

LEP Communications Framework 2021/22

March 2021

LEP Communications Framework 2021/22

OVERVIEW

- This document sets out a framework for communications activity for Lancashire Enterprise Partnership during financial year 2021/22.
- Communications activities set out in this framework have been grouped into four core areas of activity:
 - **Communications Management** – providing strategic direction and co-ordination for all communications activity, ensuring consistency in messaging, and measuring the impact and effect of communications outputs.
 - **Stakeholder Relations** – managing the LEP's relationships with its core stakeholders – internally and externally, with partners, across our networks, and with the business community – at local (Lancashire), regional (North West) and national (UK) levels. This also includes public affairs and advocacy activities intended to influence public policy and opinion.
 - **Media Relations** – strengthening our relationships with local, regional and national media (whether print, online or broadcast) to ensure LEP messaging and influence is maximised, our reputation is enhanced, and our voice heard.
 - **Social & Digital** – making best use of the LEP website and its social media feeds (specifically Twitter and LinkedIn). Our website is the 'shop window' for the LEP and, coupled with our social media feeds, is an important means of engaging a wider audience, disseminating our messages and achievements, and enhancing our impact.
- The Communications Framework is not intended to be an exhaustive list of activities. Whilst the LEP's objective must be to conduct a comprehensive programme of proactive actions to ensure the effective communication of the LEP's work and impact, it is very likely that the LEP will also have to react and respond – either to unexpected events or to seize opportunities as they present themselves. Given the ongoing situation with COVID-19 and unfolding events regarding the UK's new trading arrangements, this is more likely this year than in previous years.
- In addition to setting out the LEP's communications strategy for the year ahead, this framework also identifies a number of strategic challenges in the field of communications that the LEP needs to confront and overcome.
- This document is intended to be read and considered in conjunction with the **Stakeholder Engagement Framework** and the **Communications & Stakeholder Engagement Plan** (the latter of which sets out a provisional timetable of activity for the year ahead)

OBJECTIVES & MESSAGING

Communications Objectives

The LEP plans and conducts communications activities in order to meet the following objectives:

- Enhance its reputation and increase the effectiveness of its communications to drive Lancashire's economic growth and deliver its strategic intent
- Ensure the LEP is a trusted source of credible, relevant and insightful intelligence regarding the Lancashire economy
- Create and develop new partnerships to deliver its core objectives and promote existing partnership working
- Foster a positive image of the LEP
- Influence how the general public and key stakeholders see the LEP
- Nurture a healthy familiarity with all those who come into contact with the LEP and the LEP's activities, its services, its people and its policies
- Create a constructive climate for businesses for information, recognition and involvement
- Bring the concerns of Lancashire businesses into the hub of strategic decision-making of the LEP and exert a positive influence on public policy and decision making in the region and at a national level
- Taking our social and economic values and vision out into the world

It is very important that the LEP engages its audiences effectively; without this, it won't achieve its vision and strategic impact for Lancashire. There will be a degree of overlap of target audiences with other organisations such as local government and Marketing Lancashire, but the emphasis and objectives are different; the LEP must endeavour to respect coherence of communications where audiences and objectives overlap. Key audiences are often opinion leaders, business leaders, regulatory bodies, government, politicians, and pressure groups.

Messaging

Local Enterprise Partnerships are comparatively unique organisations in the UK economic and political landscape, fusing business, education and local government. Any effort to communicate about the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership must recognise that some audiences will be unfamiliar with the concept of a LEP generally in addition to being unacquainted or unaware with the work and successes of our LEP in particular. It is therefore important that we develop and maintain a core narrative, key messaging and a strong sense of brand identity across our communications activities.

Core Narrative

Since its inception in 2011, the LEP has developed bold plans, underpinned by a strong evidence base, to realise its ambitions through the development of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), the draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and more recently the Strategic Framework (SF). This strong strategic focus has enabled the LEP to secure a £1 billion growth plan – including funding from the City Deal, Growing Places and the Getting Building fund - which has brought forward over 70 major growth initiatives throughout the county.

