

## Succession Toolkit©

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*Staffordshire*  
UNIVERSITY

**Centre for Economic and Social Regeneration**

# **Market Towns Initiative**

## **Succession Toolkit**

**Support for the sustained involvement of Market  
Town Partnerships in the future regeneration process**

A Toolkit produced on behalf of the Ledbury Area Regeneration  
Partnership and Advantage West Midlands by the  
Centre for Economic and Social Regeneration  
*at Staffordshire University*

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## Introduction

This **Toolkit** provides a set of considerations for taking forward and sustaining the actions of the various Partnerships established through the Market Towns Initiative (MTI). It draws on the combined experience of the Ledbury and Area Regeneration Partnership (LARP) in Herefordshire and the Centre for Economic and Social Regeneration (CESR) at Staffordshire University gained during the development of a succession strategy for the Ledbury Market Town area. The Ledbury Strategy was built around an in-depth analysis of the economic and social complexion of the area, the activities initiated through the MTI, and the policies and plans of actual and potential future partners in economic and community development. It also draws on wide-ranging consultation with businesses and the community in an endeavour to prioritise the needs and opportunities for the area.

The Toolkit provides a **blueprint for succession use by Market Town Partnerships** and others contemplating the onward development of their areas once funding support has concluded. It offers advice on the thinking behind the Strategy approach, the decision making process and the steps along the way, and is presented in a format that we hope will be easy to follow. It contains limited jargon and is written in a user-friendly way as it is intended for use by those whose experience in the regeneration process may be limited. For those with greater experience, it sets out to offer good practical advice based on recent experience.

The Toolkit document includes a number of supporting Appendices, and concludes with a summary diagram of the process (Appendix 6).

**What is a Succession Strategy?** An initial definition will help to set the context.

The interpretation followed in this Toolkit is as follows:

- a **written strategy document** that sets out a series of actions; where,
- the actions are to be pursued by **extending the commitment** of an existing regeneration partnership (possibly in a new form) following the completion of its period of operation and funding resources; in order to,
- **consolidate the achievements** made so far; and,
- **build desired change around a further set of actions** that are believed to be both necessary and feasible, reflecting the view of Partnership members that effective intervention must be sustained and that an impetus must be maintained.

In this way, the essential first step will be a decision to build a Succession Strategy rather than to withdraw from direct, targeted intervention. This Toolkit is particularly designed for the Partnership that says 'yes' to the need to continue in some form. Built around the Market Towns Initiative experience, this step by step guide should be of use to Partnerships within this and most other regeneration schemes.

## ***Step by Step* - stages in the development of an effective Succession Strategy**

### **1. Preliminary considerations - the decision to do it**

Prior to starting up a succession process, there are preliminary questions to be asked. These involve assessing the opportunities and need for the development of a Market Town Succession Strategy. Key questions need to be raised concerning the degree to which the Market Towns Initiative has completed the necessary work in the area:

- Does the area still have **regeneration needs**?
- Is there a **need for succession arrangements**?
- If so, **does that require a Succession Strategy** or could the necessary actions be covered by the mainstream policy of organisations such as the local Council or Primary Care Trust?
- Aside from motivation, **in terms of momentum, and the availability of individuals with the appropriate skills and sustained enthusiasm**, is it feasible for the Partnership to carry through a Succession Strategy?

If the answer to each of these questions is 'yes' then the real work must commence.

### **2. Establishing foundations and assessing capacities**

#### **Setting the scene**

Clarity of purpose is vital. Given a decision to go ahead with a Succession Strategy, and before you start the process, specific questions must be addressed as part of the process. As a Partnership with limited resources but aspirations for your Market Town:

- What are your **absolute priorities** in terms of economic and community development?

*This will influence the way in which you proceed.*

- **Who are you aiming to influence** with regard to the future development of the area?

*It is vital to be aware of exactly which agencies, organisations and individuals you will be focusing on in the development of your area.*

- **What can you handle** in terms of project development and the time and expertise that is required to pursue this?

