

Scottish Local Authorities' Economic Development Improvement Guide - a Summary

October 2011

Introduction

The Scottish Local Authorities' Economic Development Group (SLAED) commissioned the Economic Development Improvement Guide. The Guide was produced by the Improvement Service and the work was funded by the Scottish Government.

The Guide provides a practical toolkit, which encourages Councils to 'raise the bar' in economic development by critically reviewing their activities, sharing good practice and identifying areas for improvement. The key aim of the Guide is to work with Councils and their partners to achieve greater and more sustainable economic impact.

Purpose

The Guide considers the key components required for effective economic development. In doing so, it aims to help Local Authority Economic Development services:

- exchange good practice and promote collaborative working;
- assess their overall performance in delivering economic development;
- benchmark that performance relative to comparable areas; and
- identify practical improvement actions that will help strengthen their performance and overall impact.

Whilst it focuses primarily on the economic development role of Councils, the Guide also reflects the fact that successful economic development requires effective partnership working. A wide range of economic development partners has also been involved in helping to shape the content of the Guide. The Guide itself also contains a major section on reviewing the effectiveness of economic development partnerships.

The Central Role of Economic Outcomes

At a time of significant resource challenge

across the public sector, there is a need for all services to achieve excellent value for money by delivering high quality and sustainable outcomes in an efficient and effective manner.

Effective economic development can impact positively on a wide range of priority outcomes that matter to Councils, their partners and their communities. For example, assisting unemployed residents into the labour market can impact positively, not only in economic terms, but also potentially in terms of improving health outcomes for those residents, reducing negative outcomes and strengthening the wider social fabric of communities. This type of early intervention can generate significant downstream savings across the public sector. At a time of tight resources, effective economic development can provide a sustainable basis for managing down demand for the wider range of public services.

Role of the Local Authority in Economic Development

The Guide contains a section on the positive impact that Local Authorities themselves can have on the local economy. This relates to Councils' role as major employers, purchasers of products & services and as the organisations responsible for a wide range of services, including planning, licensing, education, roads and town centre management. The way that these services are delivered can have a major impact on the local economy.

Case Studies

The Guide includes a wide range of economic development case studies, highlighting current areas of good practice. This includes examples of interventions that reflect particularly good value for money, effective collaboration and innovation. The purpose of this element of the Guide is to exchange good practice and encourage wider adoption.

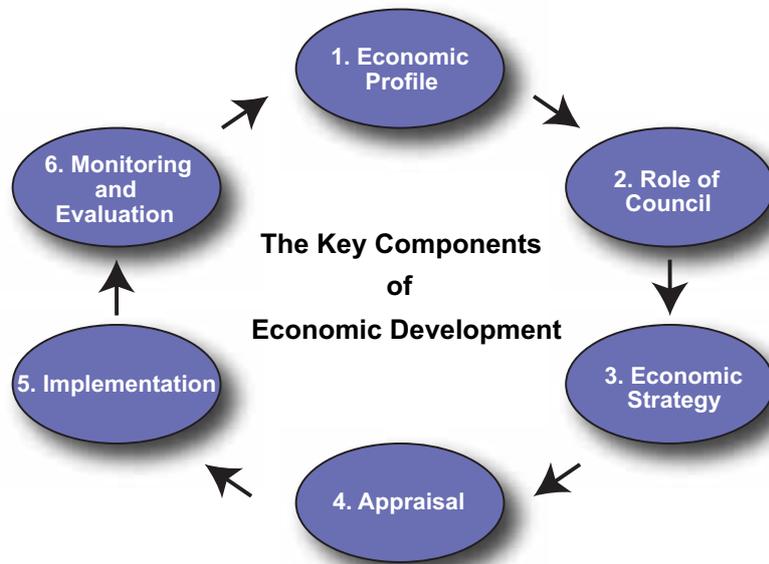


Figure 1. Key Components of Economic Development

Self Assessment Checklists

The Guide also includes a series of practical checklists covering each of the key aspects essential to effective economic development. These checklists are designed to help economic development practitioners self-assess their current activities/performance and identify areas for improvement.

Linkages to PSIF

The Guide has been designed to be fully compatible with the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF), which the majority of Scottish Councils have adopted. A separate, complementary PSIF Facilitators' Guide has been developed and will be made available to those Councils that have signed up to PSIF. The various checklists contained within the Guide have been embedded within the PSIF Facilitators' document.

At the same time, the Guide itself has been designed in such a way that it can also be usefully and flexibly applied by non-PSIF Councils. It can be used to undertake a comprehensive review of an economic development service or it can be dipped into and used to review single elements.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Economic Development Improvement Guide provides a set of practical tools that will enable Local Authorities to review, streamline and enhance their economic development services and increase the positive impact that they have within the economy.

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The Improvement Service is devoted to improving the efficiency, quality and accountability of public services in Scotland through learning and sharing information and experiences.

