

# West of England Local Growth Assurance Framework

January 2021

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# 1 Purpose of the document

## 1.1 Context

1. The West of England is one of the UK's most prosperous regions with an economy worth over £33.2 billion a year. A net contributor to the national purse, with a population of over 1 million and over 43,000 businesses, the West of England competes on a global scale.
2. In 2016, three councils in the West of England – Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire – signed a devolution deal. As a result, significant powers and funding have been transferred to the region through the new West of England Combined Authority (WECA) and West of England Mayor.
3. The West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is a business led public-private partnership which develops and drives policy and strategy for economic growth and job creation in the area. The LEP spans the geography of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. WECA provides support for the activities of West of England LEP including undertaking the role of accountable body for LEP funding.



## 1.2 Scope of the Assurance Framework

4. Government have set out in [The National Local Growth Assurance Framework](#) guidance the requirement for LEPs and Mayoral Combined Authorities in receipt of a Single Pot to produce their own local assurance framework. This document sets out the West of England's governance arrangements for these funds, how due transparency and accountability are ensured and the way that schemes are appraised, monitored and evaluated to achieve value for money.
5. The 'Single Pot' approach to funding is a significant fiscal agreement in devolution deals which seeks to reduce ring fences and consolidate funding lines for which WECA is the accountable body. The West of England Operating Framework and Business Plan together with the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and other West of England plans and strategies, provide the basis for investment decisions alongside the delivery of statutory requirements, conditions of funding and other local transport objectives.
6. The funds in the scope of this assurance framework (hereafter referred to as the 'investment programme') are as follows:
  - **West of England Investment Fund (WoEIF)** – WECA has established the WoEIF through which it will administer the additional £30m per annum allocation to WECA of grant-based investment funds (sometimes called 'Gain Share'). These funds span a 30 year period but are subject to a five-yearly Gateway Review by Government. In line with the Devolution Deal this is in the control of WECA, working with the West of England Mayor. Aside from schemes in the scope of this framework, other exceptional costs are funded via the WoEIF related to the establishment of WECA and arising from its statutory duties, together with election costs for the Mayor as agreed by the WECA Committee.
  - **Transforming Cities Fund (TCF)** – the £103m of funding awarded to WECA to deliver transport improvements aimed at transforming connectivity through improved public transport and active travel infrastructure, reducing congestion and enhancing air quality.

*For ease of language, in the scope of this framework the WoEIF and TCF are hereafter referred to as 'the WECA funding streams'.*

- **Adult Education Budget (AEB)** – from 2019/20 WECA became responsible for administering AEB within its area. Investment decisions for AEB will be made with full consideration to the statutory entitlements which are detailed in the orders laid down to devolve the functions for administering AEB to WECA.

It should be noted that owing to the nature of AEB, whilst it falls within the general principles of this framework, including transparency, accountability and formal decision making by the WECA Committee, general references to project identification, appraisal, monitoring and value for money will be subject to different arrangements. Further detail on the specific arrangements for AEB are provided in Appendix 1.

- **Local Growth Fund (LGF)** – the £202m of funding covering the period 2015/16-20/21 awarded to the LEP through Growth Deals with Government.
- **Economic Development Fund (EDF)** – the City Deal signed in 2012 by the West of England Councils, the LEP and Government included a range of measures aimed at driving economic growth. Several of the Deal elements have been adopted in ongoing programmes (such as developing an integrated inward investment service) or have been completed. One ongoing element is the Growth Incentive whereby the local authorities retain 100% of business rates growth in five West of England Enterprise Areas.

£500m of the growth in these Enterprise Areas, together with the Bristol Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone, over a 25 year period is being used to create the LEP’s Economic Development Fund to deliver infrastructure to help unlock these locations.

Whilst the operation and monitoring of the Enterprise Zone and Areas is undertaken by the relevant Council, the overall growth performance is overseen by the Business Rates Pooling Board which comprises the four Council s73 Officers and the LEP. Periodic reports are presented to the LEP Board and the West of England Joint Committee, and an annual performance report is provided to the WECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- **Revolving infrastructure Fund (RIF)** – this fund was formed from awards by Government through the Regional Growth Fund and Growing Places. This is a revolving fund aimed at advancing the infrastructure which enables development.
- **Get Building Fund (GBF)** - £13.7m capital funding over the period 2020/21-21/22 to help complete major projects which are planned to stimulate jobs and support the region’s economic recovery.

For ease of language, in the scope of this framework the LGF, EDF, RIF and GBF are hereafter referred to as ‘the LEP funding streams’.