Whilst the LEP is not involved in direct delivery, our role is to be a:

- **Strategic leader:** to develop a long-term vision for the Lancashire economy and strategy for economic growth and job creation

- **Co-ordinator:** to encourage collaborative and inclusive behaviours, creating the relationships and networks that are needed for partnership working to flourish
- **Influencer:** we will continue to develop our reputation as the voice for the Lancashire economy to attract Government investment and influence Government policy on behalf of businesses, stakeholders and the wider community
- **Investor:** we will continue to demonstrate our ability to secure significant public sector and leverage private sector investment in projects which will provide the impetus to facilitate economic growth

LEP Key Messages

- **The LEP is partnership driven:** the LEP takes a collaborative, inclusive and supportive approach to all activity which is based on consensus to drive strategic activity based on a robust evidence base to achieve positive demonstrable outcomes and inclusive growth throughout the whole of the County
- **The LEP is business led:** the LEP is viewed as an organisation with strong relationships with the Lancashire business community and a thorough understanding of what the businesses need to grow the Lancashire economy
- **The LEP is strategic:** the LEP is identified as the sole pan-Lancashire organisation with the overarching strategic oversight to inform investment decisions and promoted by BEIS and MHCLG as the lead organisations for economic development growth and job creation
- **The LEP is seen as investment focussed:** promoting Lancashire's key strengths regionally, nationally and internationally to ensure the Lancashire offer is seen as a significant contributor to both the regional and national economies and wins an increased share of government and commercial investment

Guiding Principles for LEP Communications

The 2021/22 Communications Framework is built on the guiding principles detailed in the National Assurance Framework to ensure the LEP is:

- **Transparent:** Information on decisions taken by the LEP Board is available and how ongoing engagement has informed key decisions and strategy development. When we are unable to share information, we will explain the reasons fully and clearly.
- **Two-way:** The LEP will create opportunities for open and honest feedback.
- **Timely and Targeted:** Information is provided when needed, ensuring it is relevant and set within the right context.
- **Clear:** Communication will be in plain English, easy to understand and not open to interpretation.
- **Credible:** The LEP's messages will mean something and the content is trusted and without undue influence.

COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGES

This section seeks to define the key communications challenges that the LEP's recently appointed Head of Strategic Communications has identified in a communications audit and identifies potential solutions. As with the Communications Framework generally, this list is not exhaustive – I fully expect other challenges to present themselves moving forward. As and when they do, appropriate solutions will be recommended and brought to the LEP Board for consideration and approval.

Again, these challenges have been sub-divided into four categories – the three key pillars of the LEP's communications activity (media relations, social and digital, and stakeholder relations) plus the over-arching, strategic theme of communications management. For the sake of brevity, what is referred to as stakeholder relations includes not just managing our relationships with key stakeholders, but also any advocacy, public affairs or lobbying activities that the LEP undertakes. A key challenge in each category has been identified as 'measuring impact'. This is vital in managing communications performance, and in determining where value is being added. It will also be essential to measure impact to satisfy our most important internal audience – the LEP Board.

(I have sought to minimise, wherever possible, solutions that incur significant additional costs. Furthermore, none of these solutions require the recruitment of additional staff).

Communications Management

Challenge	Solution
<p>1) <u>Measuring Impact</u></p> <p>A challenge impacting each communications pillar, and a strategic goal for the communications function as a whole. Currently, the LEP does not have an established way of measuring the impact of its communications or determining success in the field of communications.</p>	<p><u>Create a 'Communications Dashboard'</u> – a series of measurable outputs to gauge the impact of LEP activity across all pillars of activity. These should be stretching, robust, comprehensive, and ensure that we are still able to distinguish between quantity and quality.</p> <p>This would create the metrics for measuring and reporting on LEP communications performance. This would form the core of reporting to the Board (and other internal audiences) annually, quarterly, and monthly. These metrics would also be incorporated in any contracts or Service Level Agreements with external providers.</p>
<p>2) <u>LEP Communications Capacity</u></p> <p>The LEP currently only has a small team dedicated to delivering communications functions (and would always struggle to justify the creation of a large in-house team).</p>	<p><u>Create a roster of different specialist communications providers</u> – such as graphic design, social and digital media, media monitoring, polling, event management, public relations, and even public affairs.</p> <p>This would allow the LEP to be able to source relevant specialist communications support as required without expanding its internal team.</p>

