



Black Country LEP
Strategic Marketing &
Communications Plan April 2017

Introduction

This is a Strategic Marketing & Communications Plan for the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The purpose is to provide a strategic framework and action plan for the LEP to manage its reputation and increase the effectiveness of its communications to drive the Black Country's economic growth.

LEPs are partnerships between local authorities and businesses, set up by the Government in 2011 to help determine local economic priorities and drive growth and job creation. The Black Country LEP Board is chaired by Stewart Towe, Chairman of Hadley Industries and the Board comprises the Council Leaders of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and City of Wolverhampton, nominated education positions and six business representatives.

The LEPs geographic focus is the on the four local authority areas of City of Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall with recognition that the economic area and interests of business partners extends beyond this.

The LEPs long term, ambitious and evidence-based vision for the Black Country in 2033 underpins the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and growth strategy, which is made up of 12 strategic programmes; all relevant to one of the 3 pillars: People, Business and Place. These determine the work and priorities of the LEP.

Effective communication is integral to the LEPs strategic performance; it needs ownership and commitment by the Board and senior management.

Against this progress, LEPs have been operational for a relatively short period with limited resources, so awareness and engagement is limited amongst Black Country businesses.

The Black Country LEP has made significant progress, for example the Black Country has received a substantial investment from Government which will bring forward near £495m of additional investment from local partners and the private sector.

Combined together this will create a total new investment package of circa £655m for the Black Country LEP. By 2021, this Deal will create over 4,000 jobs, it will deliver over 1,500 houses, support over 2,500 businesses and 15,000 learners, deliver over 4,000 apprenticeships and over 55,000 sqm commercial floorspace.

The LEP has an excellent track record in attracting and delivering investment in the Black Country. During 2015/16 we met all our Year One targets of our original Growth Deal, investing £33.5m of our £162m allocation. This involved: creating 131 new jobs and 289 apprenticeships; building 175 new homes; reclaiming over 4ha of land; and creating 5,400 sqm of commercial floorspace.

Government Ministers and other stakeholders have recognised the Black Country as a high performing LEP.

The LEP continues to maximise impact by working with strategic companies who are likely to deliver the SEP outputs and LEP objectives.

National and Regional arenas have changed considerably over the last 18 months with the 2017 Government Industrial Strategy Green paper, Midlands Engine, WMCA vested in June 2016, HS2 receiving Royal Assent for the first phase in February 2017 and the first WMCA Mayor elected in May 2017.

As this new landscape takes shape, the communication demands on the LEP has increased and become more complex. This plan should manage the expectations of

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stakeholders and target audiences about what the role of the LEP, its sphere of influence and position within the national and regional arena.

The Plan outlines the foundations and context facing the LEP, prioritising the limited resources to inform, engage and inspire action amongst target audiences by:

- Communicating consistent messages and promoting the Black Country's distinctive strengths and key propositions set against the SEP priorities
- Continually building relationships and engagement with strategic local businesses and business networks
- Managing relationships with stakeholders including businesses and Government decision makers nationally, regionally and locally
- Improving the perception and image of the Black Country and the 5 transformational sectors for work and investment
- Measuring the effectiveness of all communications actions – Action Plans for website, newsletter, tweets, PR, publications, events, Ministerial visits
- Promoting clear, distinctive propositions to accelerate growth
- Communicating the successful progress of LEP programmes
- Developing a consultative approach with strategic businesses and stakeholders
- Agreeing high-level outcomes for a rolling summary of performance
- Positioning the LEP within the Regional structure of Midlands Engine, Midlands Connect, WMCA and HS2

1. **Strategic Aim**

The overall aim of the Black Country LEPs communications activity is:

To inform and engage targeted businesses and stakeholders in the LEPs programmes to develop an enterprise culture and drive economic growth in the Black Country; to promote the achievements delivered against the Strategic Economic Priorities.

This needs effective communication of the LEPs work, building on the platform of the LEPs reputation as a high performing strategic body, recognised as acting in the best interests of the Black Country economy.