- **South West Energy Hub** – spanning the seven LEPs in the wider south west region, this is one of five local energy hubs established across England. WECA acts as the accountable body for the [South West Energy Hub](#). It should be noted that whilst arrangements for the Hub fall within the general principles of this framework, including transparency, accountability and formal decision making by the Joint Committee, general references to project identification, appraisal and approval will be subject to different arrangements. These are described in Appendix 2.

### 1.3 What is an Assurance Framework and who it is for?

7. This assurance framework is underpinned by the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles), namely:
  - **Selflessness:** Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

- **Integrity:** Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
  - **Objectivity:** Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
  - **Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
  - **Openness:** Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
  - **Honesty:** Holders of public office should be truthful.
  - **Leadership:** Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.
8. The framework is required to show that suitable arrangements are in place to effectively manage the investment programme and that robust systems are in place to ensure resources are spent with regularity, propriety, and value for money, whilst at the same time achieving projected outcomes.
  9. The assurance framework also outlines clear and transparent procedures for all stakeholders in the West of England area (including the constituent Local Authorities, the West of England LEP, other key partner agencies, businesses and residents) regarding the delivery and spending associated with the investment programme. The assurance framework and the investment programme will be managed in accordance with the usual local authority checks and balances, including the financial duties and rules which require local authorities to act prudently in spending.
  10. The joint and consistent approach will also provide the opportunity to combine funding to maximise economic impacts. All projects funded through the investment programme will be subject to the agreed prioritisation, appraisal, and monitoring and evaluation framework, including value for money assessments tailored to the nature and scale of the proposed investment.
  11. This assurance framework will be updated regularly and reviewed annually to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. Furthermore, other funding sources may subsequently be aligned with the investment programme, such as any funds awarded through the Housing Infrastructure Fund or UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to ensure that an integrated, comprehensive and strategic approach to promoting growth within the West of England is adopted. Where these fall within the scope of this framework it will be updated accordingly. Where there are significant changes to the operation of the framework the Cities and Local Growth Unit will be informed, and any necessary action undertaken.

12. In performing its role, the WECA will ensure that it acts in a manner that is lawful, transparent, evidence-based, consistent and proportionate. The WECA s73 Officer will confirm that the financial affairs of the LEP are being properly administered and are compliant with the National Assurance Framework by the end of February each year.
13. The assurance framework sits alongside WECA's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework which sets out WECA's approach to Monitoring & Evaluation.

## 1.4 Status and structure of the framework

The remainder of this document is set out in the following sections:

- Section 2: Describes the governance and decision-making structures and outlines the transparency that will apply to all decision making.
- Section 3: Sets out the procedures for prioritising projects, appraising projects and developing appropriate business case documentation to satisfy the value for money assessment.
- Section 4: Outlines the procedures required for monitoring and evaluating projects and the overall investment programme.

## 2 Governance and Decision-Making Structure

### 2.1 West of England Governance

14. The governance structure for WECA and the LEP is shown in Figure 2.2. The specific roles in this governance process are set out below.
15. The governance arrangements for the investment programme provide timely and binding decisions, with due clarity, transparency and accountability. These are underpinned by a consistent approach which seeks to harmonise governance processes (noting that different funds may have different ultimate decision makers), assurance and reporting arrangements. This provides the flexibility to match the most suitable funding stream to a particular scheme, and also allow overview, efficiency and rigour. The governance process is shown diagrammatically in Figure 2.1.

