

REVIEW FOR THE 2019 CONFERENCE & AGM

Further to a recent discussion at F & R, please find below a summary to help inform discussions about the LEP's 2019 Conference and AGM. Various costing options are provided below, and a draft agenda for a half day event (the cheapest route) is at the end of the document.

Recommendations

Based on the feedback from F&R - around sponsorship for the LEP - and taking into account the issues raised in the following Paper, it is recommended that we hold a moderate Conference and AGM this year and without sponsorship. In order to achieve sponsorship for a conference in November ideally you would want to start the process in the January of the same year. There is not enough time to secure sponsorship for November - as it is our first time doing so for the LEP and we do not have the resources in place to undertake this task in the short term.

Thus, it is recommended that we hold a half day conference in Torbay on the 4th of November and a draft programme is at the end of this document. The costings for this event would be in the region of £11.5k and would include the venue and an external event management company to provide the necessary administrative / event support to the LEP team.

The Basic Principles Behind Having an Annual LEP Conference

- It is now a requirement from our funders that we hold an annual event.
- We choose to combine our Conference and AGM at the same event / time - saving costs and resources.
- We have led on good practice (since 2015) by holding an annual stakeholder event. By doing this, it has saved the LEP extra work and potential "problems" that would occur because stakeholders don't have easy routes to engage with the LEP – owing to the cost effective model the HotSW is based upon regarding premises and staffing. So for most of our stakeholders this is the only opportunity for them to hear from the LEP or to meet us.
- As we are publicly funded, the Conference & AGM are free for stakeholders to attend.
- We typically get around 350 or more bookings to attend with around 300 delegates on the day. Thus, the size of the venue is a critical issue as there are a limited number of venues with easy transport access and the ability to host our size in the area.

The Aims of the Conference & AGM are to:

- Help us to achieve and show transparent working / practices
- Provide an opportunity for our stakeholders to meet the LEP and for networking
- Showcase our work - explaining what the LEP does and what has been achieved with the public funds
- Share our aims and plans for the future - to increase Productivity and Prosperity in our area - including the latest work on Govt. initiatives e.g. the LIS
- Enhance the LEP's reputation and decrease potential future problems - that arise when stakeholders do not have an opportunity to engage with the LEP / are not informed.

Back up Position for this Year

Preparations for the year's Conference have had to carry on in the background as it is a significant piece of work and with long lead in times. We have identified the 4th November as the most suitable date and based upon the availability of the HotSW's Chairman and Management Team.

Further to undertaking research into the availability of suitable venues for this year's Conference, we have been able to provisionally secure the Riviera Centre in Torquay (it has not been held in Torbay before and it was the "turn" for this area) - for a half day conference on the 4th of

November. However, to maintain this booking we will need to provide them with a signed contract and deposit within the next few weeks.

Utilising this option of a half day conference and with no lunch and no breakout rooms will lead to a venue charge of £5,025 (£16.75+vat per delegate x 300). Break out rooms would incur additional costs and for up to three rooms this would be in the region of an extra £700 net.

Costings

For the last two years the costs have been around £18 / 19k net (£23k inc VAT) for the event and this includes venue, catering / lunch, sound / IT technicians, delegate pack printing, event company, photography and voting devices. *As a guide it is about a fifty / fifty split with the venue costs and all the other costs, including the event company.*

Once the approach to this year's event has been agreed, we can then go out for a 3 quote tender to find the event management company - who will provide the administrative support needed to deliver the conference. Last year's event management company was £5,720 net and this included a 20% discount as a new client, other quotes were more expensive. If the event company was also tasked with getting sponsorship - to cover theirs and most of the other costs - there would be an additional charge of around £2k net.

Thus for this year, this moderate model would cost around £11k (plus printing costs) for the venue and event management support, and without sponsorship (£13k onwards if activities to secure sponsorship were included). A draft programme for the half day is at the end of this paper.

NB please note that without any Sound / IT technicians on the day we can not guarantee sound quality / IT smoothness.