The priority audiences are:

- Strategic Local Businesses and networks
- Government – Ministers, Departments, LEP Network
- Black Country Councils
- Investors and intermediaries
- Regional Strategic Organisations – Midlands Engine, WMCA, HS2

The LEP Board has identified 12 strategic programmes which aim to enable businesses in our growth sectors to grow and deliver our contribution to UK Industrial Strategy. The programmes will also ensure that the Black Country has the economic, social and physical infrastructure to enable these companies to grow.

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Communications delivery in common with all of the LEPs work is based on good working relationships with partners to align messages and PR to engage businesses and other stakeholders. The LEP is at the centre of a web of networks, developing and harnessing the belief of individuals and organisations in an exciting and prosperous future for the area.

2. The strategic framework

The LEPs Strategic Economic Plan *'Made in the Black Country, sold around the World'* sets out the strategic approach and programmes to achieve business growth, give people new skills, test new innovations, invest in transport infrastructure and regenerate key sites for housing and employment investment in the Black Country.

The Black Country Strategic Economic Plan's programmes are structured by the themes of *Business, People and Place*:

Business – a sector based approach, focusing on the transformational sectors where the Black Country has a competitive advantage:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Business services
- Building technologies
- Environmental technologies
- Transport technologies (including aerospace and automotive)

People – Business decisions are made by individuals, based on personal considerations. The quality of life for people influences business location and career choices, for example the choice of housing, schools, transport infrastructure, culture, entertainment and sport.

Place – the greater the external recognition for the area as a place where business thrives, the easier it is to attract investment and a talented workforce.

The LEP has established Theme Advisory Groups, with the Chairs of the groups drawn from the private sector. The Theme Groups will drive the development of propositions, which will support the delivery of the Strategic Economic Plan. The Theme Groups and propositions will require communications activity to reach targeted audiences.

All Groups work to Thematic Communication Plans.

3. Team Black Country

The Black Country is driving growth with great teamwork, with the best of the private and public sectors working together to an agreed Strategic Economic Plan. We have to harness this teamwork to ensure our players take a Black Country perspective, thinking beyond their individual organisations.

The LEP is a strategic influencing body which works with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to ***inform, engage and inspire action***.

4. Positioning message

Our communications activity must repeatedly emphasise the Black Country's distinctive strengths and the remit of the LEP is assisting business growth. The Black Country needs to portray its competitive distinctiveness, with compelling propositions to generate investment to grow the economy.

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The Black Country has a proud manufacturing heritage and contemporary businesses are applying ingenuity to transform materials, make innovative products, processes and supply chain components that are exported globally.

This competitive strength underpins the positioning message:

Made in the Black Country, sold around the world

This message has the flexibility for use by partners across sectors and supply chains, in headings, articles, media interviews and presentations, supported by case studies of local companies competing globally.

It is now a powerful and recognised #hashtag and used consistently across social media leading several campaigns including Black Country Day and the successful House of Commons Showcase in July each year as well as MIPIM, the International Property & Investment Exhibition.

5. The current landscape

5.1) West Midlands Combined Authority

5.2) Midlands Engine

5.3) Midlands Connect

5.3) HS2

5.4) Relationships with the Government

Developing good working relationships with BEIS and Government Ministers, civil servants and constituency MPs. Ensuring they understand the work of the LEP and the Black Country area.

6. Target audiences

The LEP has a range of target audiences which can be grouped into broad categories:

Priority audiences:

- Local Strategic Businesses & all sector networks – including key decision makers
- Government – Ministers, BEIS, Departments and the Black Country Councils
- Investors & intermediaries – national and international target markets
- Regional Strategic Organisations, e.g. WMCA, ME, HS2

Secondary audiences:

- Residents and workers – inspire advocacy by people who live and work here
- Media - regional, national, international & trade
- Students and graduates – future talent
- Visitors

7. Stakeholder networks

Please consider the Black Country Stakeholder Engagement Plan with this document.