	<p>Whilst additional costs would be incurred when external providers are used, these are likely to be much less than it would cost to replicate these functions internally.</p> <p>Assembling a roster would be done in compliance with relevant procurement policies and competitive tendering would be used to keep costs down wherever possible.</p>
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Media Relations

Challenge	Solution
<p>1) <u>Measuring Impact</u></p> <p>Currently, the LEP does not monitor the media (either print or broadcast) to see either where it is getting coverage, or to know what relevant and related stories are generating interest nationally or regionally.</p>	<p>Source a media monitoring service, including a press clippings function.</p> <p>This would create a robust metric for measuring performance, both against the LEP's previous performance (month-on-month, year-on-year) and, potentially, the other four LEPs in the North West.</p> <p>Gathering media intelligence not only allows the LEP to measure its proactive press impact (eg pick-up for its own press releases), it also creates the ability to do reactive pieces (including thought leadership and providing comment) on relevant stories.</p> <p>Additionally, a daily press clippings email could be sent to members of the LEP team and the Board.</p>

<p>2) <u>Building editorial relationships</u></p> <p>The LEP needs to widen the pool of media outlets it has a relationship with, including being more ambitious regarding the national media.</p>	<p>Using the media intelligence provided by a monitoring service, the LEP will be able to see which outlets/channels it is successful in placing stories with, and where it is not. This allows the LEP to <u>create a plan for targeting engagement with a wider pool of outlets</u>, including at the national level.</p> <p>This could further allow the LEP to refine the choice of releases it issues or to deliver exclusives with certain outlets. It will hopefully also change the LEPs relationship with key outlets, allowing them to approach us for comment or content.</p> <p>Improved coverage in the media will also help the LEP to maintain its visibility (and sense of momentum) with key stakeholders.</p>
<p>3) <u>Profile raising and differentiation</u></p> <p>The LEP needs to raise its profile and be better at telling the story of its own success. However, the concept of a LEP is little understood outside specialist, informed audiences and the LEP would benefit from honing and refining how it talks about itself.</p> <p>Key to this is not just proving its impact and efficiency but also continually demonstrating the LEP's independence, accountability and transparency.</p>	<p>Create a proactive, centrally controlled 'forward grid' of releases/stories to ensure a regular flow of potential coverage, and to ensure that different areas of LEP activity are not competing with each other.</p> <p>Further develop and refine some key messaging about the LEP and its work (including its key projects).</p> <p>There will still be a need to exercise 'quality control' of the stories the LEP puts out – issuing more releases should not dilute the quality of the content.</p>

Social & Digital

Challenge	Solution
<p>1) <u>Control and Management</u></p> <p>Currently the LEP does not directly manage its own website or social media presence, nor does the team possess the appropriate skills to manage these functions directly. It is also vital that the LEP comply with public procurement regulations and best practice.</p>	<p><u>Test the market by conducting a competitive tender process for the provision of social and digital services</u> when the current provider's contract expires at the end of the current financial year.</p> <p>Whatever the outcome, we would have renewed confidence that the service provided was the best available, at the best price.</p>

<p>2) <u>Measuring Impact</u></p> <p>At present neither the LEP team nor the Board have a sufficient flow of performance data regarding the LEP's website or social media feeds. This means we are unable to benchmark current performance or set accurate, quantifiable targets for improvement.</p> <p>By making metrics and measurement a key 'performance indicator' for the provider of social and digital services going forward, we can build an essential component of the 'Communications Dashboard' – so that both the LEP team and the Board have a monthly snapshot of performance (which, in turn, would build into a quarterly and annual overview).</p> <p>Bidders for the contract would also be encouraged to pitch their strategies for improving the LEP's performance with regard to the key metrics.</p>	<p>Making measuring performance a key component of any successful bid to manage the LEP's social and digital media.</p> <p>This information will form a key component of any 'Communications Dashboard', as well as allowing us to measure the provider's performance.</p> <p>Potential metrics could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unique hits on the website • identifying the five 'most visited' web pages each month • retweets, likes and follower numbers (for social media)
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Stakeholder Relations