Different Approaches to an event and Options Tried in the Past

Activity	Comments
a) Half, ¾ or whole day	¾ and whole days are costly owing to providing lunch to 300
b) Voting devices used	Delegates like the interaction, it provides LEP with live data from stakeholders. But costly to rent / tech support needed
c) Digital used more / live webinars etc. on the day	Seems like a great idea to enable those who can't attend to engage. However, LEP doesn't have the technical support and knowledge / resources in house to be able to do this. Extra costs / resources needed to deliver this, as well as potential high risk issues over content control for LEP. Use of local colleges / universities is often cited, but in reality (when tried) the timing doesn't work well with academic year / curriculum - which needs to be planned a year in advance
d) Have two different locations to enable more venue choice	Having separate Devon and Somerset events has been ruled out in the past
e) Limit the number of delegates on the day to 200 to enable cheaper venue	The conference could turn into a significant negative issue for many stakeholders and the LEP could be seen as trying work in a non transparent manner – if stakeholders were not able to book a place
f) Have an event company to undertake most of the admin work	The LEP's first conference (150 or so delegates) did not have any external help and led to major staff stress and had significant operational impacts. Various models have been trialled and the most cost / resource efficient is having a modest event company work with us / carry out most of admin
g) Do not have an event company - member of staff allocates 50%	Although not tried before, we could allocate a member of staff to undertake this work by freeing them up for 2 and half

of their week for 2 and half months	months (end August to early Nov) for 50% of their working week
h) Get a sponsor for the event	If the sponsor was carefully chosen and the sponsorship achieved through the event company, this year could be the test bed for this approach
i) The LEP covers the cost of a very moderate conference	This year is a very moderate, half day affair, while still allowing for the large delegate numbers
j) Try different venues	Both the Partnerships Manager and Executive Assistant have been involved in organising events for over 20 years and have used most of the venues across the area, including in FE / HE. Instead of using a conference venue and using a "flat" space that has not yet been fitted out or is a large hall, can seem appealing. But you have to hire in every table, chair, carpet, catering, stage, sound equipment / IT needed and often this is a false economy – we did this for the conference at the Somerset Cricket club and the workload was phenomenal and ultimately a similar cost. However, we are enquiring into the availability of SD College's new building and the SEIC phase 2
k) Timings – could we hold it at a different time of the year	FE / HE venues can be great out of term time. The AGM is held to coincide with the Board signing off of our accounts / year end for Companies House etc. thus AGM is needed in early November. Few dates are usually available to choose from once the Chair and Management Team availability is factored in. Venues the size we need get booked up sometimes years in advance and availability is often difficult as there is little choice across our area for a large conference space
l) Business support stands / our ESIF funded projects (40 or so stands)	We presently have stands on the day (for free) - the providers of our publicly funded services for business, and other key business support organisations in our area - and this creates a great Buzz on the day and a LOT of good will with partners
m) LEP surgery sessions	If we wanted to offer stakeholders the opportunity to come and meet with the LEP on a one-to-one basis – a surgery type approach – we would need additional rooms to do this

Costings

Normal costings for a conference and no matter how hard you try...

Between £16.75+vat (English Riviera Centre = £5,025) and £22 + vat (Taunton Racecourse) for a half day delegate rate; and up to £35 for a whole day delegate rate and including lunch (£10,500).

We can cut around £7k from the costings by having:

1. A half day event (saving £2k to £5k because no lunches)
2. No break out sessions (saving £1k on extra room hire)
3. No specific sessions for the Growth Hub to run – no time in a half day / no break out rooms
4. No feedback from delegates on issues by using voting devices (£1.5k)
5. No extra IT / sound technicians or webinars etc (£2k onwards)
6. No photography (£500)
7. No lunch (£6 to £10 per delegate x 300 = £2k upwards, as shown in point 1 above).

Some feedback over the years:

- A good mix of stakeholder / partners and with over 50% from the private and third sectors
- Too rushed - tried to do too much in a half day event (but ½ days avoid lunch costs)
- Would like an opportunity for a lot more stakeholders to meet with / engage with the LEP

- Good mix of speakers (28) and topics - with no speaker charges to the LEP
- Sessions run by the Leadership Groups, were highly valued & provided a link to them e.g. Q&As - can we have more of this please
- A venue large enough to accommodate a mix of stakeholders at the same time and at same event
- Good to have the Growth Hub and other business support stands there
- Great having Board Directors involved on the day - raising their profile & providing access to them
- Specific IT support is needed for an event of this size
- Having a p/t subcontractor as project support – invaluable as LEP core team has no “spare” capacity
- Could we include virtual / web based engagement next time e.g. webinar?
- Does the AGM work as part of the Annual Conference / event?

Outline for a Basic Half Day Conference & AGM

When	What
9.00 - 9.30 30 mins	Registration / Networking (we need this amount of time to register 200 plus delegates)
45 mins	Welcome, Opening Introductions LEP Update - where we have been and where we are going What we have achieved (Chair / CEX)
1 and a half hours	The three Leadership Groups – from the stage (30 mins each – 20 mins plus 10 Q & A)
20 mins	Break - networking / stands (in between the 3 Leadership Group session)
35 mins	LIS / Growth Hub case studies OR other specific update e.g. DSP or Enterprise Zones (COO)
20 mins Closes 1pm	AGM (10 plus 10 Q & A)

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