Black Country business base

- Strategic companies (1,598 - barometer May 2015)

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- Award winning companies (45 -Queens Awards research March 2015)
- Black Country Chamber of Commerce Platinum Members (31 - May 2015)
- Companies awarded LEP Access to Finance funding (over 400)
- LEP project contacts – via Growth Hub, Enterprise Zone, Skills Factory, IBC

Business networks

Direct partners:

- Black Country Chamber of Commerce & Platinum Members
- Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Black Country branch
- West Midlands Manufacturing Club (run by University of City of Wolverhampton)
- Business Improvement Districts (City of Wolverhampton city centre, Albion Industrial Estate in Sandwell)

Dissemination:

- Alliance 4 the Black Country (Professional services network)
- Accountants, lawyers serving the area from Birmingham based regional offices
- British American Business Council
- Black Country Asian Business Association
- CBI, Engineering Employers Federation (EEF), Institute of Directors IOD
- Families in Business - Black Country branch
- Funding agencies – e.g. Banks, Black Country Reinvestment Society
- Knowledge Transfer Networks
- Made in the Midlands, Manufacturing Advisory Service, UKTI
- Start up support – The Princes Trust, StartUp Britain, SWEDA, Access2Business
- Social Enterprise networks
- West Midlands Lord Lieutenancy Business Group

Business Trade bodies:

- Confederation of British Metalforming, Engineering and Manufacturing Alliance, Institutes of Cast Metal Engineers, Mechanical Engineers etc
- Midlands Aerospace Alliance, SMMT
- Relevant trade organisations for each proposition

Investment partners

- University of City of Wolverhampton - £250m investment
- Be Active Sport
- Black Country Further Education Colleges
- Developers – sites & Enterprise Zone
- Foreign Direct investors – via IBC
- Homes - Accord Housing, Walsall Housing Group etc
- Growth Deal project partners
- Visitor Economy & cultural attractions and hospitality businesses

Local Authority partners

- Black Country Joint Committee, ABCA
- Dudley MBC, Sandwell Council, Walsall Council, City of Wolverhampton City Council
- Leaders & Cabinets
- Chief Executives, officers – e.g. Heads of Regeneration, Communications
- Local Economic Development teams / IBC
- Combined Authority development team

Government

- Ministers & Departments - Cabinet Office, BEIS, DCLG, DCMS, GCS
- Black Country MPs, West Midlands MEPs
- Agencies – BDUK, HCA, Highways Agency, High Value Manufacturing Catapult, Innovate UK, Visit England, Sport England, UKTI
- Skills – UKCES, Skills Funding Agency
- EU agencies, Eurocities, Greater Birmingham and West Midlands Brussels Office

Regional Agencies

- WMCA; Midlands Engine; HS2
- Regional LEPS – GBSLEP, Coventry & Warwickshire, Marches, Staffs, Worcestershire
- Birmingham Airport & Airlines

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transport - Centro, West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority, Midland Connect, Network Rail, National Express, HS2 ▪ Marketing Birmingham, Business Birmingham ▪ NHS England & Black Country Health organisations ▪ Arts Council England ▪ Canal & River Trust, MADE
<p>Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Express & Star ▪ Broadcast – BBC, Central, Big Centre TV, Radio WM, Free Radio, Heart ▪ Print / digital – Birmingham Post, Business Desk, BQ, Insider ▪ National media – broadcast, print ▪ Trade media
<p>Others / business influencers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LEP Network ▪ Regional University Business Schools – City of Wolverhampton, Aston, Birmingham, Warwick and Thought Leadership academics ▪ Research / Think Tanks – e.g. Centre for Cities, Localis, Nesta, Smith Institute

8. Relationship management

The nurturing and pro-active management of strategic relationships with the senior management of partner organisations, LEP Board members, Local Authority Leaders and Chief Officers, Government departments and the media is a fundamental component of an effective LEP communications plan.