Challenge	Solution
<p>1) <u>Measuring impact</u></p> <p>A series of metrics can be compiled to gauge success.</p>	<p>Commission a benchmark survey of stakeholder attitudes – this is likely to involve a polling or public affairs company surveying an agreed (and representative) pool of stakeholders (including Lancashire businesses) on their awareness of and attitudes towards the LEP, and then repeating the process after a significant period of time (usually 18-24 months).</p> <p>These kinds of exercise are effective at creating a benchmark against which progress can be measured. Furthermore, undertaking this research has the benefit of <i>itself</i> raising the profile and awareness for the LEP amongst those stakeholders surveyed.</p> <p>However, these kinds of surveys can be costly and time-consuming. Therefore, every effort will be made to contain costs (seeking competitive bids for the work will help with this) and find an effective provider.</p>

	<p>Also, additional metrics may be required to measure performance in stakeholder relations given LEP reporting cycles are shorter than 18-24 months.</p>
<p>2) <u>Plurality of stakeholders</u></p> <p>The LEP has a wide audience of potential stakeholders to engage and inform, but only a comparatively small team with which to do it.</p>	<p>Distinguish and prioritise the LEP’s primary stakeholders (those it needs to manage most closely), and create other methods of engaging secondary stakeholders, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • via a newsletter or economic bulletins • through larger engagement events (such as the annual conference, or local roundtables) • creating channels that facilitate two-way communications between the LEP and stakeholders (such as MPs and the local authorities we work closely with) – just as we want to be able to communicate with our key stakeholders quickly and easily, we understand that those stakeholders also want to have swift, frictionless and direct access to the LEP. <p>Secondary stakeholders can still be engaged on a one-to-one basis as required.</p>
<p>3) <u>Distance and audience</u></p> <p>The LEP’s political/policy stakeholders fall into two distinct geographical groups – those in Lancashire and those in Westminster. It is vital that those in Westminster are not overlooked or forgotten.</p>	<p>The LEP’s stakeholder engagement framework includes engaging stakeholders outside Lancashire. This will inevitably involve actions and activity that addresses its Westminster audience – these could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intensive Westminster meeting programmes every few months with key ministers and officials, • lobbying days in Parliament (including activity related to Lancashire Day), • Attending major policy events and even Party Conferences, especially when held in the north west <p>We must also make full use of ministerial visits to projects in Lancashire.</p> <p>(It is vital that the LEP remains politically neutral in its activities and engages equally with both the Government and the Opposition).</p>

<p>4) <u>Business Intelligence</u></p> <p>Effective stakeholder engagement is always a two-way conversation. For the LEP, this is especially important when it comes to gathering intelligence from businesses across the county – this has become noticeably harder as a result of COVID-19. Much of the face-to-face networking that we took for granted before has simply stopped.</p> <p>Although our work with sector groups fills some of this gap, the consequence is that the LEP has an incomplete picture of business opinion across Lancashire. Addressing this deficit is essential</p>	<p>The LEP must develop new methods for gauging business opinion and learning of the real-time priorities of local firms. Solutions can include:</p> <p>Curating a broader programme of online forums – especially for small groups of businesses (circa a dozen) – by location, sector, or around key themes. This could be done in partnership with other business groups or local authorities. Larger online events – perhaps with a guest speaker – could also form part of this programme.</p> <p>Commission a regular online survey of Lancashire businesses – this would allow us to test business opinion on key topics on a monthly basis, and to do so on a robust and scientific basis. As well as sharing the results with key policy audiences to improve the LEP's reputation and credibility, these surveys would also form the basis of media and thought leadership activity.</p>
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COMMUNICATIONS FRAMEWORK 2021/22 – OUTLINE ACTIVITY

