

Accreditation Guidance for Local Strategic Partnerships



*Accreditation Guidance for
Local Strategic Partnerships*

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ACCREDITATION GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The Government envisages that Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) will develop across the country. While there are no current plans to accredit partnerships outside the 88 areas eligible for Neighbourhood Renewal Funds¹ (NRF), this guidance will be of interest to all LSPs. The criteria outlined here cover key issues to ensure effective structures and working practices are developed. Government Offices for the regions (GOs) will assess LSPs in NRF areas against these criteria by 28 February 2002.

This guidance builds on key messages from:

- *Preparing Community Strategies Government Guidance to local authorities;*
- *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: National Strategy Action Plan;*
- *LSP Government Guidance;*
- *Preliminary Guidance on the Community Empowerment Fund*².

It also draws on a variety of existing and ongoing research into partnership development.

¹ NRF is aimed at kick-starting improvements in mainstream services in deprived areas. Details of conditions of spend for 2001/2 are in Special Grant Report No. 78.

² Respectively: DETR, (now DTLR) December 2000, Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), January 2001, DETR, March 2001, NRU, June 2001. Details of where to get all of these publications are at the back of this Guide.

SECTION 1:

SUMMARY

About LSPs:

- 1.1 Local Strategic Partnerships are necessary for developing new ways of involving local people in how public services are provided. They should bring together a wide range of people to work effectively in partnership on a range of key inter-linked issues including housing and the environment, education, crime, employment and health³.
- 1.2 LSPs should strengthen the connection with and between public sector agencies, local government, the voluntary and community sectors, businesses and local residents. Joint working is needed to find ways to:
 - Improve all public services; renew deprived areas; develop strong, sustainable economies and healthy, safe communities;
 - Focus service delivery from the outset on the needs and aspirations of local people – including those who are traditionally excluded;
 - Find ways to encourage people to be constructively involved in their communities; and
 - Ensure sustainable development in the local area and contribute to the regional sustainable development agenda.
- 1.3 Their role is to set the strategic aims for the area, and see they are delivered.

About accreditation:

- 1.4 Local authorities in the 88 areas receiving NRF must satisfy the grant conditions in Special Grant Report No. 78 to continue receiving NRF funding in 2001/2⁴.
- 1.5 To get NRF funding for 2002/3 they will need to show that they are part of an accredited LSP, as well as complying with conditions of grant for 2002/3. Conditions of Grant will be set out in a separate Special Grant Report to be published later this year. Key conditions include completion of a further Statement of Use⁵ on NRF spend and agreeing a Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (LNRS) with the LSP.

³ They should work with reference to deprivation related Public Service Agreement targets, including the 5 key areas published in the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. Go to www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/sr2000/index.html

⁴ See para 4.11 of LSP Government Guidance, DETR March 2001, and Special Grant Report No. 78.

⁵ Local Authorities will need to produce a Statement of Use outlining planned NRF expenditure for each years' spend. The first of these is due by 31st October 2001. Guidance on its contents will be published shortly.

About this Guidance:

- 1.6 The guidance on accreditation aims to:
- Enable LSPs to develop from different starting points and in the way that is most appropriate for each partnership and area;
 - Build on and encourage dialogue between Whitehall, Government Offices, LSPs and other key stakeholders;
 - Recognise that building strategic partnerships is about developing good relationships and effective processes whilst delivering results;
 - Make sure that all partners, including local people, are integral to partnerships and their decision-making; and
 - Allow for continuous development and help to spread best practice.
- 1.7 This document consists of two further sections:
- Detail on the accreditation process; and
 - Further explanation of the criteria set out in LSP Guidance.

If you need further advice on any of the issues raised here, please contact your Government Office. Contact details are at the back of this Guide.

