

ANNEX C

BACKGROUND AND METHOD



LSIPOXFORDSHIRE
SHAPING THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

This annex summarises how the Oxfordshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) was developed in line with statutory guidance.

Our work was also guided by a set of values and behaviours that were approved by our employer-led Advisory Panel.



1. Outline of the Evidence Base

The Oxfordshire LSIP draws on a combination of employer insight, labour market data, national policy analysis and regional economic strategies. The approach reflects the principle that LSIPs should be employer led while grounded in robust labour market intelligence.

The Oxfordshire LSIP draws on four main evidence streams:

- employer engagement insight
- labour market data and economic analysis
- national and regional strategies and policy frameworks
- intelligence from partners across the skills system
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Employer insights were captured using the Oxfordshire and Berkshire Insights from Employers (OBIE) system.

Employer insights were triangulated with labour market information and regional and national economic strategies to identify the key skills priorities for the LSIP. This combined approach ensures that the plan reflects both real employer experience and wider labour market trends.

A list of associated data, strategies, documents and data sources are listed on page 22.

2. Demonstrating Alignment with LSIP Guidance

Employer Engagement Approach

Employer evidence forms the central component of the analysis. Insight was gathered through structured employer consultations, surveys, workshops, roundtables and sector discussions facilitated through business networks and WDPs. Engagement included employers of different sizes and sectors across the Oxfordshire economy, with a strong emphasis on small and medium sized enterprises, which represent the majority of the regional business base.

To ensure that the employer evidence base was systematic and representative, the LSIP research programme used a comprehensive commercial dataset containing all registered enterprises operating within Oxfordshire. This dataset provided a structured sampling frame covering the full local business population.

We have recorded two categories of engagement: reach, and active engagement.

Definition of Reach

Employers engaging with electronic communication- open rate.

Definition of Employer Engagement

Engagements were counted when employers undertook one or more of the following activities:

- used information provided by the LSIP team about skills solutions
- provided feedback on workforce development needs within their organisation or sector
- provided feedback on the suitability of education and skills provision across Oxfordshire and suggested improvements
- made a commitment of time or resources to support workforce development activity.

Examples include contacting providers via LSIP information, participation in WDPs, engagement with training providers on curriculum design, offering apprenticeships or work placements, or contributing to LSIP consultations and discussions.

Engagement was designed to create ongoing dialogue between employers, providers and stakeholders and to capture headline intelligence about recruitment difficulties, skills shortages and barriers to training. This approach provides the breadth of employer insight required to understand labour market conditions across the region.

The OBIE chart below shows the ‘reach’ and the ‘engagement’ since 2022.



From September 2025 to March 2026

During September 2025 to March 2026, engagement was designed to gain employer feedback and insights for the new LSIP

We interviewed employers one to one, employers contributed to round table events and focus groups and contributed their views in pulse surveys at networking events.

Engagement September 2025-March 2026		
Reach	Engagement *	*Of Which Non-Chamber Members
12,084 Open Rate	1,263	75%

We held specific cross sector events to elicit feedback on key emerging themes:

- [Thames Valley Talent Pipeline and Essential Skills Forum](#)
- [Thames Valley AI Skills and Workforce Forum](#)
- [Thames Valley Leadership & Management Forum](#)

A full list of LSIP events is at the end of Annex C. We also attended partner events and gathered feedback.

Data was collected through structured Dot Digital and Mentimeter formats, as well as qualitative insights gathered by our research team. All this feedback was structured and coded into OBIE to ensure comparability. These were highly successful events, with the exchange of ideas across sectors generating insights that may not have emerged in one-to-one interviews.

We also gained valuable insights from WDPs. For example most recently our WDP members for [health](#)

[and life sciences](#) (60+ attendees) and [defence and security](#) (40+ attendees), joined the wider business-led curated industry networks at two working group meetings held in February 2026.

To enhance data collection and deepen insights, deep dive one to one interviews and small group meetings were conducted by the LSIP's in house research team.

397 employers attended these meetings (1-1, Forums and other meetings) from September 2025-March 2026.

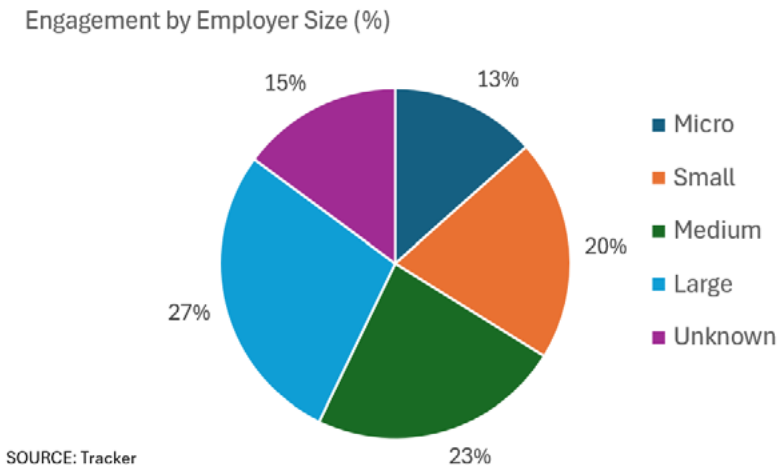
Researchers were trained in the structured interview methodology and in the consistent application of a standardised interview guide designed to explore workforce structure, recruitment challenges, skills gaps, training practices and anticipated future changes in occupational demand.

