed to complement the existing SAPs [analytical toolkit](#) which outlines the key stages of SAPs analysis. The SAPs Programme Team have identified that SAPs have developed extensive evidence bases and that the impact of this analysis could be enhanced by developing a stronger narrative. Making clear to stakeholders what the data shows and highlighting clear headline messages will help build SAPs influence and ensure the local skills priorities identified are data-driven and informed by their evidence base.

The following document has been developed drawing on best practice from SAPs which have developed effective action plans and is intended to provide guidance for how you may wish to structure your evidence base. However, this is not prescriptive, and we would expect that each area will tailor the content as they see fit so that it best suits their needs.

This guidance starts with general points on how to develop an effective narrative, before taking a more in-depth look at action plans, as this was identified as one of the key areas for further development in the recent progress review. The final section of the guidance explains a possible structure for the evidence base, including the rationale for each section and prompts to consider. We understand that some areas have opted to take a sectoral approach to their analysis, and have provided specific guidance for this in Annex A. We would also encourage those focusing on sectors to consider taking a cross-sector, occupational approach to the analysis.

This guidance is a working document and we would welcome feedback on what approaches have or have not been successful in your experience. Please contact the SAPs Programme Team on sap.programme@education.gov.uk if you have any comments or suggestions.

Important issues to consider

As you continue to develop your SAP and have influence in the local area, there are some important issues which should be considered:

Role of SAPs

SAPs should be aware that providers are subject to competition law and must comply with such law when having regard to SAP recommendations on local provision. SAPs make recommendations as to local skills priorities and propose actions plans. However, decisions as to how these priorities should be addressed or how these actions plans should implemented (for example, decisions as to the type and quantity of courses to be delivered or the number of learner places to be made available by a provider) are the responsibility of the providers.

Sharing outputs

As set out in the [analytical toolkit](#), we encourage SAPs to consider how they can “*share analysis and best practice, as widely and transparently as possible*”, either through publishing analysis and action plans, or sharing these documents with local stakeholders.

General Data Protection Regulation

You should ensure that personal data is processed and stored in accordance with GDPR regulations. Further information on GDPR can be found in this [guide to GDPR](#).

A. General recommendations

There are a number of general points we would encourage you to consider in order to strengthen the narrative of your analysis:

Telling a story



- Ensuring that the main body of the report contains only analysis that makes a case for change will help 'tell the story' of your evidence. Supplementary analysis can be included in an annex to ensure the main evidence base remains concise and easy to digest for stakeholders.
- Using graphs and charts can be an effective way of visually communicating key trends, particularly when accompanied by supporting commentary which explicitly states what they show. Although data tables can provide useful information, we recommend using these sparingly in the main report and considering whether they may be better suited to an annex, as they take more time to digest and extract key messages from.

Using summaries



- Including a summary for each section of your report helps draw out the key issues and implications. This will draw attention to the most important findings and thereby help develop a logical narrative leading to the chosen priorities.
- Depending on the length of your evidence base, it may be helpful to also include an overview of all key points for stakeholders who may not have time to focus on the detailed underlying analysis.

Linking evidence and action plans



- Presenting the evidence alongside the strategy and action plans in a single document can help stakeholders better understand the rationale for focusing on the chosen priorities. For those choosing to present the analysis, the strategy and the action plans in separate documents, it is very important to clearly reference and build on analytical findings. The following guidance follows the first approach but is still relevant for those producing separate documents.

B. Developing an effective action plan

This guidance is intended to highlight the key stages of developing effective action plans around identifying priorities and addressing local skills needs.

Identify actions for each priority

Each priority identified should be linked to specific actions which state how they will be addressed. You may wish to consider:

- What current policies or initiatives are in place that could best address these priorities? Are new local policies or initiatives required?
- What previous interventions have assisted improvement to similar priorities? Are these available still or are there alternatives that will provide better outcomes?
- What are the short-term solutions and what will be longer-term solutions?
- What rationale is there for selecting these interventions over other options? For example, is there evidence that this intervention has been successfully implemented elsewhere and how would this apply to your area?

Refining the plan to be more specific and timebound

We recognise that initially plans may be fairly high level as you work with relevant stakeholders to identify appropriate priorities and possible interventions. However, we would encourage you to include more specific detail where possible to explicitly identify the steps that will be taken to achieve your priorities. You may wish to consider:

- What are the high-level timelines for delivering these priorities, including key milestones?
- What are the specific actions that need to be undertaken to achieve these priorities? How will you get local stakeholders involved? What are the timescales?
- How will the success of your chosen interventions be evaluated?

