

**The nature of activities possible under Investment Priority 2.2 are given in the “Investment Priority 2.2” document. Below are some example activities from other LEP areas around the country.**

These are given as examples of how broad the activity under 2.2 can be. WECA is anticipating consortia to come forward based on recognised sector, geographic or learner specific ambitions, challenges or opportunities.

A strong element of all successful consortia will be the nature of the “SME support” that they will offer. As in, how will SMEs benefit from being supported by the programme – what will the support result in? The second key element will be the ‘result’ delivered. As in, how did the consortia project help the SME to engage in the skills system and/or a learner to make progression?

A West of England specific example general activity could be:

SMEs in *this sector* are not aware of the future skills needs / job demands / job types required in order to remain productive for the larger companies that they currently supply. Equally, they do not know how to go about filling these future skills needs.

A consortia project, with strong support from larger companies in the relevant sector, works with SMEs to help them better understand the technological advances being made in their sector and the new manufacturing / design / testing procedures and processes that will be commonplace within a few years.

The consortia then supports the SME to make a plan for the kinds of future skills they will need and advises them on routes to meeting those needs. This is a skills needs assessment and can form a ‘SME support’ output.

The assessment identifies that the SME will need to start making much better use of graduates in future. As such, the consortia supports the SME to design a graduate placement opportunity and then arranges for the first graduate to be placed into the opportunity. The consortia support both the SME and the graduate to ensure that the placement runs smoothly and achieves its objectives. The graduate completes a meaningful placement to the benefit of the SME and the learner. Upon completion a ‘Result’ is delivered.

*Many other eligible activities and consortia priorities are possible, this is an example to show how consortia will need a strong ‘support’ element and a strong ‘result’ element – with the latter following from the former.*

**Other examples from around the country.**

General activities to be supported:

- Support for intermediate and high-level vocational skills for career progression, with a particular focus on higher level apprenticeships (where provision is not currently available in the *place*).
- Develop the skills / capacity within SMEs to create apprenticeship opportunities, and to manage / support apprentices.

- Work with employers to provide placements or internships that enable students to gain industry-relevant, high quality, experience and skills, or for educators to improve their industry relevant experience.
- Build capacity in employers to provide placement and internship opportunities, particularly for those who face particular disadvantage or are from a disadvantaged group.
- Develop mechanisms to involve employers in the design and / or delivery of skills provision.
- Support clusters of companies to work together to address the challenges of recruiting / supporting employees to undertake a higher level/degree apprenticeship at NVQ Level 3 or above.
- Support collaboration between employers / sector bodies and education providers, to inform and develop 'sector skills routeways' that will meet the current and future skills needs of *the place's* employers in priority, high demand, and replacement demand sectors.
- Develop a mechanism to gather feedback from the employers on the appropriateness and relevance of the support provided.
- Establish and deliver an independent and impartial advisory service to match SME's to skills provision. This will include undertaking a comprehensive Training Needs Analysis (TNA) for the employer or a cluster of employers, and support about how to access existing skills, and qualification support / provision.
- Work with employers to identify options to address skill shortages including e.g. transference of skills; mentoring programmes; recruitment of new talent into the organisation via internship, placement, or Apprenticeship opportunities; or upskilling existing workers to support career progression.

### Promoting Career Opportunities in Key Sectors

This project will put SME employers in priority sectors at the heart of inspiring and informing young people and individuals seeking work or wanting to progress about future opportunities available. The Employers' Skills and Education Board in *the place* has identified this as their top priority.

The project should provide support and co-ordination linking local employers with schools and young people to provide meaningful and inspirational experiences of the world of work, and to ensure that young people can make informed education and career choices.

Employers will need to work with schools and organisations that work with young people outside of the school environment to provide the inspiration and information about job opportunities, new technologies, business developments and local skills shortages to young people, their teachers, parents and other professionals that work with young people (including training and careers guidance professionals). These individuals will then make informed decisions about the subjects that need to be studied and the skills that need to be acquired in order to access career opportunities, particularly in *the place's* key occupational sectors.

### Articulating the Skills Needs of SMEs and Helping to Ensure that Local Skills Delivery Meets those Needs.

SMEs must be able to communicate their workforce development needs to all

audiences that are involved with education and skills delivery. This project will support expert facilitators for each priority sector who will work closely with SMEs and micro businesses to understand and articulate their current and future skills needs. The facilitators will discuss those needs with local skills providers to help develop effective training packages that meet employer demand. The facilitators will also support the capacity of skills providers to directly engage with smaller businesses to understand and respond to their skills needs.

In supporting SMEs to be at the centre of this development, outcomes must ensure that there is an increase in the skills provision around energy and clean growth, manufacturing, life sciences, logistics, engineering, financial services and other sectors that are identified as a priority in the coming years.

### Strengthening Digital Skills

The wider adoption of digital technologies and associated digital and STEM-related skills to transform business processes, improve productivity and raise the overall quality of jobs is crucial across all sectors and for all sizes of business. However, particular support is needed for smaller employers.

This project will support a digital co-ordinator to work across *the place's* SMEs to engage more businesses about the importance of digital and STEM-related skills. A focused marketing campaign, including working with local business clusters and intermediary organisations will be needed. The digital coordinator will work closely with SMEs and micro businesses to understand and articulate their current and future skills needs in digital technologies, STEM-related skills, cyber security, data use and storage etc. Qualities, aptitudes and effective methods of learning should be considered, not just set skills and qualifications. The co-ordinator will discuss those needs with local skills providers to help develop effective training packages that meet employer demand.

This Call is intended to enable applicants to develop creative and innovative skills provision approaches alongside employers and other relevant institutions. The kind of activity that may be supported may include (but is not limited to):

1. Bringing together businesses and potential providers (including colleges, universities and private training providers) to identify training requirements;
2. Supporting the development of technical provision in line with economic need and in response to evidenced gaps, particularly higher and degree apprenticeship provision;
3. Building capacity in SMEs to engage with skills provision;
4. Identification of CPD needs for FE/HE lecturers in order to deliver the specialist provision that employers require.

Through this call *the place* is seeking a programme of activity which will:

- Support SME businesses across a range of sectors, in particular LEP Area priority sectors outlined below, to provide additional HE/FE student and graduate placements, internships and graduate level employment opportunities.
- Support businesses to recognise the value of HE/FE student and graduate placements, internships and graduate level employment opportunities and the impact they can have on business growth.

- Give SMEs greater access to the range of skills that Higher-Level Apprentices, Masters students and Post-graduates possess, who can then contribute to help sustain business growth.
- Provide a free and impartial brokerage service, matching appropriate HE/FE students and graduates with SMEs to ensure mutual benefit.
- Create better links and integration between Higher and Further Education providers and employers, developing better progression pathways.
- Work across the area, engaging with LEP partners, appropriate delivery organisations and stakeholders to identify opportunities for engagement and collaboration.