The use of a structured interview framework ensured comparability across sectors while allowing interviewers to probe responses in depth and capture detailed descriptions of job roles, required competencies and operational challenges.

Representation by Business Size (Engagement Sep 25-March 26)

To ensure that the employer evidence base was systematic and representative, the LSIP research programme used a comprehensive commercial dataset containing all registered enterprises operating within Oxfordshire. This dataset provided a structured sampling frame covering the full local business population.

From this frame, employers were purposively sampled to ensure representation across the LSIP's priority sectors and a strong emphasis on small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which constitute the majority of the regional business base.

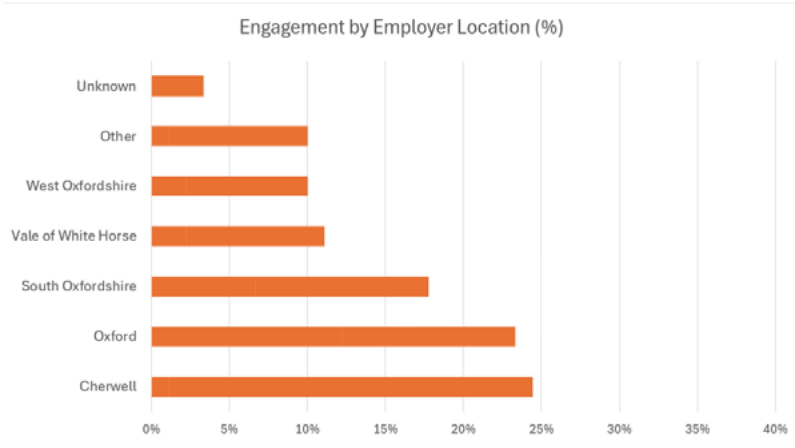


Oxfordshire's business base is strongly SME-dominated, with a particularly high proportion of micro enterprises. According to Office for National Statistics UK Business Counts data (IDBR, 2023), around 88–90% of enterprises in Oxfordshire employ fewer than 10 people. A further 8–10% employ between 10 and 49 people, with approximately 1–2% classified as medium-sized businesses. Large businesses account for around 1% or less of the total business population. Overall, SMEs represent over 99% of all enterprises in the county.

In line with this profile, LSIP engagement activity has sought to reflect the structure of the local economy. Approximately 76% of employer engagement has been with SMEs, ensuring that smaller businesses are well represented, while recognising the need to continue strengthening engagement with this group given their dominance within the Oxfordshire economy.

Representation by Local Authority (Active Engagement Sep 25–March 26)

Geographical coverage across Oxfordshire was ensured through close working with partner organisations across the five district areas: Oxford, Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire. This enabled access to employers across the full geography of the county and ensured that engagement reflected both urban and rural economic activity, as well as the distribution of key sector clusters.



Based on Office for National Statistics UK Business Counts data (2023), Oxford accounts for the largest share of enterprises within the county, with Cherwell and South Oxfordshire also representing significant proportions of the business base. Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire account for slightly smaller shares but still represent substantial parts of the local economy.

This distribution informed the sampling approach, ensuring that employer engagement was broadly proportionate to the underlying business base while maintaining appropriate representation across all five districts. The aim was not to replicate the distribution exactly, but to ensure balanced and representative coverage across different geographies, sectors and business sizes.

Representation by Sector (Active Engagement Sep 25-March 26)

The approach was structured on a sector-by-sector basis, using SIC classifications to ensure systematic coverage. Employer recruitment for deep dive interviews and events was undertaken iteratively within each priority sector, with targeted sampling to reflect both the scale and strategic importance of sectors locally. This ensured that sectors such as Creative, IT Construction, Life Sciences were proportionately represented, while also capturing insight from supporting and cross-cutting sectors including transport, retail and administrative services, as shown in the chart. (NB This OBIE chart reflects older categories of LSIP priority that were part of the long listing described above).