Example Action Plan Structure:

Summary Table

Priority	Rationale	Objectives	Actions	Success measures
Improve graduate retention	○ Evidence shows only 20% of HE graduates remain in LEP X after graduation ○ Analysis shows a lack of high level STEM skills, and this gap is expected to widen over the next 5 years as the Science and Technology sector continues to grow.	Increase the proportion of HE graduates choosing to stay in LEP X after graduation. Increase the proportion of the workforce with high level STEM skills to meet increasing demand.	<u>Short-term</u> ○ Work with university careers services to promote HE graduate opportunities in local area [By 01/09/20]. ○ Marketing campaign to promote low cost of living and housing affordability [By 30/06/20]. ○ Work with local businesses to help them build direct links with local Higher Education providers [By 01/05/21] <u>Long-term</u> ○ Make X LEP a more attractive destination for young adults by investing in and improving local leisure facilities. [By 2024]	○ Increase in number of local HE graduates employed in LEP x 2 years after graduation. ○ Increase in proportion of workforce in LEP X with STEM skills at Level 4+ ○ Employers reporting increase in number of HE graduates employed from local Higher Education providers.
Priority X	Evidence shows XX	Achieve XX	<u>Short-term</u> ○ XX [By xx/xx/xx] <u>Long-term</u> ○ XX [By xx/xx/xx]	Improvement in XX

Further detail for each priority

Priority X: Briefly outline the priority.

Rationale: Demonstrate why this issue is a priority by linking back to the evidence base.

Objectives: Outline what you wish to achieve through addressing this priority.

Actions: Present a list of specific actions that will be undertaken to address this priority, including named leads within the SAP and timescales. This should be a live document, which is updated regularly to reflect any amendments. You may wish to present this information in a table (see example below) for ease of communication.

Evaluation: Outline metrics and measures that will be used to evaluate success of initiatives.

Action	SAP Lead	External Partners Involved	Timescale	Status (Complete/In Progress/Not Yet Complete)	Success measures

C. Example of how to structure your evidence effectively

1. Overview of your area

This section contains details of how to set out the key strategic and economic context of your SAP and identify unique features of your local area. This will help you to understand the wider context of your local area and the possible implications these factors will have on skills issues.

Overarching ambition

What: Set out the overall economic ambitions and context for your SAP.

Why: To demonstrate your local goals for boosting productivity and helping people reach their potential.

Points to consider:

- What is your area's overall economic ambition?
- What is the strategy that underpins your area's wider aims, e.g. clean energy centre, production powerhouse, commercial centre, centre of culture/art etc. How does this align with your Local Industrial Strategy?

Alignment with SAPs analytical toolkit: Stage 1 – Analysis and definition of the local landscape

Key features of the area

What: Provide an overview of the key features of your local area using key statistics and local insight.

Why: To highlight key issues or themes that may impact your economic and skills landscape. This will help you to identify the impact of wider issues (e.g. ageing population, labour migration) as well as those specific to your local area.

Points to consider:

- What are the key features of the geography and demographic in your area? How and why might this influence your economic or skills plans?
- What makes the area unique? What are some of the practical, geographical or physical challenges the area faces in relation to the labour market/skills? For example, is it a highly rural area with relatively low levels of provision or labour migration, no higher education providers, etc.?

Alignment with SAPs analytical toolkit: Stage 1 – Analysis and definition of the local landscape

2. Area evidence base

This section outlines how to develop the main body of your evidence, by exploring the skills supply and demand data, highlighting skills gaps and using this information to identify emerging priorities. This will help you to establish a robust analysis which will logically lead to key skills issues for your area.

The current skills landscape

What: Explore current skills supply and demand data and consider how this profile may change in the future, by reflecting on key features of the area and strategic priorities.

Why: To draw out key issues and opportunities in the local area, both now and in the future. This will help inform the later mapping of supply and demand.