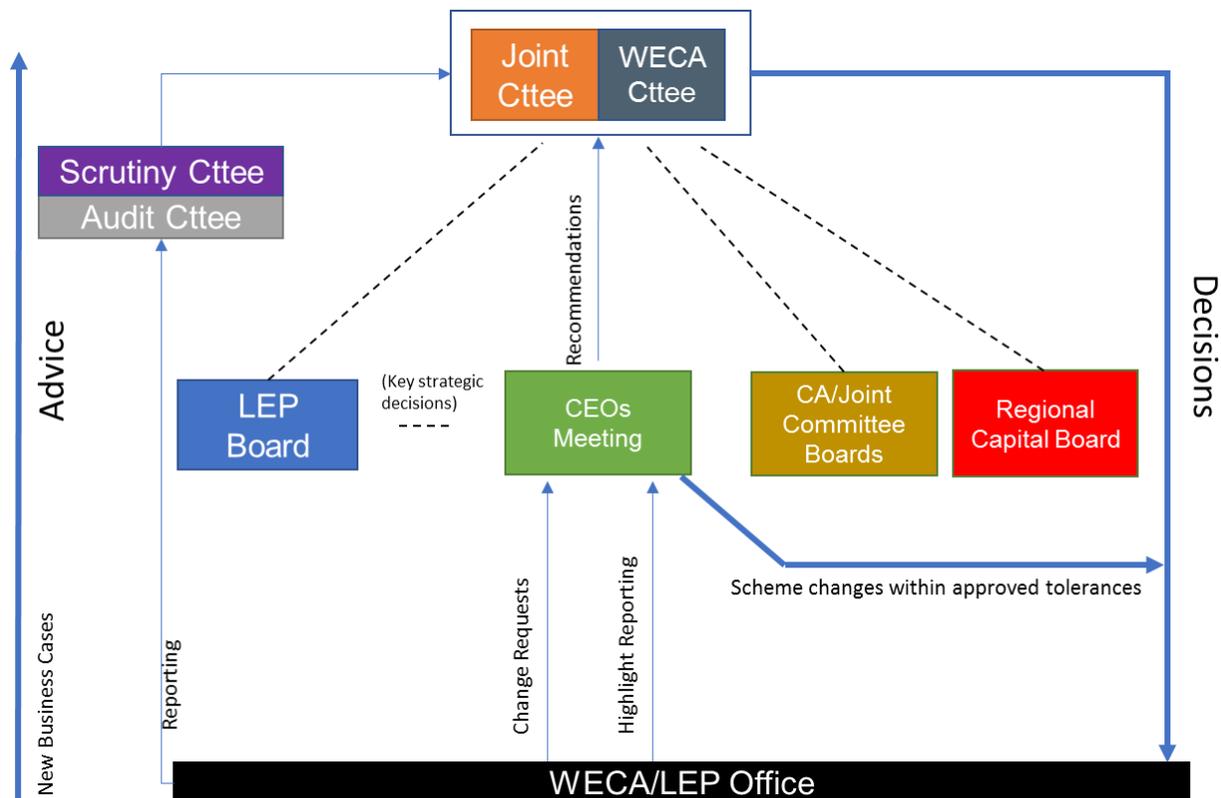
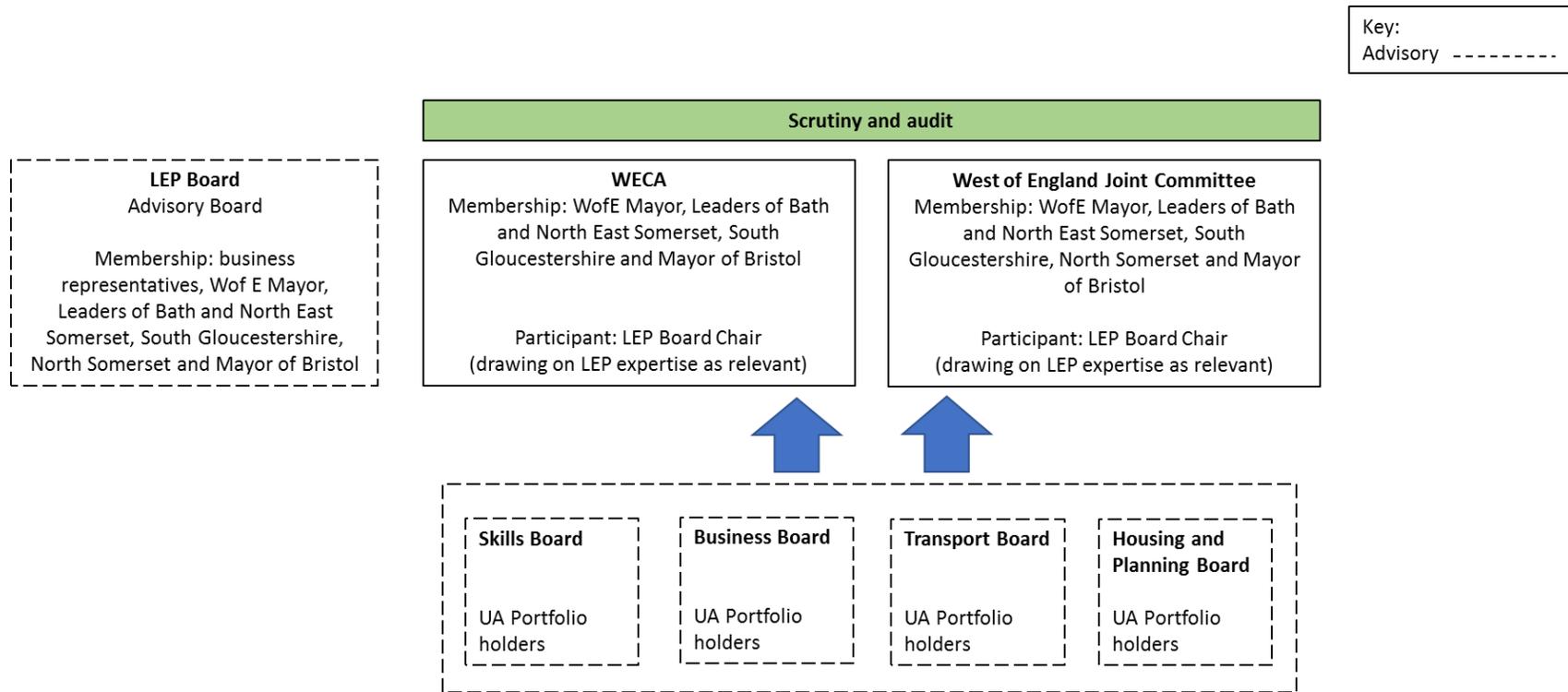