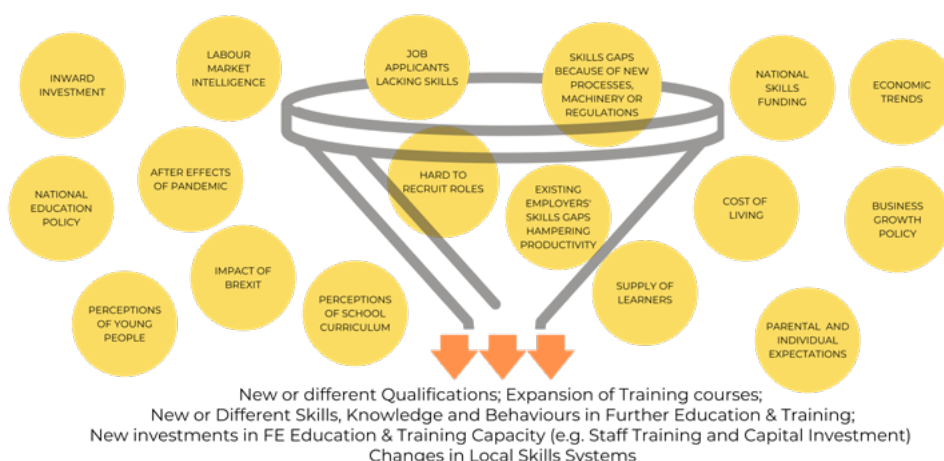
Eliciting Useful Information

Learnings from the previous LSIP round has deepened the team's expertise in eliciting the 'right' information from employers that is useful to the LSIP purpose. We refer to this as the LSIP 'Hopper'.

For this round of LSIP research, a series of structured tools were designed to guide interactions and structure the record of one-to-one interviews, focus groups, events and other data gathering exercises. All of these were detailed consultations designed to generate granular qualitative evidence about

occupations, workforce needs and the changing nature of work.

ARTICULATING EMPLOYERS' SKILLS NEEDS



They focus on:

- specific job roles and occupational demand
- recruitment difficulties and hard-to-fill vacancies
- skills shortages and workforce capability gaps
- training and workforce development needs
- emerging technological, regulatory or market changes.

The insights generated through deep dives are coded and mapped to SOC and SIC classifications, enabling employer insight to be analysed alongside labour market data and occupational frameworks.

We developed a template to guide all our interactions, learning from feedback from our ongoing work.

Template

Conversations followed a structured framework to ensure consistency in the information collected and to enable systematic analysis.

Business Overview

Employers were asked to describe their organisation, its core activities and the sectors in which it operates.

Typical questions included:

- Can you describe what your business does in a few sentences?
- What products or services do you provide?
- Who are your main customers or clients?
- How many people do you employ and in which departments?

Job Roles and Tasks

Employers were asked to identify the key roles within their organisation and describe the tasks involved in those roles.

Typical questions included:

- What are the main job roles within your organisation?
- What are the key responsibilities and tasks associated with those roles?
- Are these roles specific to your organisation or common across your industry?

Recruitment Challenges

Employers were asked to identify recruitment difficulties and hard-to-fill vacancies.

Typical questions included:

- Which roles have been hardest to recruit for over the past year?
- Why are these roles difficult to fill?
- Is the challenge related to skills, experience, qualifications or other factors?
- Where do you usually recruit from?

Skills and Training Needs

Employers were asked about skills shortages and workforce development needs.

Typical questions included:

- Which skills are most often missing among applicants for difficult-to-fill roles?
- Which parts of your current workforce most urgently require training or upskilling?
- How does your organisation currently provide training for employees?

Future Workforce Needs

Employers were asked about expected changes to workforce demand.

Typical questions included:

- Which roles or skills will become more important over the next three years?
- What business changes are driving these needs?
- Are any tasks likely to become automated or replaced by technology?

Barriers to Training

Employers were asked about barriers that limit their ability to invest in skills.

Typical questions included:

- What prevents your business from investing more in workforce training?
- Have you worked with colleges or training providers previously?
- What changes to local training provision would benefit your business most?

These structured interviews provided detailed qualitative evidence about occupational demand, skills gaps and workforce change.

Capturing Employer Insights

Employer insights were captured using the Oxfordshire and Berkshire Insights from Employers (OBIE)

system. This database tool enabled structured collection and analysis of employer feedback, allowing qualitative evidence to be coded thematically and mapped to industry and occupational classifications as well as useful comparisons with skills needs linked to Skills England Routes.

The platform supports thematic analysis and allows evidence to be interrogated across sectors and occupations. Employer insights were assessed iteratively until data saturation was reached, ensuring that key themes were consistently reflected across multiple businesses rather than relying on isolated examples.

Following data collection, the research team applied a systematic coding and analysis framework. Evidence from interviews was coded both thematically and by type of workforce need, allowing the analysis to distinguish between different categories of skills demand such as recruitment shortages, workforce upskilling requirements, emerging skills linked to technological change, and barriers to training investment.

Job roles and tasks described by employers were also mapped, where appropriate, to Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes, while businesses were categorised using Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes. This structured coding ensured that qualitative employer insights could be analysed consistently and aligned with recognised labour market frameworks.