There will be regular dialogue with representatives of organisations such as the Express & Star, University of City of Wolverhampton and Black Country Colleges who can influence external perceptions and the image of the Black Country.

The quality of these relationships is central to the LEPs ability to manage its reputation and directly influences the impact of the tactical communications actions in section 12.

The LEP needs to be clear in managing expectations of direct delivery.

9. Engaging the voice of business

A priority for the LEP is to engage businesses to ensure their voices are heard; to place the LEP at the centre of a 'network of networks' to stimulate a two way dialogue.

The LEP works closely with all business membership organisations with representation on appropriate LEP Sub Boards.

- To achieve a common understanding and focus on the key messages for the Black Country economy
- To share intelligence and develop a common use of economic data, infographics, images and case studies
- To inform businesses of all sizes, from Platinum Chamber Members to start ups on 'how to grow' and enabling businesses to deliver LEP/SEP objectives
- To begin a dialogue with strategic businesses and stakeholders

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10. Propositions and project communications

The LEP Board have identified five core propositions, which will support the delivery of the Strategic Economic Plan. These are overseen by the Theme Advisory Groups and as the concepts evolve they require marketing communications activity to generate awareness and support. All Themed Groups have a headline Communication Plan to ensure connectivity across Projects and Programmes.

Our full set of priority propositions are:

- **High Value Manufacturing City:** a series of interventions to accelerate the growth of high value manufacturing businesses in the Black Country, including action to improve the quality of existing employment locations;
- **The Black Country: business competitiveness:** a programme to strengthen our business base by creating the conditions for higher levels of business birth, growth and survival and to enable Black Country businesses to improve their productivity and competitiveness;
- **Economic Capital:** action to seek maximum economic benefit from our strategic centres and ensure that they contribute to the attractiveness of the Black Country as a place to live, work, visit and invest;
- **Black Country Garden City:** a programme to accelerate house building and improve our housing mix by treating our supply of brownfield land as an opportunity for place-shaping and the creation of sustainable communities;
- **Skills for Business, Skills for Life:** action to ensure that our skills system can meet the needs of businesses and enable Black Country residents to benefit from growth;
- **Connected Black Country:** a programme of investment in broadband and in transport to support growth by enabling the movement of goods and people;

Project communications

The LEP is responsible for a number of programmes which contribute to achieving the Strategic Economic Plan; these include the Black Country Growth Deal projects which secured Government investment. These projects require varying degrees of coordination and audience-specific marketing communications activities. This activity is used to generate an ongoing schedule of activities, campaigns, launches and milestones to plan communications activities and resources.

The following chart illustrates the links between the themes, core propositions and LEP projects, and gives an overview of the scale of communications management required:

	<i>Business</i>	<i>People</i>	<i>Place</i>
Theme Advisory Group	Business Competitiveness and Enterprise	People	Place Making and Land

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Aim	Centre of expertise in High Value Manufacturing	Skills needed by businesses	Location, environment, & infrastructure to attract businesses and people
Propositions	HVM City Programme & Digital Platform	Skills System including Skills Factory, Careers Enterprise Company, Passport 2 Employment, Apprenticeship Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Garden City ▪ Brownfield Centre of Excellence ▪ Transport Infrastructure ▪
SEP programmes	<p>B1: Supply Chain Development including Innovation & Enterprise</p> <p>B2. Exploiting Global Opportunities</p> <p>B3. Access to Finance</p>	<p>P1. Skills for the Supply Chain</p> <p>P2. Skills Capital</p> <p>P3. Schools - Raising Skills for the Future</p> <p>P4. Skills for the Unemployed</p>	<p>PL1. Expanding the Availability of High Quality Employment Land & delivering portfolio of mixed use development opportunities.</p> <p>PL2. Connecting our Goods, Services & Employees to work & International Markets</p> <p>PL3. Housing</p> <p>PL4. Distinctive Urban Centres</p> <p>PL5. Quality Environment and Low Carbon Economy</p>
Projects	<p>Access to Finance / Growth Hub (B3)</p> <p>Invest Black Country (B2, PL1,2)</p> <p>Strategic messages from LEP with Growth Hub & IBC delivery</p>	Skills Factory (P1)	<p>Enterprise Zone (PL1)</p> <p>Visitor, creative economy (PL4)</p>
Funding Streams	<p>Growth Deal</p> <p>WMCA Land Fund</p> <p>ME Investment Fund</p> <p>Enterprise Zones</p>	<p>Growth Deal</p> <p>ESIF</p>	<p>Growth Deal</p> <p>WMCA Land Fund</p> <p>Transport West Midlands</p>
Cross cutting	<p>LEP Corporate Marketing & Communications;</p> <p>Broadband project 2015 -17</p> <p>Energy Capital</p> <p>SMART City</p>		

