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East Midlands Development Agency Policy Team

Strategic Sub-regional Partnerships (SSP) Consultation



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE EAST MIDLANDS



30 January 2001

SUB-REGIONAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Last summer we jointly published a discussion paper on Sub-Regional Partnerships in the East Midlands. We had over 60 responses to the paper and have also had a number of discussions with interested parties over the past few months; reaction from within the region is summarised [here](#) (Word 97 77KB) (pdf 24KB) and on the [emda websites](#). The main points are as follows –

- There is overwhelming support for having strong strategic partnerships at sub-regional level.
- There is broad support for Sub-Regional Strategic Partnerships assuming the role set out in the paper.
- But their role and their relationship with other partnerships, particularly Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), needs to be made clear.
- There are conflicting views as to the geographical coverage of such partnerships, although there is general support for building on existing partnerships rather than creating new ones.

We have resisted the temptation to rush into decisions to move the agenda forward. This is partly because the East Midlands is breaking new ground in this area and we want to think through carefully the consequences of our action, but it is also because we wanted to understand more about the role of LSPs before taking things to the next stage.

We are now proposing in a new paper – *Investment in Partnerships* (Word 97 131KB), (pdf 47KB) – a process for the formal recognition of Sub-Regional Strategic Partnerships (SSPs) in the East Midlands. The paper does two things –

- It sets out in more detail the role of SSPs, taking into account the comments and suggestions from partners.
- It invites partnerships to make a case to be recognised as SSPs, based on 'fit for purpose' criteria.

We have prepared the guidance in close consultation with the East Midlands Regional Assembly and the East Midlands Business Forum. We are glad to acknowledge their welcome for the plans for SSPs, which is reflected in the attached press release.

Sub-Regional Strategic Partnerships will clearly have a key role to play in helping to shape the direction of the East Midlands' strategy in the years to come and in prompting partners to bring about change on the ground. This will require investment by many partners to ensure that SSPs are able to fulfil their role effectively. We recognise that we will have an important part to play in helping to build the capacity of SSPs and in supporting their plans for translating strategy into action.

There are clear benefits from recognition by *emda* and GO-EM in the short term –

- SSPs will have a special relationship with the regional bodies and will be able to exert considerable influence in the region and with Government.
- SSPs will be regarded as the key strategic agents for economic development in the sub-regions.
- SSPs will, in effect, be empowered to fulfil a formal strategic and enabling role within the region, as set out in the guidance.
- The credibility of those existing partnerships that become recognised as SSPs will be enhanced.
- SSPs will receive support to build their capacity.

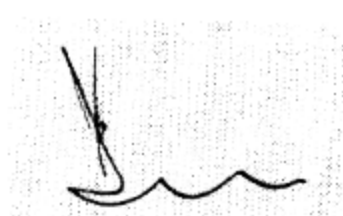
In the longer term *emda* is committed in principle to giving SSPs greater responsibility, as they prove their added value. *emda*'s aim is to make funds available to SSPs from 2002/3 to support the implementation of sub-regional strategies against agreed objectives and outcomes, subject to agreement from Government and to the partnerships proving that they have the capacity to take on the role.

Proposals from partnerships should be submitted to *emda* by the end of June 2001. These will be considered jointly by *emda* and GO-EM. To start the ball rolling we would like to invite interested partnerships and other parties to attend a seminar at the Jarvis Grand Hotel in Leicester on 27 February, starting at 10am, where we can set out our plans and clarify the process. We plan to have bilateral meetings with all potential SSPs by mid April; it would be help the process if partnerships intending to submit proposals could let us know as soon as possible.

If you would like to attend the seminar on 27 February please [complete the registration form](#).