Triangulation with Data

Triangulation of evidence and identification of priorities followed a structured, iterative process combining governance input, employer engagement and analytical testing.

As a non-devolved area, a number of stakeholders were involved in identifying and testing the focus of the LSIP.

Initial sector mapping established a comprehensive longlist by aligning Oxfordshire's identified priority sectors and economic strengths with national and sub-regional policy frameworks. This included the UK Industrial Strategy and Skills England priorities at national level, alongside the Oxfordshire Economic Strategy locally. This ensured that the initial scope reflected both the sectoral composition of the Oxfordshire economy and the wider direction of travel for economic growth, productivity and labour market development.

The Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan places a strong emphasis on innovation-led and productivity-driven growth, building on the county's globally recognised strengths in research, science and technology. It prioritises the continued development of high-value sector clusters, particularly in life sciences, advanced engineering and manufacturing, clean energy and digital technologies. The strategy also highlights the importance of skills development, business growth and competitiveness, and investment in infrastructure as key enablers of long-term economic performance. Alongside this, there is a clear focus on ensuring that economic growth is inclusive, with greater alignment between employment, skills and education systems to widen access to opportunities and support workforce participation across the county.

This longlist was then tested through a consistent set of analytical lenses to determine where LSIP intervention would deliver the greatest value. These lenses assessed the extent to which sectors contribute to productivity, gross value added, exports and innovation. They also examined the persistence and scale of labour and skills pressures, including vacancy intensity, recruitment difficulty and workforce shortages, as well as the degree to which sectors offer accessible entry points, progression pathways and opportunities for inclusion. Ongoing discussions at the Thames Valley Skills Unit weekly meetings (internal), alongside feedback from partners, helped to refine where the LSIP should focus.

Between September and October 2025, the early phase involved sense-checking emerging sector areas against live employer feedback. In November, a set of draft priority areas was formally agreed with the LSIP Employer Panel, an LSIP Local Authority Panel (convened by Oxfordshire Enterprise) and an LSIP Provider Panel (with representatives from all FE colleges, over 20 ITPs, and Universities). The Employer and Provider Panels were pan Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

Further consideration was given to sectors that underpin economic resilience and essential services, particularly where workforce sustainability is critical. Additional weighting was applied to sectors central to the transition to net zero, those with strong research and innovation intensity, and those that build on distinctive local assets such as innovation campuses, anchor institutions and established cluster

strengths. Consideration was also given to the likelihood of future disruption, including the anticipated impacts of artificial intelligence, automation and wider economic change, recognising that these factors will reshape skills demand over the medium to long term.

Employer insight informed the process throughout but did not determine priorities in isolation. Instead, a structured triangulation process was applied. Emerging themes from employer engagement were identified through systematic coding of feedback and wider engagement activity. These themes were then tested against labour market demand indicators, including online vacancy analysis over the previous three months and employment data from the Office for National Statistics Business Register and Employment Survey, to confirm whether reported shortages reflected wider demand. Skills supply data was subsequently reviewed, drawing on Department for Education further education statistics and the Local Skills Dashboard, to assess whether provision aligned with or diverged from employer need.

Long-term employment projections to 2035 were used to identify sectors expected to support significant job growth across Oxfordshire. Findings were then cross-referenced against the Oxfordshire Economic Plan and the Oxfordshire Works Plan, the UK Industrial Strategy and Skills England priorities to ensure alignment with strategic economic direction. Sector-specific intelligence was incorporated where available, including evidence from partners such the Electrical Contractor Training Alliance, CITB, Enterprise Oxfordshire, individual local authority skills plans.

Four key evidence streams informed the analysis throughout:

- Labour market data and economic analysis
- National and regional strategies and policy frameworks
- Employer engagement insight, including both wide engagement and deep dives
- Intelligence from partners across the skills system

Where evidence converged across these sources, priorities were confirmed. Where evidence diverged, further interrogation was undertaken with employers and partners before inclusion.

Priorities were finalised through a structured governance process, with the Panels (Employer, Provider and Local Authority) reconvening in February 2026 to review and agree priorities.

Draft priorities and emerging findings were then shared widely with partners in February 2026 to ensure transparency and collective input. This included circulation to further education colleges, higher education institutions, independent training providers, local authorities, employer groups, sector bodies, careers services and Jobcentre Plus.

A full draft of the LSIP was subsequently reissued in March 2026 for further consultation. Feedback from all stakeholders was gathered and analysed systematically, with changes incorporated where appropriate. This iterative approach ensured that priorities were not only evidence-based but also tested and validated across the wider system.