Communications Management

1) Development of a Strong LEP brand

- **Consistent use of branding and language:** All communications activity undertaken by the LEP will be consistent in the use of branding and language to ensure the LEP and its values are instantly recognisable. A LEP Corporate Communications Protocol will be developed.
Timings: Early 2021
- **Development of Key Messages for LEP Programmes:** The LEP currently has a number of key programmes which contribute to the overall objectives of the Strategic Framework such as the Lancashire Skills Hub, Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership, Careers Advisor Network, Growth Deal and Growing Places Fund. It is important that the LEP showcases success for each of its workstreams and makes best use of the myriad case studies that demonstrate that success. The LEP Communications lead will work with programme leads to develop (if they are not already in place) key messages from each of the programmes of work which align with the overall strategic key messages of the LEP and seek to raise awareness of and encourage engagement with all of these programmes.
Timings: Early 2021
- **Protocols and Boilerplates:** Publicity for all LEP programmes and initiatives will be consistent and will use an agreed format which will include as a minimum a quote from



the Chair of the LEP with agreed boilerplates. Firmer and more effective communication protocols and guidelines for future projects and programmes will be developed to allow for media opportunities with LEP members via appropriate local projects. Publicity guidance for recipients of all future LEP programme monies will be revised with greater emphasis on the LEP and other partners involvement wherever possible.

Timings: In line with LEP Corporate Communications Protocol. New project / programme protocols developed as they emerge whilst aligned with funding requirements

2) Internal Communications & Governance

- **Publication of LEP Corporate Documents:** Develop and publish LEP corporate documents including the Annual Report, Annual Delivery Plan, Achievements Document and 3-year Business Plan on a timely basis and make better use of these documents as a communications tool for the promoting the work and successes of the LEP.
Timings: Annually / on-going
- **Internal communications:** Improve internal communications amongst staff and board members by providing regular updates on key areas of LEP activity, success stories, areas of risk, new policy initiatives and funding opportunities outside of formal channels such as LEP board and sub-committee meetings.
Timings: Weekly through LEP round-up distribution
- **Annual General Meeting:** In accordance with the requirements of the National Assurance Framework, the commitment to transparency and the desire to publicise the successes and impact of LEP activities, the LEP will hold an Annual General Meeting. In 2021 this will be subject to the limitations imposed by COVID-19.
Timings: Annually

Stakeholder Engagement

3) Stakeholder Mapping

- **Mapping:** In order to ensure we are adding value to partners, it is imperative that we identify all stakeholders, understand their expectations, level of interest and how they are able to influence the work and success of the LEP. We also need to understand their current levels of awareness and perception of the LEP which will determine a baseline against which to measure impact. A comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise will be undertaken between August and September to develop a baseline and will determine the most appropriate platforms through which to communicate and how key messages will be nuanced and positioned, according to the audience and their respective requirements.
Timings: An initial mapping exercise was completed as part of the preparation of the Stakeholder Engagement Framework.

4) Stakeholder Engagement – Local Government

- **Clear and Consistent Messaging:** Development of clear and consistent messaging based on findings from stakeholder mapping exercise aligning the work and activities of the LEP and how they contribute to the respective objectives of the stakeholder organisations.
Timings: On-going
- **Raise the Visibility and Profile of the LEP:** Further increase the visibility and profile of the LEP amongst local government stakeholders – and thereby enhance their engagement and interactions with the LEP - by identifying and attending relevant meetings such as the Lancashire Leaders and Lancashire Economic Development Officer Group. This will provide the opportunity to hear current local issues, opportunities etc as well as the opportunity for the LEP to promote activity and provide insight as to how this activity may provide a solution to issues or how an opportunity can be exploited.
Timings: Monthly
- **Individual Stakeholder Meetings:** Establish periodic individual stakeholder meetings to develop relationships and encourage two-way dialogue and opportunities for collaborative working
Timings: Quarterly
- **Universal Impact:** Identification and promotion of LEP related activity through press releases and case studies which have had a demonstrable positive impact on local businesses and residents, particularly the programmes of work undertaken by the Lancashire Skills Hub and active promotion of Social Value.
Timings: On-going