Points to consider:

- Thoroughly explore **skills supply data** for your SAP:
 - Are there any skills which are overprovided for in your area?
 - What is the average skill level in your area (e.g. measured by level of educational qualification)?
 - How does your area's skills data compare to national average and/or to areas of a similar size or geography?
 - How will wider trends (e.g. ageing population, migration) impact on skills supply in your area?
 - Forward look- What do data trends indicate will happen to your area's future supply?
- Thoroughly explore **skills demand data** for your SAP:
 - In what sectors/occupations is demand highest/lowest? Why? Has there always been high/low levels of demand in this sector/occupation or is this a relatively recent development?
 - What does the demand data say about your area (e.g. predominantly agricultural area, growing service sector etc.)?
 - How will wider trends (e.g. automation) impact on skills demand in your area?
 - Are there any strategic or economic factors which may affect future demand (e.g. large investment in a particular sector)?
 - Forward look- What do data trends indicate will happen to your area's future demand?

Alignment with SAPs analytical toolkit: Stage 2 – Analysis of skills demand, Stage 3 – Analysis of skills supply.

Gap analysis

What: Consider where there currently is and is likely to be in the future, a mismatch between skills supply and demand.

Why: To identify the key skills gaps and mismatches. This will help show what the key priorities should be and identify areas which need to be addressed.

Points to consider:

- How robust is the evidence base? Are the data sources used of sufficiently high quality to draw robust conclusions about skills gaps?
- What is your current skills landscape - what do your supply and demand data for skills tell you? For example, do you have high demand and little supply or vice versa, what sectors/occupations does supply outstrip demand in?
- Is there a geographical as well as sectoral pattern to your supply and demand?
- Where do you have demand for skills and little supply? How recent is this? Are there clear external or internal factors that have contributed to this, if so why/how?
- Using national data as a comparator where possible, which of your skills gaps do you believe are more unique to your area, and which are more widespread nationally?
- Which are the most pertinent skills gaps in your area and why?
- Are there any emerging skills gaps which data is indicating will continue to worsen?

Alignment with SAPs analytical toolkit: Stage 4 – Mapping of supply and demand

Emerging priorities

What: Use the key findings from the analysis to identify the main issues and challenges.

Why: To build on the evidence base, particularly the gap analysis, to identify key skills issues for the area.

Points to consider:

- As a result of looking at the current landscape and gap analysis, what do you think the emerging priorities for your area are? Are these surprising or closely aligned with local perceptions?
- How unique do you feel these priorities are to your area? How many are likely to be widespread nationally?
- Are there any in particular which stand out as particularly important or relatively unimportant for the local area?

Alignment with SAPs analytical toolkit: Stage 5 – Conclusions

3. Priority areas

This section outlines how to identify which priorities should be taken forward, and how to articulate this in your report. This will ensure you have a strong rationale for your chosen priorities, which in turn will help you influence stakeholders.

Assessing priority areas

What: Build on emerging priorities to identify those which will be taken forward.

Why: To demonstrate a clear rationale for why chosen priorities were selected over others.

Points to consider:

- Weigh up all of your area's emerging priorities, think about which might need to be addressed as a priority over others. Think about how many it may be feasible to pursue at once and which might need to be pursued more independently.
- Think about what priorities are closely aligned to the areas' stated ambition in Section 1 of this guidance and how they can support that ambition.
- Consider which emerging priorities you may wish to discount and clearly state the reasons for this.
- Consider which emerging priorities you think may be addressed by other means outside of the SAP's function.
- Consider whether these priorities are unique or similar to higher geographical levels (e.g. international, national or regional?). Do neighbouring areas have similar priorities?
- Think about where your SAP could have the greatest impact and why.
- Think about whether the emerging priorities need to be pursued in the short, medium or long-term and why, will that impact how you wish to prioritise actions on them?

Alignment with SAPs analytical toolkit: Stage 5 - Conclusions.

Outlining priorities

What: Provide an overview of priorities which will be pursued.

Why: To make clear what each priority is and to demonstrate the logic that led to the selection of that priority.

Points to consider:

- In turn, take each selected priority and discuss in detail. You may wish to include a high-level discussion of what actions could be taken to address this; alternatively, you may find that this fits better in the action plan.
- For each priority, you may wish to consider:
 - Why is this a particular issue?
 - Is this priority applicable to all of your local area or just a certain subset?
 - What are the key statistics that demonstrate the importance of this?
 - What do you aim to achieve by addressing this priority?

- What are the possible mechanisms for addressing this priority?

Alignment with SAPs analytical toolkit: Stage 5 - Conclusions.