*This will help you to decide how to develop the Partnership as an effective organisation.*

- Who will be meeting **the costs of actions** that you envisage as part of your Succession Strategy?

*This will give you an idea of what is needed, and will help you to set resource goals.*

### 3. The Strategy process - building from secure foundations

*This part of the process involves operating principles for the succession process and the building up of project ideas for consideration.*

#### 3.1 Early considerations - establishing main operating principles

*These operating principles suggest the best way to do things. Of course, that may not be possible for every Partnership and each will have to tailor its actions as necessary. On the basis of experience, the advice from Market Town Partnerships is to:*

- **Build credibility** - during the three year MTI Programme, work to build a reputation as an effective organisation that can manage funds and hit targets efficiently.
- **Think forward** - where possible, start the long-term planning well in advance of when you have to act; twelve months before the completion of the existing Programme is not too soon.
- **Establish a Strategic Planning Group** to take responsibility for the succession function, and give this group clear terms of reference and authority to act.
- **Understand your own capabilities and the role you can fulfil.**
- **Recognise that the group has limited resources and no real power** – opportunities may be greatest where your objectives coincide with those of key public and private agencies and organisations.
- **Do not reinvent the wheel** – build on existing activity and learn from established good practice in policy approaches and project actions. Creativity and flexibility can follow.
- **Inform and involve the key players** at an early stage. This includes Local Authority members and officers, Advantage West Midlands, and your own Partnership members.
- **Recognise that, at this time, economic regeneration** is the main priority.
- **Consider succession arrangements and the need for resources** if a new Partnership organisation is to be established.

The next stage is to review problems, identify opportunities, and make a decision on succession priorities.

#### 3.2 Review the key problems in your area

Define these clearly and use them as a basis for future decision making. The Healthcheck completed in preparation for the MTI Programme should, where possible, be updated to provide a clear picture of the local area. Parish Plan work, or related activities conducted by County, District and/or Town/Parish Councils may be available. Information will often be available from your Local Authority/Authorities.

The review should include both commercial (business and economic development) and community (social and environmental) issues. These can also be identified from the existing policy documentation - strategic documents - such as Unitary Development Plans, Economic Plans, Advantage West Midlands Economic Strategy and Action Plan, the West Midlands Regional Assembly Spatial Strategy - and so on.

### 3.3 Identify potential project opportunities

The succession process must commence with a review of potential projects. This initial list should be completed in two steps, the first based on the following:

- the **achievements of the MTI**;
- remaining **economic and community needs**;
- the **strengths of the area** and the opportunities that may be available; and,
- the **aspirations** of the local community and businesses.

Following this in-house review:

- the aspirations should be '**mapped**' against **project proposals** that are already in place within Local and Regional Strategy documents.

This process is essential - the ethos of the succession approach must be to build on and perhaps nurture accepted ideas.

You will need the support and understanding of professional Local Authority and regional development agency staff that have already been through the thinking process. If there is a new 'good idea', the opportunity will arise to bring it forward but it is sensible to wait until the foundations have been laid.

From this process, **prepare a list of potential projects** and identify lead players. Use this as a basis for a rigorous selection process aimed at defining your future schedule.

Provide this list as material for initial work on the Succession Strategy - see Section 4.2.

### 3.4 Decide on the priorities for Partnership attention

It is clearly necessary to **determine priorities for action** as only so much can be achieved with available resources. The question is - how should priorities be set? The process needs to reflect on the following:

#### *Local economic complexion*

Build from the Market Town Healthcheck and in particular any SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis that was completed. If possible, update the Healthcheck to obtain a current picture of the local economy.

#### *The actions from the existing Programme*

Review outputs from the Market Towns Programme for your area.

#### *Collation of views via parallel activities*

Liaise with other processes involving community and/or business liaisons such as the development of Parish Plans.

*The views of local agencies*

Conduct a consultation with key agencies and organisations with an involvement in the area.