Dennis Morrison
Regional Director
GO-EM



Derek Mapp
Chairman
emda

[Guidance\(Word 97 131KB\) \(pdf version 47KB\)](#)

[Responses\(Word 97 77KB\) \(pdf version 24KB\)](#)

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INVESTMENT IN PARTNERSHIPS: *Sub-Regional Strategic Partnerships*

Introduction

1. In August 2000, *emda* and GO-EM jointly published a discussion paper on Sub-Regional Partnerships in the East Midlands. We had over 60 responses to the paper and have also had a number of discussions with interested parties over the past few months. Reaction from within the region is summarised in a separate report. The main points are as follows –
 - There is overwhelming support for having strong strategic partnerships at sub-regional level.
 - There is broad support for Sub-Regional Strategic Partnerships assuming the role set out in the paper, but the role needs to be clarified, as does their relationship with other partnerships, particularly Local Strategic Partnerships.
 - There are conflicting views as to the geographical coverage of such partnerships, although there is general support for building on existing partnerships rather than creating new ones.
2. We now propose, in this paper, a process for the formal recognition of Sub-Regional Strategic Partnerships (SSPs) in the East Midlands. The paper –
 - sets out in more detail the role of SSPs, taking into account the comments and suggestions from partners in response to the initial discussion paper
 - invites partnerships to make a case to be recognised as SSPs, based on 'fit for purpose' criteria set out below

Role of Sub-Regional Strategic Partnerships (SSPs)

3. We propose that the role of SSPs will include the core generic functions at paragraph 6 as the common basis upon which all SSPs will operate. This is intended as a guide rather than a blueprint and it may be that SSPs identify slightly different activities reflecting strategic priorities within the sub-region.
4. We see the SSPs having a broad strategic perspective. In time this should parallel the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS), the East Midlands' sustainable development framework. Initially, however, we would expect SSPs to focus their attention on the economic development aspects of the IRS - as defined in the Regional Economic Development Strategy *Prosperity through People* (including regeneration - see *Annex 1*) - whilst at the same time ensuring that their activities complement the environmental, social and spatial components.
5. We envisage a staged approach to the development of SSPs' role. Initially, they will be recognised by *emda* and GO-EM, through a concordat, as the key strategic economic partnership in the sub-region, empowered to carry out the role set out at paragraph 6. As we are given more freedom in how we use our budgets, *emda* intends to devolve some financial responsibilities to SSPs, but not before April 2002 – see paragraph 7. We will want to keep SSPs under review to ensure that they continue to meet the 'fit for purpose' criteria.

6. The SSPs will initially -

- lead the preparation and ongoing development of **sub-regional economic development strategies** and act as a catalyst for the translation of strategies into action that is appropriate to the area, commissioning and co-ordinating implementation through members of the partnership and other local delivery agents - determining priorities and ensuring effective linkages in the process*; a more detailed breakdown of what this could entail in terms of specific operational activity is set out at *Annex 1*
- either lead the preparation and delivery of comprehensive **regeneration plans** for target areas within sub-regions, or endorse those led by smaller-scale partnerships as being consistent with sub-regional strategic priorities
- work closely with *emda* to help shape the direction of the **regional economic development strategy** and delivery plans; and with GO-EM to help build links between national Government, sub-regional economic development and strategies for local neighbourhood renewal.
- ensure that sub-regional strategies -
 - build on the priorities identified by local partnerships and partners within the sub-region
 - reinforce the priorities in the Regional Economic Development Strategy and Delivery Plans (e.g. centres of regional excellence within the sub-region) – a new version of the Regional Delivery plan has been published in draft alongside this guidance
 - influence the use of resources from all partner organisations
- work with regional partners (including other SSPs) to evaluate the impact of economic development within the region; and take the lead in monitoring the **performance of the sub-region**, within a common performance measurement framework for the region that includes targets at regional and sub-regional level
- comment on (and, where appropriate, endorse) **bids for resources**, from within the sub-region, to a variety of regional, national and European funding sources, according to strategic need
- facilitate two-way **communication** on sub-regional issues, brokering solutions and helping to share best practice within the sub-region
- link with economic development partnerships in **neighbouring sub-regions**, including across regional boundaries

* This is separate to the processes established for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund where Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies should be agreed with the LSPs – although clear communication channels should be established.