As a result, the final LSIP reflects a shared and agreed position across employers, providers and strategic partners, ensuring that priorities are credible, deliverable and aligned with both employer demand and Oxfordshire’s economic ambitions. The table below summarises this:

Some sectors that are important to Oxfordshire’s economy were not prioritised as standalone LSIP sectors where evidence suggested that skills needs were already well served through existing provision or where workforce development issues were captured within broader clusters. For example, education and professional services represent a significant part of Oxfordshire’s economy but employers did not identify distinctive sector-specific skills shortages requiring a separate LSIP response. Skills needs within this sector are largely addressed through the cross-cutting priorities relating to digital capability, management development and workforce upskilling.

Priority Area	Why Prioritised
Life Sciences (Pharmaceuticals, Biotechnology and Health Technology)	Oxfordshire hosts one of the UK’s most significant life sciences clusters, with strong demand for scientists, laboratory technicians, regulatory specialists and advanced manufacturing staff across research, diagnostics and medical technology.
Technology and Innovation (green technology, energy, advanced manufacturing and quantum and super conducting technologies)	Rapid growth in clean energy, fusion research, battery technologies and low-carbon engineering is driving demand for engineers, technicians and specialists in energy systems, materials science and advanced manufacturing.

Priority Area	Why Prioritised
Digital (Data, AI and Technology Enabled Services)	Digital capability underpins Oxfordshire's innovation economy, with strong demand for software developers, data analysts, AI specialists and digital infrastructure roles across research, technology and professional services.
Creative Industries (Gaming and Publishing)	Oxfordshire has a strong cluster of gaming, publishing and digital content businesses requiring hybrid creative and technical skills across software development, digital production and user experience design.
Defence (Advanced Manufacturing, Space and Supply Chains)	Strategic sector linked to national defence infrastructure, aerospace and space technologies, with demand for engineering technicians, logistics specialists and compliance aware technical staff.
Critical Services (Health, Care, Visitor Economy, Food and Farming)	Large foundational workforce supporting local communities and the rural economy, with ongoing recruitment challenges and demand for skills in care delivery, hospitality, customer service and land-based industries.
Construction, Retrofit, Electrification and Green Infrastructure	Continued housing growth and infrastructure investment alongside Net Zero targets are driving demand for skilled construction trades, retrofit specialists and low-carbon building expertise.

The second table below sets out the triangulation and rationale in more detail.

Priority	Headline employer insight	Labour demand (vacancies and projections)	Skills supply implications	Economic evidence
Life Sciences (Pharmaceuticals, Biotechnology and Health Technology)	Employers report shortages in laboratory technicians, regulatory specialists and production technicians, alongside growing demand for automation and digital capability in research environments.	Vacancy demand remains strong for science, research, engineering and technology professionals and health professionals. Skills Imperative projections show continued growth in health and social work employment.	Provision needs to strengthen laboratory technician pathways, regulatory knowledge and digital capability in scientific roles while improving progression into specialist research and technical roles.	Oxfordshire hosts one of the UK's largest life sciences clusters, supported by universities and major science campuses.
Technology and Innovation (green technology, energy, advanced manufacturing and quantum and super conducting technologies)	Employers report increasing demand for engineers and technicians working on energy systems, advanced materials and low-carbon technologies.	Skills Imperative projections show strong growth in electricity and gas employment, higher than the national average, alongside demand for engineering skills in clean energy innovation.	Provision must strengthen engineering and technician pathways linked to energy systems, advanced manufacturing and low-carbon technologies.	Oxfordshire hosts major clean energy research including fusion energy and advanced energy systems.
Digital (Data, AI and Technology Enabled Services)	Employers consistently report shortages in applied digital skills including software development, cloud platforms, cyber security and AI-enabled services.	Vacancy data shows high demand for science, research, engineering and technology professionals and business and public service associate professionals. Skills Imperative projections show continued growth in information technology employment.	Provision needs to strengthen pathways into software, data, cyber and AI roles while supporting digital capability across sectors.	Digital capability underpins Oxfordshire's research and technology economy.
Creative Industries (Gaming and Publishing)	Employers report growing demand for hybrid creative and technical skills combining digital production, software development and creative design.	Skills Imperative projections show growth in arts and entertainment employment, reinforcing demand for creative and digital content occupations.	Provision should strengthen portfolio-based learning, technical creative pathways and employer collaboration in gaming and digital production.	Oxfordshire hosts a cluster of gaming, publishing and digital content firms.

