

Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) 2022-2025

Employment and Skills Action Plan guide for Good Growth projects

Introduction

This guidance document has been created to assist Good Growth projects to create their own Skills and Employment Action Plans. These plans are usually required as a condition of Shared Prosperity Fund awards and they play an important role in driving Good Growth behavioural change.

What do we mean by Good Growth?

Projects supported through the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly (CloS) Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) should deliver jobs that are well paid and high quality. Projects should deliver an improvement of the employment culture of recipient organisations. Finally, the opportunities available should be inclusive and economic growth should benefit the environment.

The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Good Growth Principles

Business/Economy

- Increase % of workforce earning the real living wage
- Improve productivity of businesses in CloS
- Upskilling the workforce

Why do I need to do a Skills and Employment Action Plan?

Nurturing the skills and educational levels of the CloS workforce is important because we know that higher skill levels are essential for increasing productivity, incomes, and opportunities. On basic skills, more than a quarter of the working-age population in England have low literacy or numeracy skills. Employers have told us that there are skills gaps and shortages which hold their employees back. Evidence shows that differences in skill levels can partly explain differences in outputs and wages across the UK, therefore better skill levels are crucial for delivering Levelling Up in CloS. Additionally, to unleash the potential of the growing industries in CloS, it is important to make sure that the workforce has the skills needed to meet their requirements.

Organisations play a crucial role in boosting the skills of their employees. Research shows that a supportive workplace environment, coupled with proactive management is essential for enabling workers to use and enhance their skills, and advance in their careers. Training employees in new skills can be highly advantageous for employers, as it improves overall performance. More skilled staff can manage more complex tasks more quickly. Additionally, investing in employee development can greatly impact recruitment and retention as an organisation that values and supports its employees tends to attract and keep more skilled workers.

Overall, skill development is critical for driving economic growth and achieving higher standards of living. A Skills and Employment Action Plan is a structured approach for supporting skills advancement and this tool should be underpinned by a culture where learning is embedded and encouraged across every level of the organisation.

The practical steps outlined below are suggestions for how this Plan can be developed, it is recognised that each organisation will need to tailor their approach to their own context and needs.

Practical steps

1. Develop or harness a corporate strategy

To understand what skills advancement your organisation needs, start with finding out what the corporate strategic goals are.

- What is the mission and vision of the organisation? What are the key priorities, goals, and strategies? What do you want your entity to be and achieve this year, the next and in 3-5 years' time?
- Look at forecasted changes in the sector and organisational environment, including the estimated rate of growth or decline, the competition, and the technological changes.
- How can growth be achieved? What are the opportunities, constraints, and risks?
- What skills and competencies are required to achieve these goals? The outcome of this task will direct the Action Plan. Make a list of the specific skills and knowledge areas that are essential and identify where there are present and future gaps.

2. Assess current skills and competencies

Part of the above corporate strategy is to evaluate the existing skills and competencies of your staff, which is sometimes called a competency framework assessment, or a similar tool is a [learning needs analysis](#). This task links to learning and career development but can also be the basis for a variety of people management processes such as job role profiling, recruitment and selection, performance management and review.

Key components are:

- What skills, knowledge and experience does the workforce already possess? This may involve self-assessments, performance appraisals, and discussions with employees.
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of each team member. Are there personal aptitudes or ambitions to consider?
- A key outcome of this task should be to identify the alignment between what the organisation needs regarding skills and what the employees have or can develop.
- However, this process should be just as much about championing the personal aspirations of staff in the recognition that skills development is not only valuable when it directly plugs an organisational gap. It is just as important to invest in people for their own benefit. Yet this also is beneficial for the entity because it increases staff wellbeing which improves employee engagement, recruitment, and retention.
- The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has useful resources on devising [competency frameworks](#).

3. Take a whole organisation approach to embed a skills development ethos

Closely following on from the task above, to fully embed a skills and development ethos into the organisation, both the whole organisational and individual level must be taken into account:

- Long term vision of skills development within the organisation.
- Organisational budget for skills development.
- How a pipeline of core skills and talent can be built.
- The number and nature of possible external opportunities such as apprenticeships, traineeships, work experiences and industry placements. This may also involve working with schools, colleges, and universities to form and publicise these opportunities.
- Management training to ensure that staff are sufficiently supported to pursue learning and development.

- Training cost repayment employment clauses for where there is a high price for learning and development.

4. Work with each staff member to set individual goals and create a development plan

An integral part of the Employment and Skills Action Plan should be an explanation of how the entity will upskill staff. For this, it may be helpful to work with each employee to set individual learning needs and development goals in the form of a tailored plan, shaped by the organisation's objectives but also personal ambitions.

This plan should outline the actions, resources, and timelines necessary for the employee to reach their goals. Consider:

- Goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).
- Determine the resources and materials or tools required. Decide upon a set number of hours or days of training per quarter for each employee.
- Determine a set budget for each employee for the purposes of skills advancement.
- Various development methods, such as on-the-job training, workshops, apprenticeships, online courses, mentoring, coaching, membership to a professional network or body.
- Consider allocating the time of more senior staff member to mentoring or upskilling more junior members.
- The process to periodically monitor and appraise achievement of skills development.
- The Government's [Career Development Plan](#) guidance contains advice in this area.

5. Evaluate the Impact

After a certain period, assessing the impact of the organisational skills development approach so that it can be improved over time. This can help ensure that an upskilling culture is firmly embedded.

- Have employees gained the desired skills and competencies? Has this had a positive impact on their performance and the organization's objectives?

6. The Employment and Skills Action Plan

The Employment and Skills Action Plan should be a summary of all these efforts, containing concrete commitments. A well-executed skills approach can lead to increased staff wellbeing, improved performance, and a more skilled and motivated workforce.