SECTION 2:

PROCESS

- 2.1 The accreditation of each LSP will build on an active dialogue between LSP members, the Government Office for their region and other key stakeholders.
- 2.2 The aim should be for the LSP to come to a collective view about:
 - Progress so far against the criteria outlined in **section 3**;
 - Areas for future development; and
 - An action plan outlining steps that will be taken in the following year to further strengthen the partnership and increase its effectiveness.
- 2.3 GO staff will provide ongoing support and make a decision on accreditation by looking at the collective view as outlined at 2.2.
- 2.4 The process must:
 - Be open and transparent;
 - Allow local flexibility whilst working within the national framework; and
 - Support innovation and learning.

Who does what and how?

- 2.5 Government Offices will ask LSPs to assess themselves against the criteria outlined in **section 3** and reach a collective view. In the run up to February 2002 accreditation, LSPs may be in the early stages of development and will be working towards achieving some of the criteria.
- 2.6 The assessment will form the basis for a dialogue with the GO. It need not be too time-consuming or unduly paper-based, but it will need to reflect the qualitative nature of the overall approach. It will be important to make sure that all partners to the LSP take an active part in the process. They should be encouraged to give an honest assessment of progress to date and agree a forward action plan.
- 2.7 LSPs will need to clearly demonstrate how the criteria are being met, what plans are in place to address areas for development, and a time-frame for progress.
- 2.8 Government Office staff will provide advice and support to LSPs throughout the year. Where necessary they will challenge the LSP, and encourage involvement of statutory agencies.
- 2.9 GOs will make a decision on accreditation on behalf of the Secretary of State. If it delays or denies accreditation the GO will give its reasons in full, together with an assessment of what the LSP would need to do to gain accreditation. The GO will set a date for review of progress on outstanding issues.

- 2.10 In reaching a decision GOs will:
- i) Make sure that the assessment process presents a collective view;
 - ii) Take soundings from key stakeholders (both within and outside the LSP, at neighbourhood, local authority, sub-regional and regional level), to test the basis of the assessment. GOs will seek a wide range of views including from those that may not have had strong links with the GO in the past.
- 2.11 External advice and support will be available to GOs during the accreditation process.
- 2.12 Staff in the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) and GOs will work together to build up expertise in current good practice, and capacity to support the process.

Timing

- 2.13 Formal notification of accreditation should be in writing from GOs by **28 February 2002⁶**.

LSPs should agree the date on which they want to present their assessment with the GO. They will need to consider that:

- The partnership will need time to form and present a collective view;
- GOs will need time to review and decide the assessment before 28 February; and
- GOs will need to accredit a number of LSPs in their region.

Links to other audit and assessment processes

- 2.14 LSP accreditation does not happen in a vacuum. Where an LSP feels that it is appropriate to refer to existing assessment processes used by partner members, (for example Best Value or NHS modernisation reviews or existing systems for measuring community participation), it may do so. However, it needs to avoid placing too much emphasis on one or two of the larger partners.

⁶ Local Authorities will also need to comply with the conditions set out in the forthcoming Special Grant Report for the coming financial year (2002/3) in order to receive NRF.

When is an LSP not accredited?

- 2.15 The following points will result in the delay and possible withdrawal of NRF:
- Lack of evidence of sufficient effort to progress against the criteria at **section 3**; and/or
 - Failure to come to a collective view about progress made, and the steps that need to be taken for future development of the partnership.

Funds may be withheld until an LSP has achieved successful review against agreed remedial actions with the GO.

What happens in 2003/2004?

- 2.16 Receipt of NRF funding for the following financial year (2003/2004) will again take place on the basis of an accreditation process. GOs and LSPs will assess their progress in the light of their 2002/3 assessment, action plans, and stakeholder input, and against the criteria outlined here.
- 2.17 Guidance will be reviewed in the light of learning for the 2003/4 assessment.

SECTION 3:

THE CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION

The *LSP Government Guidance* (DETR, March 2001), outlines six key criteria for establishing successful LSPs. This section expands on those criteria. Accreditation will assess progress against *all six* criteria, but will take account of local conditions and starting points.