*Ensuring that priorities fit within the strategic context*

Review the contents and approaches of key strategic documents pertaining to the Market Town.

*Reviewing the need for consultation*

If it becomes apparent that substantial changes have occurred since the original MTI consultation, you may consider further consultation with the local community and businesses.

This process would be the responsibility of the Steering Group set up to manage the succession process (see Section 4.2).

### **3.5 Assess Partnership capabilities and capacities**

*Earlier in the process, there should have been a consideration of what the Partnership can do in terms of succession activities. Given that a decision was made to pursue active succession, at this point it will be important to assess capabilities and capacities and to act to fill any gaps.*

*Asking and answering these questions will help you to recognise what is attainable and what is needed to increase the chances of effective succession activity.*

#### **Your capabilities?**

Your Partnership will need to be proactive. As such, your capabilities are critical. You will need to ask questions such as:

- Which members are committed to the longer-term strategy?
- What skills and qualities do they have and will these be sufficient to manage the process?
- Can you fill any gaps?
- What is achievable? Can you handle the full range of options?

It is essential to encourage individuals experienced in regeneration, planning and/or business, perhaps by co-option, to be part of, or at least work with, the nominated Strategic Planning Group, suggested as a necessary preliminary to the succession process (see Section 1 above). In essence, effective partnership is vital (see Toolkit Appendix 1).

#### **Your capacities?**

Capability needs to be matched with resources to create a level of capacity. It is vital for you to assess what is within your scope to achieve. This requires you to self-assess in



terms of:

- Do you have access to enough resources and support to 'lead' projects?
- Are you better suited to supporting other community leaders, and the public and private sector, to achieve their objectives?

*The question of capacity is important. Effective succession activity may be possible with basic voluntary activity and some Local Authority support. However, aspirations may be greater and you could decide to develop income-earning activity to support a new Partnership organisation.*

## **4. Developing and implementing a Succession Strategy**

This section deals with the two key issues - the nature of the succession Partnership, and the production of a Succession Strategy.

### **4.1 The succession arrangement - making key decisions about structure**

The future Partnership may be based around the existing MTI model and carry forward a level of activity on the basis of in-kind contributions of time. For many MTI Partnerships, this will be the way forward. However, whilst it is possible to develop succession arrangements within the existing MTI, the aspirations of the succession Partnership may go beyond 'voluntary' activity. More crucially, when the MTI Programme ends, so does the funding that provides the technical and administrative support. To manage a Succession Strategy process on a fully independent basis will require resources. Moreover, the succession Partnership may decide to become more proactive in the regeneration process. Some income generating activity would provide resources that can be dedicated to technical support for the Partnership. An alternative is that one of the Partner agencies or organisations could be asked to provide administrative support.

#### **Potential pathway idea – new structures and income generation**

If a suitable structure and operating system capable of earning income and providing an operating base to support the management of the Succession Strategy is to be set up, this will require someone with business acumen and a depth of knowledge of local conditions. A small number of regeneration partnerships, have developed the existing Partnership into an alternative organisation. Re-invention as a Development Trust, combining the Strategy support role with income generation in order to support its administration, is one way to progress this idea.

Income may be generated via social enterprises set up by the Partnership, for example by drawing on its skills and expertise as a consultancy, or by generating revenue from buildings or facilities transferred to the Partnership from the Local Authority.

#### **Partnership consolidation**

The development of the succession Partnership involves some preparatory investigations. Learning from experience is a potentially productive activity. Study visits may be arranged to learn about how other Market Towns or similar regeneration Partnerships have dealt with the succession process. It will be useful to consult with representative

organisations such as the Development Trust Association to obtain objective advice on the creation of a future operating structure, although this is only one option. At this stage, it would also be useful to establish bridges with other organisations and their activities. A community organisation of this type has limited resources and no real power to act. It is essential that bodies such as local Councils, Civic Societies, Chambers of Commerce, Planning Departments and Economic Development units both understand and trust what is being done. Some sources of further advice on operating structures are outlined in Toolkit Appendix 2.