7. It is too early to be definitive about the devolution of any financial resources from *emda* to SSPs – but we can share *emda*'s current preferences. From 2002/3 *emda* will have greater flexibility in its use of programme budgets from Government, subject to reaching outcome targets. This will be defined through a Corporate Plan to be agreed between the Government and *emda* in the latter part of 2001/2. *emda* is, however, committed in principle to giving SSPs greater responsibility over time, as SSPs prove their added value. *emda* will be seeking to begin this process from 2002/3 as the new flexibility comes on stream, subject to SSPs having the capacity to take on the role. *emda*'s preferred model, which will have to be discussed with the Government, would be to allocate part of their funds to SSPs to support the delivery of sub-regional strategies; in return we would expect SSPs to achieve agreed objectives and outcomes. We will discuss this further with SSPs in the summer, as *emda*'s Corporate Plan for 2002-2005 is drawn up. In the meantime *emda* and GO-EM will be exploring the options.

Composition of SSPs

8. To fulfil the above role effectively, SSPs should involve, on an equitable basis, senior figures from a variety of partners with a stake in the sub-region's economic development and regeneration (taking positive steps to ensure that membership reflects the characteristics of the area, including the rural/urban balance and the ethnic mix), including –
- Local Strategic Partnerships
 - Local authorities in the sub-region, whether County, Unitary or District
 - Active contributors from across the sub-region's business community, able to bring a strong business perspective to the partnership
 - Representatives from universities with a campus in the sub-region
 - Local Learning Partnerships and providers of learning and skills, including colleges and schools
 - The local Learning & Skills Councils, Business Links and other public agencies investing significant resources in the sub-regional economy (e.g. the Employment Service)
 - Representatives of other relevant sectors, e.g. the voluntary, faith, health and environment sectors and the police
 - Representation from other relevant local partnerships (e.g. on crime & disorder, health) and from local communities, e.g. through parish or town councils
9. We also suggest that it would be in the interest of close partnership working if senior representatives from *emda* and GO-EM were to participate in meetings of the SSPs where appropriate.

Relationships

10. It will be essential for SSPs to interact effectively with other partnerships operating at the regional, sub-regional and more local level, including for example Learning Partnerships, Business Link Partnerships, Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships and, in particular, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).

11. LSPs will be umbrella partnerships focused on improving the quality of life and governance in their locality. Government guidance on the establishment and operation of LSPs is to be published in February. They are expected to have a role that goes beyond neighbourhood renewal into community planning and the co-ordination and rationalisation of other local partnerships and their activities. In areas suffering high levels of deprivation and social exclusion they will have a key role in joining up national programmes locally. We recognise that some partnerships may seek recognition both as an SSP and from Government as an LSP. As LSPs will have a broader role than SSPs will initially have, we would ask such partnerships to make clear what arrangements they would put in place to deliver the distinctive role set out for an SSP.
12. Another key relationships will be with the Monitoring Committees for the main European regional programmes. We cannot, under the regulations for the programmes, in any way fetter the committees' discretion in the way they monitor the quality and effectiveness of the programmes. In implementing the regulations, however, GO-EM will take full account of the importance of SSPs -
 - in consulting on and determining the membership of the committees
 - in its proposals to the committees on the selection of operations to be supported.

Criteria for Recognition

13. Partnerships are invited to make a case for being recognised as an SSP. They will have to demonstrate that they would be able to fulfil the role set out above. Ideally, partnerships should provide evidence based on current practice of their competency to fulfil the role. This will not, however, necessarily be possible for newly emerging partnerships. At the very least we will want to see a clear commitment from the partners that the criteria will be met, with an indication of process and timescales. Ultimately, any formal delegation of responsibility will have to be based on the partnership having arrangements fully in place.
14. In determining which partnerships should be recognised, we will want to ensure that there is full regional coverage and we will work with partnerships to this end. We will expect partnerships to resolve any inconsistencies or duplication amongst themselves – indeed, this will be taken as a measure of their maturity as partnerships. SSPs with overlapping geographical boundaries are not precluded, although we will need to be convinced that the partnerships concerned have effective arrangements between them for strategic planning and for co-ordinating delivery.
15. As a broad steer, we would expect to recognise no more than 10 SSPs in the region.
16. The following criteria will be applied in assessing bids –
 - **Critical Mass** - evidence (backed up by statistics) should be provided that the area to be covered by the SSP has sufficient critical mass for the sub-regional strategic role to be carried out effectively. This could mean for instance that the population coverage is of a sufficient size or that, in the case of rural areas, the partnership brings together several geographical areas to provide a strategic focus. As a guideline we would expect a minimum population level of 250,000 – only by exception will we consider proposals from partnerships covering an area with a smaller population.