STRATEGIC

3a) They are effective, representative, and capable of playing a key strategic role

- i) All the following criteria (3b – 3f) support this criterion. LSPs will work continually to achieve it and expectations should be tailored to the circumstances of each area. In particular, assessment should look at:
 - The ability of LSP members to make strategic decisions and influence decision-making and delivery within their organisation or community;
 - The ability of the LSP to build consensus and resolve conflict;
 - How decisions are reached and how partner organisations are held accountable;
 - Whether the LSP practices equal opportunity for all; and
 - Leadership style, which should:
 - Build trust and openness within the partnership;
 - Recognise the value and contribution which each member brings;
 - Enable all members to articulate their views; and
 - Enable different partners to lead where they have expertise.

INCLUSIVE

3b) They actively involve all the key players, including the public, private, community and voluntary sectors

- i) A range of key stakeholders must be involved if LSPs are to achieve their strategic aims⁷. The starting point for the LSP should be that involvement and consultation will be open to all. However this may happen in a variety of ways and may take time to build. Assessment should look at:

⁷ Further detail on suggested partners can be found at Annex C of the *LSP Government Guidance*, DETR March 2001.

- How the LSP manages this creatively to ensure views, reflecting the diversity of local organisations and residents, are fed into the partnership while maintaining its ability to make decisions and focus on results;
- The openness and transparency of decision-making, and other processes of the LSP;
- Whether all partners actively seek and support engagement of hard to reach groups, and those who may traditionally have been excluded from partnership working;
- What barriers to involvement have been identified and what solutions have been agreed (including flexibility in the working practices of the LSP); and
- The participation of all partners from the earliest opportunity, to help determine the structure, processes and priorities of the LSP.

Strategic level

- ii) LSPs should actively ensure that they hear the voices of all the sectors at a strategic decision-making level, and give them equal value. Assessment will need to look at whether the LSP can show clear evidence of how it involves all sectors and in particular:
- Seeks and supports the input and the membership of voluntary and community organisations, smaller community groups and local residents, especially from hard to reach groups;
 - Seeks input and uses expertise from business of all sizes and community enterprises, each of whom have very different concerns and contributions to make⁸; and
 - Involves representatives from key public sector agencies who have the authority to ensure delivery of agreed action through their organisations.

More widely

- iii) LSPs also help develop strategy – in particular the Community Strategy, and the Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (LNRS). The assessment process should look at whether:
- There is early, ongoing and varied involvement of residents and all the sectors outlined above in: identifying priorities; finding ways to tackle deprivation and renew communities; taking decisions; and delivery;
 - The LSP works with a range of people who reflect the make up of the local population, and who can help to build support for local strategies and help to implement them;

⁸ This does not need to be limited to business within the local area, and indeed may need to involve major employers based outside the area boundaries.

- The LSP is developing protocols with local communities to involve people in the design and delivery of programmes that affect them; and
- Whether local people are able to hear about and feed into the LSP's work.

Working with the Community and Voluntary Sectors

- iv) Meaningful community engagement takes time, and needs to be designed in dialogue with local people. In the first instance, many LSPs will want to build on and extend existing community networks. They should also work to engage sections of the community that may be harder to reach, (such as young and old people, refugee groups, faith groups, travellers and BME communities). Assessment should look at:
 - Levels of participation of the community and voluntary sectors in the LSP. This should be within the context of the *Compact on relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England*⁹;
 - Evidence of continuing and effective Local Compact development, explicitly linked to the Local Strategic Partnership¹⁰;
 - Work to establish baselines, and aspirations for effective and meaningful community involvement in the LSP and how these are brought together into a plan for involving the community; and
 - How the LSP supports, and works closely with, the evolving Community Network and how a framework is being developed for integrating the network and the Community Empowerment Fund with the work of the LSP.

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities

- v) Black and minority ethnic communities have high representation in deprived areas¹¹, and are often under-represented at the strategic decision-making level. As such it is crucial that they are brought into the decision-making and delivery process in LSPs. In particular assessment should look at whether:
 - The LSP works within race relations legislation, and whether those public authority partners identified by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, use their influence to encourage partnership activity to promote racial equality;

⁹ Home Office, November 1998.

