



In August, the Economic Development Committee (EDC) approved a draft Labour Market Strategy (LMS) for public consultation. Between 2 September and 11 October, consultation meetings drew more than 260 participants while nearly 40 responses were received via email or online survey. On 28 November, EDC will consider whether to endorse a final draft LMS reflecting input received during the public consultation.

This Quick Reference Guide summarises key points raised during consultations and the resulting changes to the LMS. The final draft LMS is available for review [online](#) and in hard copy at the library or at the Jamestown Customer Service Centre. Any questions should be sent to Amanda Curry Brown ([Amanda.Brown@sainthelena.gov.sh](mailto:Amanda.Brown@sainthelena.gov.sh)) prior to 4pm on 27 November.

### **Significant Revisions Resulted from Consultations**

The consultation process unmistakably identified parts of the draft LMS that required significant revisions. These changes will more closely align the document and its proposals with the community's needs as identified during consultations.

#### *The LMS must clearly help St Helenians in the 'here and now'*

While many of the policies and programmes proposed in the LMS are focused on making near-term improvements to the labour market, this was not always clear in the draft document. That lack of clarity led to concern that individuals currently living and working on St Helena would be overlooked in favour of those coming from outside. To address this, the final draft LMS has been reorganised to focus on activities in three specific timeframes:

- 2020 – 2025: Addressing Current Labour Market Challenges
- 2020 – 2030: Growing St Helena's Workforce
- 2020 – 2035: Building the Economy of Tomorrow

While work must begin today to accomplish long-term goals, the revised document more explicitly recognises the critical importance of tackling the most pressing issues facing those who are already on-Island sooner rather than later.

### *Parallel work on the LMS and Immigration Ordinance helped to inform both efforts*

Currently, acquiring Saint Status is the only path to long-term residency available on St Helena. In some other countries, individuals who immigrate for the purposes of employment must first obtain permanent resident status before they are eligible to apply for citizenship. This allows people to live and work in a country without restriction but does not include access to the full rights of citizenship, such as a passport or government benefits.

In parallel to the LMS consultation, the Immigration Working Group has been reviewing a proposal to extend the time required to achieve Saint Status and to include a permanent resident category in the revised Immigration Policy and Ordinance. Feedback received during consultations on the draft LMS suggested that this proposal could benefit St Helena and was worth further examination. Such a category would address employer interest in retaining skilled workers on-Island while also respecting public concerns about acquiring Saint Status.

The final draft LMS recommends the specific details of a proposal for permanent resident status be developed by the Immigration Working Group and incorporated in the draft Immigration Policy and Ordinance. In accordance with SHG's consultation process, the draft will be made available for public consultation before it is adopted.

### *The final draft LMS includes updated statistics and additional commentary to build a common understanding of the context for the policies and programmes proposed*

The 'Situational Analysis' section now includes the most up-to-date information available. In addition, a more detailed discussion addresses questions or comments that arose during consultations. For example, there is now additional analysis of seasonal population patterns while the section on declining birth rates explains how St Helena compares to global trends. The discussion of emigration explores a range of reasons why individuals choose to leave St Helena and acknowledges the contributions those working off-Island make to St Helena's economy.

### **Even Popular Proposals Were Improved through Consultations**

Early input from the community informed the policies and programmes originally proposed in the draft LMS, many of which proved to be popular. Subsequent feedback during the broader consultation process provided helpful perspectives to further refine the initial proposals and will also be critical for shaping the implementation process.

### *Career Access St Helena (CASH) was by far the most popular proposal*

Employers, employees and students all responded enthusiastically to the CASH concept and St Helena Government (SHG) has already begun planning for its implementation. CASH has been brought forward in the document to highlight it as a centrepiece of the LMS and to clarify its function as both a placement service and workforce development resource. The final draft LMS also specifically discusses the role CASH can play in supporting students, school leavers and people with disabilities.

### *Many stakeholders welcomed efforts to clarify and consistently implement SHG HR policies*

In response to feedback received during consultations, the final draft LMS includes an expanded discussion about issues related to compensation. In addition, a new section addresses concerns raised about 'jobs for life.'

### *Feedback from employers provided insight into how policies and programmes could be implemented by the private and non-profit sectors*

Based on employer feedback, descriptions of policies and programmes are now more general so it is clear they could be adopted by any interested employer and not only SHG. Comments from employers were especially valuable in shaping plans for an Island-wide 'HR Community of Practice' (previously called the 'HR Forum'), an employment scheme for recent university graduates and a working holiday scheme. Based on suggestions from employers, the Employment Rights Committee has already started designing materials to raise awareness of the requirements under the Employment Rights Ordinance.

### *Additional detail in the 'Complementary Policy' section expands on key sectors*

More detailed summaries of actions needed related to banking, education, investment and social policy address feedback received during consultations.

## **Consultations Did Not Lead to a Clear Consensus for Some Proposals**

On two issues, no clear consensus emerged from the wide variety of views presented. In these areas, the final draft LMS proposes ways forward that are (1) consistent with the 10 Year Plan and Sustainable Economic Development Plan and (2) will meet the needs of those individuals the proposals are intended to help without significantly disadvantaging others.

*SHG will propose a pilot relocation assistance package to help St Helenians who are returning to the Island with job offers*

The proposal to provide incentives for St Helenians to return to the Island to live and work attracted a full spectrum of views. Some felt very strongly that there should be no action taken while others suggested a generous package of benefits that includes full payment of travel expenses, tax exemptions and access to housing. In the online survey, responses were split exactly in half between those who supported the proposal and those who did not.

After considering the range of feedback, including input from individuals currently living overseas, EDC has recommended that SHG propose a pilot programme to offer loans to cover the cost of flight and freight for qualifying individuals and their dependants. Precise details of the pilot will be determined through the standard tax and revenue process.

In addition, this programme is now referred to as 'relocation assistance' rather than 'relocation incentives.' This change more appropriately describes the intent of the proposal to remove barriers for people who actively want to return to the Island rather than to entice those who otherwise would not return.

*There is a need to balance traditional economic sectors with new opportunities*

In consultations, advocates spoke passionately in favour of either traditional or emerging sectors being the appropriate focus for economic growth. In reality, both will be critical to St Helena's future. Recognising the need to plan for a diversified economy, the final draft LMS promotes the Sustainable Economic Development Plan as a guidepost for education policy. This includes giving students ample opportunity to explore traditional industries such as farming and fishing. At the same time, it recognises that students today have access to an array of career paths that may have been unimaginable in the not-so-distant past. Additional detail on digital opportunities reflects feedback from current students.

**The following proposals appear largely unchanged in the final draft LMS:**

- Creating an online registry for St Helenians overseas and email digest of jobs;
- Updating the shortage occupation list;
- Improving or implementing succession planning policies;
- Marketing St Helena as a destination for digital nomads and
- Including workforce development requirements in TC officer contracts.