11. Marketing communications activity and action plans

The LEP has developed a range of channels and tactical action programmes for corporate and project communications – social and digital media, print, PR, forums, presentations, briefings, Ministerial visits. These need to be underpinned by a process for all staff and board members to update contacts for the database and design and imagery.

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These are reviewed in the following section with the current position and measurement and actions.

Website

www.blackcountrylep.co.uk

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be the shop window for the LEP and its work • To reinforce strategic messages
Audiences	<p>Primary – strategic businesses Secondary - Government depts., stakeholders, media, general public – access to board reports & strategic documents</p>
Measurement	<p>Monthly analysis of user data, and 6 monthly review of site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique Visitors, % New Visits vs % return Visits • Traffic Sources • Inbound Links / referring URLs • Indexed pages, Bounce rate • Most popular / least popular pages • Companies Visiting, Information requests • Search Engine rankings • Interactivity – online surveys
Activity to date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LEP site redesigned September 2016 • Skills Factory – refreshed and expanded January 2017 • Invest Black Country refreshed 2016
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget • Needs constant updating to improve user experience & navigation • Manage stakeholder and business expectations of what the LEP is, what it does and what it can/can't do
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit content & layout • Navigation, design - easy for users to find information they want • Hyper links to business networks • Ensure opens on all platforms - PC, mobile, tablet • Improve images & interactive content • Flexibility on home page to highlight key news • Coordinate content with Growth Hub
Cost £	Staff time, programming and design costs for new layout

Newsletter / e bulletins	
Objectives	To disseminate a regular, easy to read LEP news summary with links to more details online e bulletins – rapid response, latest news to targeted audiences from database
Audiences	Local businesses, business networks and LEP stakeholders

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- Activity to date
- Started Autumn 2013 and sustained
 - 8 editions in past 12 months
 - over 3,300 sent direct in March
 - Each edition link is tweeted & on website
 - Includes direct links to business organisations, partners and stakeholders
 - e bulletins for targeted distribution on specific topics
- Measurement
- Reaching target BC companies with growth potential
 - Open Rate %: (average 22% last 3 editions)
 - Click Through Rate: % clicking any link - content effectiveness
 - Unsubscribe %
 - Hard Bounces: % not deliverable
 - Sharing by partners
 - Interactive feedback, response online poll
 - e bulletin – average 22%, can reach over 35%
- Challenges
- Contact database – 2017 Mail Chimp upgraded to improve accuracy and reach to strategic companies selected target groups
 - Read rates as a whole are low, need realistic expectations
- Actions
- Review frequency and level of content – consider monthly with less detail
 - All content to answer "Why should I read?"
 - Make reading experience as easy to inform and engage with headlines, summary information
 - Coordinate with Growth Hub newsletter and use LinkedIn group as a way of increasing circulation/driving up the open rate.
 - Review each edition & measure
 - Archive editions to be on website
 - e bulletins - managing partner expectations and not using as an advertising tool for other companies
- Cost £
- Content – in house
Design, distribution by Ice Blue £4k pa

Contact Database	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To engage with Black Country key stakeholders • To target the right level of individual in a target business • To create meaningful engagement
Audiences	All
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers on database • Strategic company contacts • Requests for newsletter via website • An increase in engagement
Current activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database currently exists from previous LEP contacts and those requesting the e newsletter • The Skills Factory has a separate database • Communications for e newsletters, e bulletins and events