Priority	Headline employer insight	Labour demand (vacancies and projections)	Skills supply implications	Economic evidence
Defence (Advanced Manufacturing, Space and Supply Chains)	Employers report shortages in engineering technicians and technical specialists across defence and aerospace supply chains.	Vacancy demand remains strong for engineering professionals and skilled metal, electrical and electronic trades. However, projections show declining employment in traditional manufacturing and engineering sectors, indicating structural change towards advanced and specialised roles.	Provision must focus on higher technical skills, advanced manufacturing capability and engineering specialisation rather than traditional production roles.	Oxfordshire benefits from defence logistics, aerospace activity and space sector research.
Critical Services (Health, Care, Visitor Economy, Food and Farming)	Employers report persistent recruitment pressures in operational roles requiring customer service capability and regulatory awareness.	Skills Imperative projections show strong growth in accommodation and food services, support services, and health and social work, alongside demand for caring and administrative occupations.	Provision needs to strengthen entry pipelines, improve work readiness and support progression in service occupations.	Oxfordshire has a significant visitor economy and major health sector employers.
Construction, Retrofit, Electrification and Green Infrastructure	Employers report shortages in skilled trades including electrical installation, surveying and retrofit roles.	Vacancy evidence shows strong demand for skilled metal, electrical and electronic trades. Infrastructure growth and Net Zero investment will sustain demand for construction skills.	Provision must strengthen skilled trades pipelines and embed retrofit and low-carbon construction capability.	Housing growth and decarbonisation targets are driving construction demand.
Cross-cutting theme: Recruitment Pressure in Specialist Roles	Employers report the greatest shortages in mid-career technical roles requiring applied technical competence and industry experience.	Vacancy evidence shows strong demand for professional and associate professional occupations across science, engineering and digital sectors.	Provision must strengthen technician pathways and support workforce progression into specialist roles.	Oxfordshire's innovation economy relies heavily on specialist technical capability.
Cross-cutting theme: Upskilling to Improve Productivity	Employers emphasise developing existing staff in digital capability, compliance and operational management.	Projections show growth in professional services and information technology, increasing demand for higher-level skills.	Provision should support modular workforce development and higher technical education.	Economic strategies highlight productivity growth as central to Oxfordshire's economy.

Environmental and Net Zero Goals

Employers across Oxfordshire highlighted that the transition to a low carbon economy and the rapid pace of technological change are reshaping skills needs across many sectors. Businesses increasingly require workers with knowledge of sustainable construction, low carbon energy systems, environmental monitoring, resource efficiency and digital technologies that support more sustainable production and operations. These skills are becoming relevant not only in traditional environmental sectors but also in construction, advanced engineering, manufacturing, life sciences and infrastructure development. Oxfordshire has a number of strategic ambitions linked to environmental sustainability and Net Zero which reinforce the importance of these skills. The Oxfordshire County Council Strategic Plan and the wider county Net Zero ambitions emphasise the transition to a low carbon economy, including investment in sustainable transport, energy systems and green infrastructure. The Oxfordshire regional innovation strategies also highlight the county's role in advancing clean energy technologies, including work linked to fusion energy, advanced materials and environmental science at major research facilities such as Culham Science Centre and Harwell Science and Innovation Campus.

These ambitions are reflected in local employment and economic strategies, including the Oxfordshire Works Local Get Britain Working Plan, which emphasises the need to prepare the workforce for emerging green sectors and support residents to access opportunities linked to the transition to Net Zero. Employers participating in the LSIP process also highlighted the growing importance of retrofit, low carbon heating systems, sustainable construction methods, environmental compliance and carbon management across both large infrastructure projects and SME supply chains.

The LSIP supports these environmental and Net Zero objectives by promoting skills development

in areas such as retrofit, green construction, sustainable infrastructure, energy systems engineering and environmental data analysis. Providers, employers and partners will work together to embed environmental awareness, sustainability practices and low carbon technologies within training programmes. This will include integrating these themes into construction, engineering and technical pathways, alongside developing short courses and modular training that help existing workers update their skills.

Through the WDPs, employers, providers and local partners will continue to review emerging green skills requirements and ensure that training provision reflects technological change and environmental policy priorities. This approach aims to support Oxfordshire's transition to a low carbon economy while ensuring businesses have access to the skilled workforce needed to deliver sustainable growth.

Equality of Opportunity

Employers and partners highlighted that some groups face greater barriers in accessing training and progressing into skilled work. In Oxfordshire this includes young people who are not yet connected to employers, adults needing to retrain or change career, people returning to work, and those who may face practical barriers such as cost, caring responsibilities, transport or limited access to flexible learning opportunities.

The Oxfordshire Works Local Get Britain Working Plan highlights that, although the county overall has a strong labour market and an employment rate already above the national target of 80%, there remain specific groups and localities where people experience barriers to entering or progressing in work. As a result, the focus of the plan is on addressing pockets of economic inactivity and improving pathways into employment for those currently underrepresented in the labour market.

Partners also note that Oxfordshire's tight labour market means employers often struggle to recruit even when vacancies exist, particularly where people face health-related barriers, limited access to training, or weak connections to employers and local labour markets. Addressing these barriers is therefore an important part of improving workforce participation and supporting inclusive economic growth across the county.

Employer feedback also highlighted the importance of improving awareness of career pathways and strengthening progression routes. In some industries, entry-level roles are often perceived as temporary or low skilled, despite offering progression into supervisory and higher-skilled positions. The LSIP therefore includes actions to strengthen careers engagement, including sector-based careers events, improved work placements and clearer progression pathways from Level 2 into Level 3–4 roles. These actions are intended to widen participation and improve retention by making long-term career opportunities more visible.