¹⁰ See NCVO website for further information. www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

¹¹ As of the 1991 census, in terms of size of population being targeted by NRU, the 88 areas account for around 4 in 10 of the general population and 7 in 10 of the black and minority ethnic communities.

- The LSP demonstrates clear mechanisms for ongoing consultation and including black and minority ethnic communities in planning, decision-making on funding and any other functions; and
- Membership (in its widest sense) and activities reflect the diversity of the area that it covers.

Involving the private sector

- vi) Business, both as employers, deliverers of service and local residents, has an important role to play in developing successful economies. The LSP will need to develop ways of encouraging and supporting the involvement of the business communities. Assessment should look at whether business representatives:
- Have been chosen appropriately and are able to link to other business networks;
 - Are empowered to play a role in the LSP in its widest sense; and
 - Represent the diversity of private sector activity in the area.

ACTION-FOCUSED

3c) They have established genuine common priorities and targets, and agreed actions and milestones leading to demonstrable improvements against measurable baselines

- i) The LSP will need to ensure that it makes visible and demonstrable progress and that it doesn't simply become a 'talking shop'. Key areas for assessment include:
- Whether measurable baselines have been established;
 - The extent to which decisions are taken on the basis of evidence;
 - The extent to which decisions taken within the LSP are implemented by partners/their organisations;
 - Identification of, and efforts to deal with, any conflicts between partners' priorities;
 - Contents of the Community Strategy (where appropriate) and the LNRS¹². The LNRS is due to be in place by April 2002. GOs should consider work in progress and consensus on the proposed use of NRF for accreditation in 2002/3;
 - The extent and nature of joint working between LSP partners; and

¹² Further advice on developing an LNRS can be found in Annex G of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, and in chapter 4 of the LSP Government Guidance.

- Evidence of improvements in service delivery, in particular against the deprivation related public service agreements identified in the Spending Review 2000.

PERFORMANCE MANAGED

3d) Members (organisations) have aligned their performance management systems, aims and objectives, criteria and process to the aims and objectives of the LSP

- i) Aligning aims and objectives, performance management and other systems will help to make partnerships work better and should be encouraged where possible. However organisations cannot always redesign their systems rapidly or easily. Process change may not be appropriate, for example in smaller organisations, or may be very complicated for large ones which are working with several LSPs.
- ii) If high levels of alignment are to be achieved central government will at the same time need to tackle issues of joining up performance management systems and core priorities of public agencies at a national level.
- iii) Assessment of LSPs should look at:
 - Appropriate incorporation of elements of the aims and objectives of the LSP into the corporate aims and/or business plans of the strategic partners;
 - Progress towards sharing the information, targets and monitoring processes necessary to implement agreed strategy; and
 - Consideration of accountability for achieving results within the partnership.

EFFICIENT

3e) They reduce, not add to, the bureaucratic burden

- i) LSPs will be encouraged to propose to central government, ways of cutting red tape and working more flexibly e.g. streamlining partnerships and rationalising plans. Simplifying the map of local partnerships is not a technical exercise. It involves consultation to build consensus on the best ways forward, and it takes time.
 - Any proposals from an LSP should be signed up to by all partners.
- ii) Unnecessary bureaucracy has significant impact on local people and organisations who use LSP members' services. Assessment should look at:

- Clarity of links between partnerships and plans, lines of responsibility and accountability;
- Simplicity of access to funding for local organisations;
- Efforts to reduce form filling and duplication of effort; and
- How partners co-ordinate consultation activity.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

3f) They build on best practice from successful partnerships by drawing on experiences of local and regional structures, and national agencies

- i) A great deal of partnership experience and research identifies examples of good and bad practice, and key barriers to partnership working. LSPs should show:
 - That they are building on these experiences, spreading best practice and learning from each other.
- ii) Future success of neighbourhood renewal and better delivery of public services more widely will depend on increasing the skill levels and knowledge of everyone involved. Learning and development for all partners needs to be built into all LSP activity from the outset. Assessment should look at how:
 - The LSP brings together its plans for improving skills and knowledge into a plan for 'local action on learning' as part of its LNRS¹³.
Not all LSPs will be in a position to produce fully developed plans this year, but it is important that they identify critical learning and development needs of LSP partners early on.