Example:

Priority 1: Improve HE graduate retention in local area

Evidence shows that only 20% of HE graduates from Higher Education providers in LEP X stay in the area after graduation, with many choosing to move to larger cities in nearby LEAs. This is a particular issue given that the analysis revealed a high levels skills gap in LEP X, particularly for STEM subjects and the high level of growth in the local Scientific and Technical sector. Improving HE graduate retention will help to address this gap and will ensure an ongoing supply of high-level STEM skills. Possible initiatives to address this in the short term could include working closely with university career services to promote local graduate opportunities, running a marketing campaign to highlight the low cost of living for young people and working with businesses to help them develop direct links with local Higher Education providers. Longer-term, developing the towns within LEP X to be more attractive to young people by improving local facilities will help encourage students to stay locally following graduation.

4. Action plan

This section outlines how to present an action plan and implement mechanisms for future evaluation and monitoring of initiatives. This will help you articulate your plans and priorities to stakeholders and will ensure your actions can be evaluated for success.

Action plan overview

What: Provide a clear overview of the actions which will be taken to address your selected priorities.

Why: To make clear to stakeholders what actions have been prioritised and why these have been identified as the most appropriate course of action.

Points to consider: You may also wish to refer to the earlier guidance on [page 6](#).

- As a minimum this section should list the actions your SAP intends to take to address the priority areas in Section 3; this could be in written form or shown in a table or diagram.
- You should provide some supporting rationale for why this action has been deemed suitable- this may include evidence to show it has been a successful intervention elsewhere and why it is relevant for your area.
- You may also wish to:
 - Discuss plans for each priority in more granular detail, building on discussion from the 'Outlining Priorities' section.

- Provide the high-level timelines linked to your plans.
- Explain why you chose that action over other possible actions.
- Highlight how you will engage with stakeholders and external partners to implement these actions.
- Provide more detailed plans or milestones in an annex.

Alignment with SAPs analytical toolkit: Stage 5 - Conclusions.

Monitoring and evaluation

What: Outline plans for evaluating the success of chosen initiatives.

Why: To show how success of planned actions will be measured to ensure that the identified initiatives are successfully helping to address priorities in the longer-term.

Points to consider:

- Discuss how you will evaluate if your plans are working to address the priorities you set for the SAP in section 3. This may include metrics / indicators of success/ targets. If so, why are they the best measure to assess your priority?
- Consider how you will manage change. How will you allow for the fact priorities for your area may shift or change during the time your plans are in motion?
- What external support can your SAP draw on to help ensure the continued success of the SAP?

Alignment with SAPs analytical toolkit: Stage 5 - Conclusions.

Annex A: Sectoral approach

We recognise that some areas have opted to take a sectoral approach to their skills analysis, choosing to conduct various deep dives for each sector, or for those sectors deemed most important for the local area. Whilst this approach can be effective, there are a number of points we would encourage you to consider in order to ensure your analysis meets the standards set out in the SAPs analytical toolkit and ensures your SAP has influence locally.

Explain your choice of sectors

If you have opted to focus on certain sectors in your analysis, we would encourage you to clearly articulate how and why these sectors were chosen. For example, do these sectors fit with the particular economic ambitions for your area, or has analysis shown that they are high-growth sectors? Explicitly stating your rationale for focusing on particular sectors will help justify your approach to stakeholders and ensure your analysis has impact.

Consider an occupational approach

Many occupations can cut across sectors; for example, a software developer could work in many sectors including retail, business or IT. We would therefore encourage you to also take a cross-sectoral occupational approach to your analysis and consider what the implications are for your key sectoral findings.

Ensure your documents are joined-up

If your evidence is split across a number of different reports, it is important to ensure that there is consistency and join up between these in order to increase the impact of your analysis. This could be achieved by drawing all reports into a central repository or using a single document to draw out key findings or signpost to each report. This will help ensure all the relevant information is easily accessible to stakeholders and that your overarching strategy remains present between documents.

Consider developing a single action plan

Whilst each sector report is likely to contain actions relevant to that particular sector, we recommend also producing a single document that brings together all skills-related actions in one place. This will help you to clearly communicate all future plans to stakeholders, as well as enabling you to identify links between different priorities and actions. For example, if each sectoral report highlights a need for more apprenticeship opportunities, you may find that this is better addressed by an initiative covering all sectors.