The LSIP supports equality of opportunity through a set of targeted, practical interventions. These include the expansion of contextualised ESOL provision linked to priority sectors such as care, logistics and the visitor economy, combining language development with vocational skills to support progression into employment. Flexible and modular training delivery is also being expanded, enabling participation from individuals with caring responsibilities or those working in shift-based roles. In addition, improvements to Level 2 pathways and employability provision are intended to strengthen entry routes into the labour market, particularly for those without prior qualifications or established employer networks.

Governance of the LSIP

Governance of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is structured to ensure clear employer leadership, robust challenge and effective accountability in line with statutory guidance, while maintaining strong alignment with wider economic governance across Oxfordshire.

Employer Representative Body (ERB)

The Employer Representative Body provides overall leadership of the LSIP and is accountable for its development, refresh and implementation. It ensures that the plan reflects a broad, representative and independent employer voice across the Oxfordshire economy and that statutory requirements are met. The ERB retains responsibility for sign-off of

ERB

EMPLOYER BOARD

WDPs

**LOCAL AUTHORITY AND
PROVIDER PANELS**

priorities, oversight of delivery and escalation of systemic risks.

Employer Board

An Employer Board, comprising senior employer representatives from a diverse range of sectors and business sizes, is convened to support the ERB. Membership draws on existing employer engagement alongside new representation to reflect updated priorities. Acting on behalf of the ERB, the Board operates as the primary decision-making and assurance forum. Reflecting functional economic geography, membership spans Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The Board provides structured challenge to the evidence base, validates priorities and monitors progress against agreed outcomes. It plays a formal role in holding partners to account for delivery while ensuring that priorities remain grounded in Oxfordshire's economic needs.

To support transparency and effective governance, the Employer Board maintains a register of interests for all members, which is reviewed regularly and used to manage any actual or perceived conflicts in line with good governance practice.

WDPs (WDPs)

WDPs operate as sector-based working groups aligned to priority clusters. Chaired by Thames Valley Skills Champions, they bring together employers, providers and relevant stakeholders to support implementation. Their role is to generate intelligence, undertake occupational reviews and identify skills gaps. WDPs do not have decision-making authority and report into the Employer Board.

Provider and Stakeholder Panels

A cross-area Provider Panel brings together education and training providers from Berkshire and Oxfordshire, reflecting shared travel-to-learn patterns. The panel supports coordinated curriculum planning and delivery responses to LSIP priorities, while maintaining a clear distinction between employer-led priority setting and provider-led implementation.

Local Authority and Strategic Alignment

A formal, non-statutory relationship is maintained with the Oxfordshire local authorities and Oxfordshire Enterprise through its Joint Employment and Skills committee, creating a defined dotted reporting line. Regular updates are provided on LSIP progress, emerging skills needs and delivery risks, supporting coordinated action across partners while preserving the employer-led nature of the LSIP.

Assurance and Reporting

A clear reporting and assurance cycle is maintained, including an annual LSIP progress report and periodic updates drawing on labour market data, employer insight and WDP reporting. The Employer Board reviews performance and progress, with the ERB retaining overall accountability. Reporting through the Prosperity Board workstream forms part of this wider assurance framework, ensuring transparency, alignment and continuous improvement.

National Data and Policy Sources

The LSIP evidence base draws on a wide range of national datasets and policy frameworks, including:

[Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) labour market statistics](#)

[Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\)](#)

[Annual Population Survey \(APS\)](#)

[Population estimates - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Labour Force Survey \(LFS\)](#)

[Longitudinal Education Outcomes \(LEO\) data](#)

Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data

[Department for Education further education statistics](#)

Skills England labour market intelligence and skills assessments

[Occupations in demand: 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

[Assessment of priority skills to 2030 - GOV.UK](#)

[AI foundation skills for work - GOV.UK](#)

[Employer skills survey 2024: England results - GOV.UK](#)

[Local Skills Dashboard](#)

[The Skills Imperative 2035 - NFER](#)

[UK Industrial Strategy](#) and related workforce plans
national sector workforce strategies.
[Get Britain Working White Paper - GOV.UK](#)
[Clean Energy Jobs Plan: Creating a new generation of good jobs to deliver energy security](#)
[NHS England » NHS Long Term Workforce Plan](#)

Local Authority Plans

Although Oxfordshire is not currently a devolved area, local economic strategies have been reviewed to ensure alignment. This includes:

[The Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan \(2023\)](#) including:

- The latest Strategic Economic Action Plan (2024)
- Strategic Economic Plan, Independent Economic Review
- Oxfordshire Economic Baseline
- Oxfordshire Economic Projections

Local Authority Plans:

[Our strategic plan 2025 - 2028 | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

[The Way Ahead: Council Plan 2025-2029 - South Oxfordshire District Council](#)

[At the Heart of the Vale: Council Plan 2025-2029 - Vale of White Horse District Council](#)

[Introduction - Our Strategy | Our Strategy 2024-28 | Oxford City Council](#)

Evidence from Oxford City Council- Skills and Inequality Study' and emerging 'Skills Strategy', being developed with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) in 2026.

