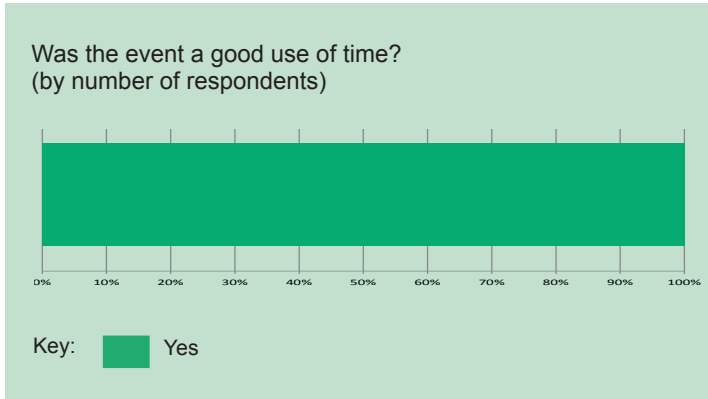


Event: 13 Oct, 20 Nov 2013, 2 Feb 2014
Number of attendees: 61
Number of survey respondents: 37
Number of telephone interviews: 16

This event aimed to help councillors take an active leadership role in the economic and social aspects of the planning system.

Meeting the needs of PAS' audience

Overall, the event met the needs of delegates. All respondents confirmed that it was a good use of their time (see graph).



Almost 98% of respondents said the event made a difference in their ability to do their work. Examples include:

- Greater confidence in understanding and being able to articulate the social and economic benefits of planning, particularly with planning officers and the public; councillors now taking greater ownership of the planning process as a result.
- Planning function now more aligned with the economic objectives of Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- Further work undertaken to better understand service delivery, using the benchmarking approach covered as part of the event.
- Improvement action plans produced as a result of undertaking performance reviews, which included changes to streamline pre-application and validation processes, and to encourage development management and plan-making teams to work together.

Adding value

Over 91% of respondents felt that they gained an improved understanding of the financial and social returns of planning following the event. This included a better awareness of the use of planning obligations, New Homes Bonus and Community Infrastructure Levy.

Respondents praised the format of the sessions; in particular, the interactive sessions enabled delegates to share and discuss experiences. The theoretical Local Plan case study exercise was valuable, though some respondents felt that it would have been more beneficial to use a real case study and discuss the practical lessons learnt going forwards.

“The training gave me an additional set of tools through which to understand and evaluate development.”

Value for money

The support cost PAS between £285 and £430 per person to provide. Nearly 98% of respondents considered that the event offered good value for money.

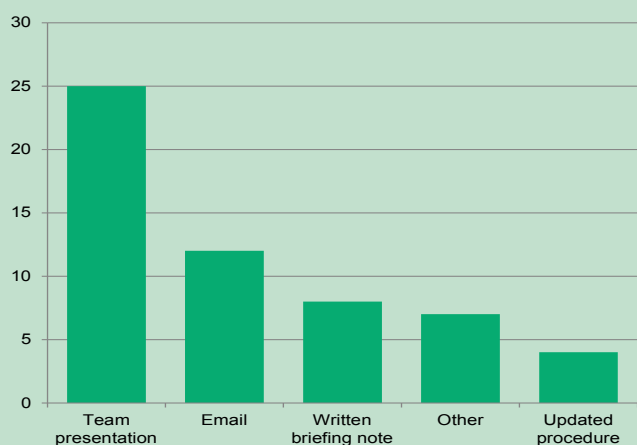
Respondents valued the residential aspect of the event which provided significant opportunities for reflection and networking. It allowed councillors to discuss shared issues and find out about the approaches taken by other local authorities.

“The biggest benefit was the opportunity to come together with fellow councillors ... if not for the residential aspect, the networking opportunity would not have been as valuable.”

Disseminating information

Over 94% of respondents shared what they learnt with colleagues (see graph).

Ways delegates have shared content from support (by number of respondents)



Many respondents also shared what they learnt with planning officers. In particular, the benchmarking data has been used to review and improve the planning service in their local authorities, including changes to powers of delegation.

“I am now more familiar with performance figures and how they can be used to monitor our service.”

Over 80% of respondents said that they felt the support helped them to take a more active leadership role at their local authority. The support has given them the confidence to discuss financial aspects of the process with fellow colleagues and officers and implement service changes.

Suggested improvements included:

- Consider including separate break-out sessions for district, county and unitary authority councils, so that content and discussion can be tailored to specific contexts.
- Provide regular briefing papers or email updates to build on the material covered at the events. This would ensure that learning points remain relevant and up-to-date.
- Encourage involvement of a wide variety of authorities, including urban authorities. This could be done by identifying target councils and contacting the chair of committee, portfolio holder or chief planner.

Conclusion

Overall the feedback indicates that the Leadership Academy event was very well-received. Councillors have a greater understanding of the economic and social aspects of planning and have been motivated to implement changes in their councils. Lessons learnt include:

- The benchmarking data session was particularly valued and should remain part of the programme.
- Real life examples and case studies are preferred where possible, and should be used to encourage discussions surrounding lessons learnt.
- Encourage wider participation by identifying target councils and liaising with the chair of committee, portfolio holder and officers.