5) Stakeholder Engagement – Engaging the Voice of Business

- **Lancashire Business View:** Agree a series of editorials / features aligned to the Sector Groups to provide insight, commentary and guidance. The editorials will be complemented by a number of roundtable discussions comprising business, academia and external expertise to have sectoral 'deep dive' discussions to stimulate debate, promote the work of the LEP and enhance visibility amongst the business community.
Timings: Roundtable discussions began in August / September 2020 and every two months thereafter. Editorials / features to be placed commencing August 2020 and every two months thereafter.
- **Engagement with strategic companies:** Develop and implement a business engagement campaign with those businesses which have been identified as having strategic significance for the Lancashire economy. This will also include developing a stronger relationship with the FOC Account Manager at LCC
Timings: Ongoing

- **Establishment of Sector Groups:** To obtain real-time evidence and engagement with business leaders operating within Lancashire's key sectors, sector groups will be established. The groups will be action-focussed and deliver tangible outputs to enable recovery and return to growth. Insight from the groups will further enhance the LEP's reputation amongst MPs, stakeholders, Government and associated departments and agencies.
Timings: All sector groups to be established and first meetings held by the end of March 2021
- **Develop a Lancashire Business Survey:** Create a regular (monthly or quarterly) survey of Lancashire business opinion to gather near real-time business and economic intelligence on the county and to drive media coverage, inform policy making and support thought leadership activity.
Timings: Monthly or quarterly
- **Engagement with Business Relationship and Trade Organisations:** Proactively develop relationships with BROs and trade organisations to identify areas of complementary activity and identify and attend relevant networking events and take up public speaking opportunities at events / panels to raise the profile of the LEP amongst organisations and networks.
Timings: On-going
- **LEP and Growth Hub Collaboration:** Demonstrate how and where the LEP is encouraging business growth and directly supporting SMEs through Boost Business Lancashire and other programme case studies such as Made Smarter. Identify cross over campaign opportunities between the LEP and Boost.
Timings: On-going
- **Webinars:** Arrange and host a series of webinars aligned to key initiatives and the focus of the Sector Groups to engage with the wider businesses operating in Lancashire's key sectors
Timings: Quarterly

6) Public Affairs (MPs and Ministers)

- **Face-to-face meetings and Roundtable Events:** The LEP will proactively instigate more frequent face to face and roundtable meetings with local MPs and Ministers. These will be with regards to both general Lancashire economic updates and horizon scanning (highlighting potential opportunities for MPs to be more closely involved in) and also location-specific projects which would have a direct impact on their constituents or within their portfolio, for example the Minister for Small Business and the Minister for Regional Growth. These meetings will be attended by the LEP Chair and may be on either an individual, grouped or cross-party basis.
Timings: Frequency of meetings will be determined by levels of activity; Roundtable events twice yearly

- **Regular correspondence with local MPs and Ministers:** The Chair will write on a regular basis to all local MPs and Ministers to provide an update of LEP activity and progress on the Strategic Framework with a view to encouraging a two-way dialogue and engagement.
Timings: As required however as a minimum quarterly
- **MP and Ministerial Visits:** The LEP will proactively identify opportunities to arrange Ministerial and MP visits to projects of regional or national significance or of more local relevance for local MPs.
Timings: Key milestones of Growth Deal and other projects
- **Sharing of press information and positive media coverage:** The LEP proposes to circulate relevant, professionally written press releases to local MPs about programmes, initiatives and outcomes which impact on their constituencies. We would also include links to any local/regional press stories placed by the LEP (which are linked to a local MP's constituency) to ensure they knew how our work was being communicated to the wider-public and their constituents via the media. We also seek to work closely with MPs when launching policy campaigns and seek to leverage their influence and relationships to enhance the LEP's prospects for securing positive policy outcomes.
Timings: As and when releases are issued/campaigns launched
- **Inclusion of Ministerial and MP Quotes:** Ministerial quotes for Growth Deal related press releases form part of the Grant Funding Agreement for Growth Deal. The LEP will look to build upon this and, where appropriate, will seek quotes from relevant Ministers and/or for significant announcements which affect their portfolio / constituency.
Timings: As appropriate
- **Social media and personal 'tagging':** The LEP will make more use of its own social media channels and work with other LEP initiatives such as Boost Business Lancashire and other partners to promote contributions to economic growth in Lancashire and will identify opportunities where we can 'tag' relevant local MPs in our communications (such as Twitter), allowing them to quickly and easily share and/or like our original message.
Timings: As and when messages are conveyed through social media channels.