#### **4.2 The 'Succession Strategy' preparation**

*The production of the Strategy needs to be a fully professional process. It may be completed 'in-house' if expertise and time is available. Alternatively, there is a value in producing a Strategy through a consultancy that tackles the job from an independent perspective.*

**Initiating the production of a Succession Strategy** that establishes the priorities and specific actions needed to actually implement projects will usually entail a dedicated Study Team. Clearly defined criteria have to be established. The process will involve:

- forming a Steering Group to take responsibility for production of the Strategy;
- preparing terms of reference that are clearly stated with easily measured progress checks; and,
- obtaining resources to carry out the work.

If external resources are required these may be sought from existing MTI funds, or from other sources such as Local Authorities, AWM and so on.

**Terms of Reference must be clearly specified** - This involves a number of elements:

- define how the Strategy will be used - who is it aimed at and with what objectives in mind?
- establish the starting point - at this stage it is essential that resources are used to provide practical information relating to the proposed projects, including evidence of need and demand. Avoid going back over the basic research carried out previously.
- define the key outputs - such as Strategy documents, and Project materials - that will be needed to put the Programme into action.
- specify the information required in the key outputs.
- define lines of responsibility and progress milestones.
- establish links to other relevant activities such as the Town/Parish Plan process.
- as a spin-off, the Strategy team may be asked to identify activities that have the potential to earn income for a social enterprise.

**Review progress** - the Steering Group should establish regular checks on progress - these should be dealt with in depth, and effective action taken to amend any problem areas or loss of direction.

## **The Strategy - design, development and implementation**

### **Strategy content**

The **Strategy will need to include** the following:

- A record of the process that led to its creation.
- Details of the links between the Partnership and the Strategy.
- A review of the current economic and community challenges facing the area.
- Some evidence of the achievements of the MTI Programme in the area.
- Details of relevant local and regional strategies and related documents that set the context for the development of the area.
- Strategic development themes for the Succession Strategy - These will be based on the following:
  - the review of local economic and community problems conducted at the preliminary stage of the process; related to this,
  - the needs and aspirations of the community and local businesses;
  - the assessment of area strengths and opportunities;
  - established priorities based on the process set out in Section 3.5;
  - existing projects and initiatives that are likely to come forward over the lifetime of the Strategy; and, where possible,
  - an innovative review of project potentials for the area.
- Guiding principles for project development and prioritisation (see Toolkit Appendix 3).
- Full details of proposed themes, projects and actions together with detailed project summaries for those proposed.
- Implementation arrangements, including relationships with the succession Partnership and other key agencies and organisations who will be involved in delivering the projects.
- A clear marketing approach (see Toolkit Appendix 4).
- A clear approach to funding acquisition for project development (see Toolkit Appendix 5).
- Appendices containing technical data to support the Strategy and individual projects,

### **Launching the Succession Strategy**

Launching the Succession Strategy is itself an important stage. This needs to be managed to gain attention and support for the process. Important questions include:

#### *Who to invite?*

It will be appropriate to extend invitations to all potential Partner agencies and organisations.

#### *What type of event?*

A presentation on the Strategy with a workshop to discuss who will lead and/or contribute to each project will be useful.

## **Review progress**

The Partnership will need to periodically review progress on implementation, as well as the Strategy document itself, to check the following:

- Are targets being reached?
- Is there enough revenue coming in to fund the support?
- Are there adequate resources in staff and support to continue the process?
- Have County and Regional Strategies been updated and/or changed?
- Are there new opportunities to explore?
- Have there been any change in local circumstances?
- If so, what needs to be done?
- Is the project programme still viable? Should some parts be adapted, or even abandoned and replaced?

In effect, it is always necessary to be alert to changes and to develop a process that is flexible enough to allow you to easily make changes in response to new or changing needs and opportunities.

# Market Towns Initiative Succession Toolkit Succession Strategy Development Process