- **Strategic Fit** – demonstrate that the partnership is committed to ensuring that the strategy for the sub-region will be an effective vehicle for translating regional strategic objectives for economic development into delivery on the ground, reflecting local needs. Partnerships are encouraged to consider how their strategy will relate to the latest version of the Regional Delivery Plan, which has been published in draft alongside this guidance. SSPs should also ensure that their economic development strategies fit within the framework of the IRS (see paragraph 4).
- **Operating Framework** - following on from strategic fit, the partnership will have to show that there are clearly defined responsibilities and lines of accountability for strategic leadership and delivery at regional, sub-regional and local levels, recognising the need for added value and subsidiarity and the need to avoid duplication. There is no prescribed model for the legal status or constitution of SSPs although this issue will be reviewed before any financial discretion could be devolved by *emda*. Partnerships should also indicate how they propose to build their capacity to take on the new role, including any support sought from *emda* and GO-EM to do so. Before any formal responsibility can be devolved by *emda*, SSPs will have to demonstrate that they are competent to exercise the responsibility effectively.
- **Commitment from Partners** – evidence that the key partner institutions are committed to playing their part on the partnership, ready to direct their activities and resources in line with the sub-regional strategy and agreed delivery arrangements. This includes the relevant local authorities, Local Strategic Partnerships, LLSCs and Business Links.
- **Business Community Engagement** - The need for strong and high quality business involvement within SSPs is particularly worth highlighting. The business community has a key role to play in determining the action needed to create a climate for business and economic success. Partnership working can be enhanced by the energy, focus and global perspective of business leaders, from SMEs as well as from the region's larger businesses. East Midlands Business Champions –see *emda* website – may be a source of business input to SSPs. Partnerships are encouraged to consider having a business leader in the chair of the SSP.
- **Overlap** - demonstrate that there are effective arrangements for managing the delivery of the sub-regional strategy in parts of the sub-region also covered by other SSPs. This might, for instance, mean reaching agreement between SSPs to lead on specific themes in the overlapping area. The partnerships should also show how they would work with partnerships in adjoining sub-regions / regions. As proposals emerge, partnerships will be encouraged to consider how they might fill any gaps in geographical coverage.
- **Performance Monitoring** - demonstrate that the partnership would be able and willing to work within the regional performance measurement framework set out in the second edition of the Regional Delivery Plan (see *emda* website) and set out their plans for measuring the partnership's own performance as well as that of the sub-region. The partnership should also explain how they would propose to link to the East Midlands Observatory, including any plans for satellite observatories at sub-regional level.
- **Inclusive Approach** – ensure that the interests of the whole sub-region are taken into account in a balanced way.

Resources

17. *emda* is firmly committed to making support available to help build the capacity of SSPs, once they have been recognised, to enable them to fulfil their role effectively, e.g. for secretariat support or for help in developing the partnership's performance measurement capabilities. Partnerships' needs for capacity building will vary - we will therefore be flexible in our response to their needs.
18. We will be considering with GO-EM over the next few months the extent to which we can devolve financial responsibilities to SSPs and the implications for accountability.

Proposals and Selection - Process

19. Proposals from partnerships should be submitted to *emda* **by the end of June 2001**. To start the ball rolling we would like to invite interested partnerships and other parties to attend a seminar at the Jarvis Grand Hotel, Leicester, on 27 February, where we can share our thinking and clarify the process.
20. We plan to have informal bilateral meetings with partnerships during March and early April. It would be help the process if partnerships intending to submit proposals could let us know as soon as possible.
21. The proposals will be considered jointly by *emda* and GO-EM. We will aim to make decisions about the successful SSPs by the end of July. We would then seek to agree concordats with the partnerships involved and discuss with them their needs for capacity building; an example of a concordat between an RDA and a sub-regional partnership in another English region is at *Annex 2*, to illustrate what we have in mind. We would be looking to have an ongoing dialogue with the SSPs about the scope for devolving further responsibilities to them over time (see *paragraph 7*).
22. We propose to bring SSPs together on regular basis to help shape the regional agenda and to share best practice.
23. For ease of reference, a summary of key dates in the process is at *Annex 3*.

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