7) Government Departments & Agencies

- **Regular Meetings:** Arrange regular meetings with relevant Government departments, sponsors and agencies to promote the work of the LEP and encourage a two-way dialogue to improve / enhance the reputation of the Lancashire LEP in relation to governance, delivery and strategic impact.
Timings: On-going
- **LEP Annual Review:** The LEP will respond in a timely and comprehensive manner to pre-APR document submissions and the publication of corporate documents and strategies such as the Annual Report, Business Plan to demonstrate strategic impact as well as periodically undertaking compliance checks on the LEP website and Local Assurance Framework to ensure compliance. The LEP will react and respond swiftly to action recommendations and areas for improvement arising from the APR and regularly communicate progress towards full implementation.

Timings: Annually. Compliance checks every 2 months

- **Peer to Peer Reviews:** To enhance the reputation of the LEP and demonstrate a willingness to continually improve its operations, the LEP will participate in Peer to Peer reviews to identify areas for improvement and examples of good practice.

Timings: Six monthly

8) Networks

- **NP11:** The LEP will actively participate in all communications campaigns instigated by the NP11 network to raise the profile of the LEP / Lancashire both within the NP11 region and on the national stage. The LEP will endeavour to be represented at the most appropriate level at NPH meetings and events and position Lancashire's sectoral strengths and economic contribution to the NPH agenda.

Timings: On-going

- **LEP Network:** the LEP will capitalise on all promotional and positioning opportunities arising from LEP Network activity.

Timings: On-going

- **Pan-Regional Bodies:** The LEP will identify appropriate representation at pan-regional bodies such as Transport for the North to ensure Lancashire voice is heard and is aware of any potential opportunities arising from (eg) infrastructure funding.

Timings: On-going

Media Relations

9) Communication and Media Engagement

- **Develop relationships with local and regional media:** Identify and develop relationships with relevant journalists in local, regional, national and trade press.

Timings: On-going

- **Deploy LEP members as experts:** Develop relationships with key media and make journalists aware of the Chair and key board members for print/online/radio/ TV interviews within their area of expertise

Timings: On-going

- **Thought leadership:** Linked to the 6 pillars of growth within the Strategic Framework or emerging themes identify opportunities within local, regional or business focussed media to have published regular think pieces or opinions. The ambition is to achieve on think piece per month.

Timings: Monthly



- **Proactive press releases:** Provision of steady and consistent distribution of press releases to local, regional and national media outlining the strategic activities of the LEP as well as publicising:
 - Funding opportunities through existing initiatives such as the Growing Places Fund as well as opportunities arising through new funding initiatives
 - Promotion of key projects and milestones within all LEP programmes including Growth Deal, Lancashire Skills Hub, Boost, Enterprise Zones

Timings: On-going

- **Reactive press releases:** Issuing reaction and statements to coincide with locally, regionally, nationally significant events linked to the activities and strategic objectives of the LEP.

Timings: On an ad-hoc basis

- **External newsletter:** Revamp of current Lancashire Business Brief to include opinion and commentary from the Chair of the LEP board as well as roundup of relevant business and economic news. Review and development of existing database to include identified stakeholders.