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Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of 'real' contacts particularly in strategic companies • On-going job that constantly needs reviewing and information from all staff and board members
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer 2016 – Mail Chimp upgrade • Buy in contact lists • Use LinkedIn to mine information about “real” contacts
Cost £	Staff time and buy in costs (if an option), Graduate intern

Social media - Twitter [@blackcountrylep](https://twitter.com/blackcountrylep) and LinkedIn

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use tactically for immediate communication of LEP activity & relevant news • Promote Black Country as innovative, enterprising and as a place to invest, live and work • Remain in the LEP top 10 for followers • LinkedIn – Business orientated online forum for advice and discussion
Audiences	All stakeholders
Activity to date	<p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep relevant to LEP or local businesses • Daily review of positive stories, create headline, tweet & post positive images of BC business/place/people using local Flickr groups • No negative comments about other places / organisations • If possible add links & images, use campaign hashtags • Retweet relevant partner tweets & content from strategic companies • Good partnership 2 way communication
Measurement	<p>Monthly twitter & LinkedIn analysis:</p> <p>https://analytics.twitter.com/user/blackcountrylep/home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tweets • Tweet impressions • Profile visits, mentions • Followers • Benchmarking vs. other LEPs, in top 10 • No target for tweets per month, must be content led • LinkedIn - Content of discussion topics, Businesses / advisers engaged
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media set as an objective for Marketing team • Review if some tweets are best delivered by other partners e.g. Growth Hub
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain current Twitter profile • Set up separate LinkedIn page linked to the twitter feed • Integrate tweets with PR

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LinkedIn activity integrated into Marcomms
Cost £	Staff time / Graduate intern

Public Relations

- Objectives
- To achieve positive media coverage and profile the LEP & Black Country as a business location and place to live ,work, invest
 - To build good relationships with media

Audiences All stakeholders, dependent on content & international audiences

- Activity to date
- Writing & issuing releases to local, national and trade media to generate positive coverage: TV interviews, campaign on Growth Deal progress, Enterprise Zones, transport, MIPIM participation, Skills Factory
 - Monthly LEP column in Express & Star, good working relationship established
 - Process for approval of quotes by Board Members
 - Briefing Board members to prepare for broadcast interviews

- Measurement
- Media coverage monitored daily via Precise media monitoring
 - Advertising Value Equivalent of coverage calculated monthly
 - No setting of monthly release targets, content led
 - Feedback and sharing of coverage
 - 2016/17 AVE £1.5million

- Challenges
- Limited capacity – need to prioritise
 - Getting information, quotes, images from partners

- Actions
- Coverage to reinforce key messages on LEP delivery
 - Focus on key events – e.g. delivery progress for Growth Deal
 - Increase sector coverage & profile LEP Board members nationally
 - Integrate with digital media - tweets, website news, LinkedIn
 - Forward plan of events, launches, campaigns
 - Send positive coverage to Board, partners and Government depts.

Cost £ Staff time
External PR consultant

LEP Annual Review	
Objectives	To produce an annual publication of LEP achievements in print and electronic formats
Audiences	LEP stakeholders, primarily Government depts., MPs, Council Cabinets, partners
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback • Requests for copies

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-tweets of link • Downloads from website
Activity to date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approach – highlighting key achievements using statistics & images ▪ Approval process - sign off by Chair and CEO ▪ 1,000 copies printed & distributed to Government depts., MPs, MEPs, Council Cabinet members ▪ Download link online & tweeted
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Generating and verifying the information ▪ High quality images
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appoint designer and agree design framework ▪ Senior staff to provide content and images
Cost £	Design, print, distribution £5,000