Figure 2.1 – Investment Programme Governance Process



**Figure 2.2 – WECA Governance**

## **WECA Committee**

16. The WECA Committee is chaired by the West of England Mayor, and is made up of the council Leaders of Bath and North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire and the Bristol Mayor. The WECA Committee meets regularly and in public and the papers for these meetings are published on the [WECA website](#). The constitution of WECA is also [published](#) which includes the code of conduct for members (Part C). This Committee provides the formal and accountable decision making process related to WECA funding streams. The delegations granted by the WECA Committee related to scheme changes are set out in paragraph 26 and Appendix 3.

## **West of England Joint Committee**

17. The West of England Joint Committee involving the West of England Combined Authority Mayor, the Council Leaders of Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire and the Bristol Mayor meets formally and in public, and papers for these meetings are published on the [WECA website](#). The Terms of Reference of the West of England Joint Committee can be viewed in the [constitution](#) (page A7). This Committee makes all decisions related to LEP funding streams (again aside from the delegations set out in paragraph 26).
18. It is the role of these Committees to approve and periodically review a programme of schemes through the submission of Strategic Outline or Outline Business Cases (see Appendix 7). These schemes will be awarded 'Programme Entry'. Schemes with Programme Entry will then produce Full Business Cases or Final Approval Business Cases (see section 3.2) for approval to secure funding confirmation.

## **LEP Board**

19. The purpose of the West of England LEP Board is to secure the region's continuing and ambitious economic success and attractiveness as a place for its residents to live and thrive and for businesses and communities to grow in a sustainable way.
20. The LEP Board is a business led partnership between business/universities and the region's unitary and combined authorities. The LEP Board works in a collaborative and catalytic way seeking to share and test ideas informed by best practice from across the globe to ensure that actions are evidence based and draw upon the best in the world. A joint statement setting out the respective roles of the LEP and WECA is shown in Appendix 4.
21. In terms of the LEP funding streams, the role of the LEP Board is to bring a business perspective and make recommendations to the West of England Joint Committee based upon advice from the Chief Executives (see paragraph 26). A programme of sequential meetings supports this process and timely decision making. The LEP Board and Chair play a key advisory role and make recommendations that are considered by the Joint Committee, who take full account of these recommendations in their decision making. The Chair of the LEP Board participates as a non-member in the meetings of the WECA and Joint Committees.
22. The Board receives regular updates on all LEP funded projects, so they are sighted on their performance, issues, risks and relevant mitigations in place.

### Combined Authority/Joint Committee Boards

23. The following Boards meet 6 times a year and involve the West of England Combined Authority Mayor and the relevant Cabinet lead Member(s) for the constituent Councils: –

- Skills Board
- Business Board
- Transport Board
- Housing and Planning Board

The Boards do not make decisions but provide strategic guidance and advice to the West of England Combined Authority, West of England Joint Committee and LEP on skills; business; transport; and housing and planning matters, including having oversight of projects and programmes; raising issues and giving views. The Terms of Reference can be viewed in the [constitution](#) page A7).

### WECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee

24. The functions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are primarily to scrutinise the work of the WECA and the Joint Committee including the prioritisation and approval of schemes, and progress with the delivery of the investment programme. WECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to:-

- i. Review or scrutinise decisions made, or other actions taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the WECA or Joint Committee.
- ii. Make reports or recommendations to the WECA or Joint Committee on matters that affect the WECA area or the inhabitants of the area.
- iii. Make reports or recommendations to the WECA or Joint Committee with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of these Committees.
- iv. In so far as the business of the LEP relates to the discharge of functions of WECA or Joint Committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall have the power to scrutinise the LEP as set out in (i) to (iii) above.