¹³ Further guidance on developing these plans can be found at section 4.17-4.19 of *the LSP Government Guidance*, DETR (now DTLR), March 2001.

GOVERNMENT OFFICE CONTACTS IN THE REGIONS

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USEFUL DOCUMENTS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: National Strategy Action Plan

Social Exclusion Unit, January 2001

<http://www.neighbourhood.dtlr.gov.uk/actionplan/index.htm>

tel: 020 7944 8383 email: neighbourhoodrenewal@dtlr.gsi.gov.uk

Active Partners (Community participation benchmarking criteria)

Yorkshire and Humberside Development Agency, 2000

<http://www.yorkshire-forward.com/display.asp?docid=155>

YHDA Leeds, Victoria House, Victoria Place, Leeds LS11 5AE

Auditing community participation: An assessment handbook

Danny Burns and Marilyn Taylor, The Policy Press, 31 July 2000

tel: 01904 629241 website: www.jrf.org.uk

Championing Race Equality in Regeneration: Local Ownership in a Regional Agenda

BTEG, August 2001

fax: 020 7837 0269 email: bteg@btinternet.com

Collaboration and co-ordination in area-based initiatives – second research working paper

DETR, Regional Co-ordination Unit (RCU) December 2001

tel: 01709 891 318

Community Empowerment Fund – Preliminary Guidance

NRU, June 2001

<http://www.neighbourhood.dtlr.gov.uk/guidance/index.htm>

tel: 020 7944 8383 email: neighbourhoodrenewal@dtlr.gsi.gov.uk

Compact on relations between Government and the voluntary and community sector in England . . . (and related codes of practice)

Home Office, Nov 1998

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/acu/acu.htm>

tel: 020 7217 8400

Effective Local Strategic Partnerships: LGA advice note for working with the community and voluntary sectors

LGA, May 2001

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/blg/compact/csa.pdf>

tel: 020 7664 3131 website: www.lga.gov.uk

Governance in Partnerships: Checklist of Good Practice

Department of Health, March 2001

<http://www.haznet.org.uk>

tel: 020 7413 1994

Local Compact Guidance: Getting local relationships right together

NCVO & LGA, July 2000

<http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/main/gateway/pdfs/>

[LocalCompactGuidelines.pdf](#)

tel: 0207 713 6161 email: ncvo@ncvo-vol.org.uk

Helpdesk: 0800 2798 798

Local Strategic Partnerships – Government Guidance

DETR, March 2001

<http://www.local-regions.dtlr.gov.uk/lsp/guidance/index.htm>

DETR Free Literature, PO Box No. 236 Wetherby, LS23 7NB

tel: 0870 1226 236

The LSP Guide: A handy guide to getting involved for voluntary and community groups

Community Development Foundation & Urban Forum, 2001

CDF tel: 020 7226 5375 email: admin@cdf.org.uk

Urban Forum tel: 020 7248 3111 email: info@urbanforum.org.uk

New Deal for Communities – Race Equality Guidance

DETR, Feb 2000

<http://www.neighbourhood.dtlr.gov.uk/newdeal/ndc/race/index.htm>

tel: 0207 944 8383 email: neighbourhoodrenewal@dtlr.gsi.gov.uk

Policy Action Team 17 – Joining it up Locally

DETR, April 2000

<http://www.local-regions.detr.gov.uk/pat17/index.htm>

tel: 020 7944 8383

Policy Action Team Report 16 – Learning Lessons

SEU, March 2000

<http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu/2000/PAT16/default.htm>

tel: 020 7276 2055

Preparing Community Strategies

DETR, Dec 2000

<http://www.local-regions.dtlr.gov.uk/pcs/guidance/index.htm>

DETR Free Literature PO Box No. 236 Wetherby, LS23 7NB

tel: 0870 1226 236

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/raceact/welcome.htm>

The General Duty to Promote Racial Equality: guidance for public authorities on their obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Commission for Racial Equality, 2001

Website: www.cre.gov.uk/ tel: 020 7828 7022

Special Grant Report 78 – The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund

NRU, March 2001

<http://www.neighbourhood.dtlr.gov.uk/fund/grantreport/index.htm>

The Stationery Office, £3.40 Website: www.tsonline.gov.uk/

The Guide to Development Trusts and Partnerships.