Events - LEP Conference, presentations, briefings

Objectives	To use events to engage and update local businesses and other targeted groups on the work of the LEP
Audiences	Primary - local businesses Secondary - Government depts, stakeholders, media, public
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business attendance & feedback on event • Media coverage • Working in partnership
Current activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual LEP conference for businesses • Forums / briefings / Board member presentations • Meet the Funder events
Challenges	Limited in-house resources to undertake: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event organisation • Promotion to secure business attendance • Presentations • Marketing collateral is out of date, using old LEP branding e.g. new pull up displays needed
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forums hosted in partnership with business networks to engage local businesses & shape policy e.g. by sector, size of business, location • Review effectiveness of Access to Finance and Meet the Funder events to engage growth potential businesses • Briefing materials supplied to board members & partners to advocate the work of the LEP • Set up briefings on the progress of the LEP for local MPs, selected companies, Local Council Cabinet Members
Cost £	Annual Event – venue hire, catering, AV staging

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	£10,000
Briefings – venue hire, catering, AV support	£2,500
New marketing display material	£1,500

Ministerial visits

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage and coordinate visits by Government Ministers To showcase the Black Country, the LEPs achievements in general & progress on specific projects To exploit the credibility of the visit
Audiences	Government, media
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct feedback from Minister and Head of events Media coverage
Current activity	Good track record with BEIS
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To respond quickly with ideas To recognise events become the Ministers event and officials decide what happens
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To respond positively with ideas, companies to visit when requested To proactively suggest platforms for visits arising from propositions Get approval for LEP Chair to be quoted in releases Engage local media if allowed, ensure photographer booked
Cost £	Coordination - staff time, photographers

Design & imagery

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To use design film, photos & infographics to communicate Consistent implementation – to reinforce key messages
Audiences	All
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent use of quality images Requests for use by partners Image Bank created in 2017
Current activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEP Review, Black Country Economic Review, Presentations The LEP has negotiated access to E&S photography
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No design / infographic skills in-house
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build up images and access via partners & local Flickr groups Develop in house infographic capability
Cost £	Budget to commission creative design or negotiate in-kind

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assistance from partners with design resources.

Advertising and sponsorship

The LEP does not have the budget to undertake advertising or sponsorship, but it can achieve sponsorship by providing assistance in-kind, such as profile raising to achieve a sponsorship association with events and campaigns.

Any implementation will be tactical and in the past has been linked to a specific project such as the Growth Hub or Skills Factory.

The LEP will not commission any lobbying services.

11. Action summary

1) Feedback on this plan

- Share draft plan with strategic partners to generate shared engagement and evolve the plan. The plan should be for 2017 - 2020 and actions developed for short and medium timescales over the next 2-3 years.
- Present Action plan and costs to LEP Board in June 2017.

2) Managing relationships

- Maintain good working relationships with senior management of partner organisations, LEP Board members, Government departments and the media

3) LEP Communications delivery

- 2017 Audit on all activity and identity to develop an action plan to increase effectiveness of communications – Brand & Identity redesign; Guidelines completed; Mail Chimp upgraded; Social Media Policy & Strategy completed; Digital media – websites redesigned / refreshed; print reviewed; Collateral reprint. PR, presentations, briefings, ministerial visits all referenced to SEP priorities
- Thematic marketing and communications plans completed for the Theme Advisory Groups and propositions
- Allocate ownership responsibilities and budgets
- Ensure activity has SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely) objectives and measurement
- Ensure Regional priorities aligned and communicated where appropriate
- Black Country Communication Team set up – LA leads; IBC
- Regional Communications Groups attended – WMCA;ME.HS2.LEP Network

4) Network Coordination

- Between the LEP and Chamber of Commerce, FSB. & Growth Hub

5) High-level outcomes for rolling summary of performance

- Communication Report provided to every LEP Board meeting and Away Days.

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6) Combined Authority and cross-LEP working

- Ensure LEP positioning alongside West Midlands Combined Authority and communicating the benefits of cross-LEP working.
-

7) A distinctive, contemporary Black Country story

- Contribute the distinctive contemporary Black Country story to the current Midlands Engine regional positioning project.