Timings: Quarterly

10) Events and Visits

- **LEP Member Visits:** Series of visits by the Chair or relevant board members to businesses, colleges, universities which have benefitted from LEP funding and whose projects are up and running. This will raise the profile of the LEP as well as providing insight as to how LEP investment has provided the envisaged outcomes and impact.
Timings: Quarterly
- **LEP Funded Projects:** Opportunities will be sought to ensure LEP members are able to attend site, media and ministerial visits to LEP funded projects currently underway to exploit the credibility of the LEP and reaffirm their involvement in these projects. The LEP's Communications lead will have regular ongoing contact with LEP funded projects and programme managers to ensure publicity opportunities are maximised. A programme of potential site visits to be developed according to key milestones.
Timings: Visits to take place on an ad-hoc basis at key milestones
- **Strategic consultation events:** To ensure buy-in from stakeholders on all areas of strategy development, the LEP is committed to engaging and consulting with stakeholders. This approach as worked well previously, during the development of Lancashire's Local Industrial Strategy where two consultation events, held at key phases during the development process, attracted in excess of 100 participants from the private, public, third, education and government sectors. The LEP will continue such consultation as and when the need arises.
Timings: On an ad-hoc basis
- **Department for International Trade (DIT):** Working with colleagues at Lancashire County Council and Marketing Lancashire, the LEP will identify opportunities for DIT

visits to promote key businesses, sectors, assets and the wider Lancashire offer. The ambition is to host two DiT visits a year.

Timings: Twice yearly

Social & Digital

11) Social Media

- **Social Media:** Build engagement and followers of the LEP's existing (Twitter and LinkedIn) and new social media channels – by sourcing and sharing and reacting to relevant business-centric, economic and innovation news and government announcements. Social media communications will be consistent messaging and a presence on social media platforms which will reinforce the LEP's position as the leading body which unites business voices. Key audiences / followers will be identified (eg MPs) and a 'wish-list' of followers developed for active targeting. The LEP's social media channels will also be more effectively used to:
 - Publicise funding opportunities such as the Growing Places Fund
 - Achievements and key milestones of LEP funded projects such as the AMRC
 - Policy positioning
 - Promotion of the diversity of the county and local success stories
 - Using polls to gather feedback from followers
 Timings: On-going

- **Meet the Board:** Board member blogs for social media content, LEP website, e.g. profile pieces about their careers, business, what drives them and why they are members of the LEP board.
Timings: On-going

12) Digital (LEP Website)

- **LEP Website improvements:** The main LEP website is the shop window of the LEP, not just for all stakeholders but, equally as importantly, potential investors considering Lancashire. Therefore a strong, effective website is not just an important communications asset, it is also a vital economic asset. We will look to enhance the quality of information contained within the site by aligning to the Strategic Framework and use the site as a tool through which to reinforce strategic messaging whilst ensuring compliance. The LEP will also look to redesign other LEP related websites such as the Invest in Lancashire and Lancashire Advanced Manufacturing and Energy Cluster sites to ensure alignment and consistency.
Timings: On-going

MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

As made clear in the 'CHALLENGES' section of this framework, measurement and evaluation have been identified as urgent priorities across all areas of LEP communications activity.

Whilst tangible metrics can and will be identified (in terms of the number of social media connections, visits to the LEP website, number of press releases being used by the media etc) as part of the creation of the Communications Dashboard, the effectiveness of the LEP's Communication Plan will be measured in part by comparing the desired outcomes achieved from the activity set out above. However the success of any LEP communications and public relations activity will be

determined by the impact the outcomes have on the ability of the LEP to achieve its corporate objectives and the ambitions of the Strategic Framework.

COST IMPLICATIONS

To address the 'CHALLENGES' identified earlier in this plan, it is proposed to undertake or commission the following initiatives:

Communications Initiative	Timeline
Undertake a benchmarking Stakeholder Perception Audit	As soon as possible (ideally April or May)
Create a quarterly or monthly business survey/opinion poll	Conduct the first survey in July
Commission a media monitoring service	As soon as possible
Provision of web and social media services	Ongoing – however the current contract expires at the end of March

The financial implications of these initiatives have been included within the Annual Operating Budget for 2021/22.