DTA, 1998

Website: www.DTA.org.uk

tel: 0845 458 8336 email: info@dta.org.uk

OTHER USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

The Audit Commission

The Audit Commission carries out national research on public sector delivery performance, including on Best Value and Partnerships.

website: www.audit-commission.gov.uk

tel: 020 7828 1212 email: enquiries@audit-commission.gov.uk

Black Training and Enterprise Group

Aims to act as a catalyst for enabling black groups and individuals to play an active role in the economic regeneration of local communities through partnership with others.

website: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/bteg.html

tel: 020 7713 6161 email: bteg@btinternet.com

British Urban Regeneration Association

Promotes best practice in regeneration.

website: www.bura.org.uk

tel: 0800 0181 260 email: info@bura.org.uk

Commission for Racial Equality

CRE works in both the public and private sectors to encourage fair treatment and to promote equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of their race, colour, nationality, or national or ethnic origin.

website: www.cre.gov.uk

tel: 020 7828 7022 email: info@cre.gov.uk

Community Development Foundation

Aims to pioneer, study and promote new forms of community development, in order to inform public policy, professional practice and community initiatives.

website: www.cdf.org.uk

tel: 020 7226 5375 email: admin@cdf.org.uk

Health Development Agency

Works across government departments and sectors to improve health and reduce health inequalities.

website: www.hda-online.org.uk

tel: 020 7222 5300 email: hda-enquirydesk@hda-online.org.uk

The Improvement and Development Agency

The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) draws expertise from local authorities, the business world, professional service firms, not for profit organisations as well as other parts of the public sector.

website: www.idea.gov.uk

tel: 020 7296 6693 email: Customerservices@idea.gov.uk

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is the UK's largest independent social policy research and development charity. It supports a wide programme of research and development projects in housing, social care and social policy.

website: www.jrf.org.uk tel: 01904 629241

Local Government Association

Works with and for member authorities to realise a shared vision of local government that enables local people to shape a distinctive and better future for their locality and its communities.

website: www.lga.gov.uk

tel: 020 7664 3000 email: info@lga.gov.uk

National Council for Voluntary Organisations

NCVO is the largest membersh based umbrella body for the voluntary sector in England.

website: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

tel: 020 7713 6161 email: ncvo@ncvo-vol.org.uk

National Council for Voluntary Services

NACUS is the national association for Councils of Voluntary Service which span both urban and rural areas in England.

website: www.nacvs.org.uk

tel: 0114 278 6636 email: nacvs@nacvs.org.uk

Urban Forum

Urban Forum is an umbrella body for community and voluntary groups with interests in urban and regional policy, especially regeneration.

website: www.urbanforum.org.uk

tel: 020 7248 3111 email: Info@urbanforum.org.uk

OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES

www.citizensconnection.net

Has practical advice on how to take action plus the stories of people who've done it already.

www.regen.net

An information network for regeneration partnerships.

www.crimereduction.gov.uk

A resource for the crime reduction practitioner.

www.groundwork.org.uk

Work in partnership with local people, local authorities and businesses to promote economic and social regeneration by improvements to the local environment.

www.regenerationuk.com

Provides UK regeneration practitioners with an easy to use reference guide to regeneration information on the Internet.

www.partnerships.org.uk

Information on how to use the Internet to build networks and benefit communities – particularly neighbourhoods and villages.

www.ukonline.gov.uk

This partnership between government, industry, the voluntary sector, trades unions and consumer groups aims to make technology clear and easy to use.

www.haznet.org.uk

Health Action Zone website. A resource for tackling health inequalities and whole systems approaches to service delivery.