12. Outcomes & measurement**14.1 Reporting high-level outcomes**

Communications activity will be monitored against achievement of the strategic aim:

To inform and engage businesses and stakeholders in the LEPs programmes to develop an enterprise culture and drive economic growth in the Black Country.

The following high-level outcomes are proposed:

Engaging businesses

- Strategic businesses in partnership with Local Authorities (each have strategic business engagement strategy) and Business networks. Rest of businesses in conjunction with the Growth Hub
- The number, size and turnover of businesses accessing support and the jobs created or safeguarded via the LEP Access to Finance team and Growth Hub

Consistency of message

- Six monthly reviews to monitor the consistency of the LEPs message across all communications and media coverage.

Network co-operation

- Co-operation and alignment of messages
- Using network to inform and engage businesses to assist growth

Managing Stakeholder Engagement Plan

- Building and operating effective relationships with senior representatives of stakeholders and responding to their requirements for information from the LEP.
- In co-ordination with local authorities to avoid duplication / confusion; and through more effective use of LinkedIn group
- The LEP continues to be regarded as high performing by stakeholders including Government
- **Digital** - Improved metrics for the LEP website and maintaining our position in the LEP top 10 for Twitter followers and benchmarking against other LEP LinkedIn groups.

13. Resources

Black Country Consortium Ltd (BCC) provides the secretariat function for the Black Country LEP. BCC has a depth of experience in bringing partners together to work at a Black Country level and the Economic Intelligence Unit provides a robust evidence base for LEP programmes.

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The Black Country LEP has limited personnel resources and budget constraints. Therefore we have to prioritise our communications activities, with limited scope for external advertising or sponsorship.

Acronyms

ABE – Association of Building Engineers
 HCA – Homes and Communities Agency
 BURA – British Urban Regeneration Association
 ICE – Institute of Civil Engineers
 EZ – Enterprise Zone
 WMITA – West Midland Integrated Transport Authority
 HS2 – High Speed 2
 CIC – Construction Industry Council
 ATOC – Association of Train Operating Companies
 IMechE – Institute of Mechanical Engineers
 RIBA – Royal Institute of British Architects
 IStructE – Institution of Structural Engineers
 RICS – Royal Institute for Chartered Surveyors
 PWC – PriceWaterhouseCoopers
 T&T – Turner & Townsend
 FDI – Foreign Direct Investment
 UKTI – UK Trade & Investment
 SMMT – Society for Motor Manufacturers and Traders
 UKCES – UK Commission for Employment and Skills
 MADE – Midlands Architecture Design Excellence
 MTC – Manufacturing Technology Centre
 WMG – Warwick Manufacturing Group
 NFB – National Federation of Builders
 CECA – Civil Engineering Contractors Association
 HBF – Home Builders Federation
 CIOB – Chartered Institute of Building
 FMB – Federation of Master Builders
 ABE – Association of Building Engineers
 CIH – Chartered Institute of Housing

Government Communications Service performance framework

For best practice the Black Country LEP Communication Plan will follow the Government Communications Service performance framework recommendations.

https://gcn.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/GCS-Evaluation_Performance_Framework.pdf

1. The performance framework must contain communications objectives that are aligned to the strategic priorities of the organisation.
2. Each communication objective in the framework must be underpinned by Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) measures that are clearly defined.
3. The performance framework must contain a selection of input, output, out-take and outcome metrics on each communication activity.

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4. The performance framework should comprise a selection of both qualitative and quantitative evidence that is consistent and comparable.
5. Ensure the measures in your framework reflect integrated activity (e.g. Press & Digital).
6. The performance measures should be within the communication directorate's sphere of influence.
7. Ensure you take account of other influences / interventions that may impact your communication activities.
8. Agree a limited number of high-level outcomes that provide a summary view of your performance.
9. Senior management are accountable for overall performance, so it is essential to secure their early buy-in.
10. Ensure the performance measures are regularly reviewed, documented and communicated.

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