[West Oxfordshire Council Plan 2023 to 2027](#)

Regional Data and Information

[Business Manifesto | Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce](#)

[ey-uk-regional-economic-forecast-03-2025.pdf](#)

[Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership \(OIEP\)](#)

[Enabling a net-zero county | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

[Destination Management Organisation | Experience Oxfordshire](#)

[Equinox](#)

[Quarterly Economic Survey - Q4 Report - 2025](#)

[Oxford - Cambridge Region | Supercluster Board](#)

Involvement of Providers

All categories of providers were involved in development, including:

- Further Education colleges
- Independent training providers
- Higher Education institutions
- Providers with statutory duties under the Act
- Providers without statutory duties

Schools and sixth form settings were engaged, particularly in relation to careers pathways, progression and early engagement with priority sectors

Provider Panels and Local Authority Panels were convened in November 2025 and February 2026 to test findings and assess delivery feasibility. This ensured that agreed actions are realistic within current funding and regulatory frameworks.

In Oxfordshire, anchor institutions including the universities, NHS organisations and local authorities play a central role in the local economy and in supporting workforce participation. The LSIP aligns with partners such as the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership and a wide range of VCSE organisations that provide alternative provision, employability support and progression pathways for those furthest from the labour market. These partners are particularly important in delivering vocational ESOL, pre-employment training and targeted support that enables individuals to access opportunities in LSIP priority sectors. Working alongside Oxfordshire Works, this approach helps ensure that inclusion, skills development and employer demand are connected, supporting both access to work and progression within key industries.

An example list of providers involved is below:

- University of Oxford

- Oxford Brookes University
- Ruskin College (University of West London)
- University College of Estate Management
- Activate Learning
- Abingdon and Witney College
- The Henley College
- UTC Oxfordshire
- BAM Construction Training
- Chiltern Training
- CoTrain
- Equal Engineers
- JTL Training
- Multi Trades Training
- New Meaning Training
- Oxford Business College
- QA
- The Management Academy
- The Digital College
- Explosive Learning

Involvement of Local Stakeholders

Local stakeholders were engaged through:

- Cross-Thames Valley Defence and Health and Life Sciences working groups
- Thames Valley FE Group
- LSIP Panel Meetings

Events September 2025-May 2026	
LSIP Led Employer Events	Partner Employer Events attended by LSIP (Examples)
Manufacturing WDP 18th September	Federation Of Environmental Trade Associations Meeting
Windsor Debates 26th September	Bayer Recruitment Event
Hospitality WDP 30th September	Retrofit Event
Defence WG 3rd October	CPD Retrain Expo
Construction WDP 9th Oct	Go Connect SME Business Event
HLS WG 15th Oct	TVAI Event
Screen WDP 23rd Oct	Life Science for STEM Event
State of the Region Conference 24th October	The Power of Robotics and AI Event
Care Festival 26th November	Construction Steering Group
Care WDP 9th December	Tech STEM Event
AI & Digital Forum 22nd Jan	AI Skills Report Launch
HLS WG 5th Feb	NVIDIA AI Conference
Talent Pipeline Forum 10th Feb	Thames Valley Expo
Defence WG 13th Feb	Dentistry and Life Science Show
Leadership & Management Forum 12th March	ECTA Alliance Meeting
Windsor Debates 20th March	Reading Pub Watch
Haulage WDP 15th April (Activate organised and ran meeting)	
Hospitality WDP 7th May	
Growth Conference 12th May	

List of Stakeholders Involved (not inclusive)

- Oxfordshire Enterprise
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Vale of White Horse Council
- South Oxfordshire Council
- West Oxfordshire Council
- Cherwell Council

- Oxford City Council
- Equinox
- Oxfordshire Care Providers
- Experience Oxfordshire
- Careers and Enterprise Company
- Thames Valley AI (TVAI)
- British Computing Society
- CECA Civil Engineering Contractors Association
- CILT Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport
- CIMSPA Chartered Institute for Sports and Physical Activity
- CITB
- Cogent Skills
- ECA, Excellence in Electrotechnical and Engineering Service
- FMB, Federation of Master Builders
- Home Builders Federation
- IMI Institute of Motor Industry
- Institute of Sales Professionals
- Logistics UK
- Road Haulage Association
- Skills for Care
- UK Hospitality
- STFC Apprenticeships & UKRI Apprenticeship
- STFC UKRI
- Unison
- Springboard
- Stem Advisors Hub
- STEM Ambassadors