### Audit Committee

25. The functions of the Audit Committee include:

- Reviewing and scrutinising the authority's financial affairs;
- Reviewing and assessing the authority's risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements;
- Reviewing and assessing the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which resources have been used in discharging the authority's functions; and

- Making reports and recommendations to the Combined Authority in relation to the reviews they have conducted.
- To consider and approve the Annual Statutory Accounts
- To consider Member Code of Conduct

### West of England Chief Executives

26. The governance process is underpinned by the West of England Chief Executives meeting which comprises the Chief Executive of WECA and the LEP (hereafter referred to as the WECA Chief Executive) and the Chief Executives of the relevant constituent local authorities. The Chief Executives meet at least quarterly aligned to meetings of the WECA and Joint Committees and its role in the context of the investment programme is to:

- Act on information provided by scheme promoters and technical advice and recommend a programme (the 'Programme Entry' schemes) for:
  - WECA funding streams – approval by the WECA Committee.
  - LEP funding streams - consideration by the LEP Board and approval by the West of England Joint Committee.
- Make recommendations on individual investment decisions for schemes with 'Programme Entry' awarded by the WECA or West of England Joint Committee based upon business cases and technical advice.
- Consider change requests for approval within the agreed tolerances. The decision on such change requests is made by the WECA Chief Executive in consultation with the other Chief Executives.
- Make recommendations to the WECA or Joint Committee for those changes outside of the tolerances.
- Provide overview of the investment programme.
- Managing programme level risks.

### Regional Capital Board

27. The Regional Capital Board provides a regular forum for public organisations responsible for the delivery of strategic infrastructure schemes in the West of England. Whilst not a decision making Board, comments from the Board may be passed on to the WECA Committee and Joint Committee and members of this Board may be invited to attend the Combined Authority/Joint Committee Boards to update on specific programmes and projects.

## 2.2 Transparency

28. WECA and the LEP are committed to being open, transparent and accountable.

### 2.2.1 The LEP Board

## Appointment of LEP Board Members

29. The LEP Board Chair comes from the private sector. Opportunities for membership of the LEP Board are openly advertised and widely promoted. The LEP Chair in consultation with the Business Nominations Committee (which is the only sub-Board of the LEP Board) is responsible for nominating business members including the vice chair, and the Higher Education representative, for approval by the LEP Board. The Vice Chair in consultation with the BNC is responsible for the nomination of the Chair, for approval by the LEP Board.
30. Selection criteria and procedures ensure that individuals are selected on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities, and that this promote diverse representation reflective of the local business community. The LEP's diversity statement is published on the LEP website.
31. The membership of the LEP Board comprises:
  - Up to fourteen business members including the Chair
  - One Higher Education representative
  - The Mayor of the West of England Combined Authority, the Mayor of Bristol City Council and the Leaders of Bath and North East Somerset Council, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Council
32. In line with the commitment to secure a greater gender balance, the membership of the LEP Board may increase in the short terms whilst efforts are undertaken to seek more interest in LEP Board roles from female business members. The Board would then revert to 20 as current terms or resignations allowed.
33. The term of the Chair and Vice Chair is three years from date of appointment. The term of business members and university member is up to three years. Terms are staggered to ensure continuity amongst the membership and support succession planning. Members can serve a maximum of two terms but renewal of term is not automatic. In the event of the resignation of a business member an appointment process would be undertaken in line with the process described above.
34. The membership of the [LEP Board](#) and the [terms of reference](#) can be viewed on the [LEP website](#). A member or members of the LEP Board, currently [Neil Douglas](#) and [Richard Bonner](#), are specifically responsible for representing and engaging with the SME business community.
35. An induction process is in place for new members of the LEP Board. All new WECA officers follow the organisation's induction process.

## Remuneration

36. LEP Board members receive no remuneration. The LEP's hospitality and expenses register is published on the LEP website.

## Code of Conduct

37. The LEP Board members are required to follow a Code of Conduct (which includes the conflicts of interest policy) which is based on the Seven Principles of Public Life. This Code of Conduct is published on the [website](#). LEP Board members are required to sign the Code of Conduct before taking up their role. Officers who support the LEP are employees of WECA and are bound by WECA's code of conduct.

## Registering and Managing Interests

38. The LEP Board Code of Conduct includes the way that pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests are declared and managed. This policy applies to all involvement with the work of the LEP. The interests of Board members are published on their individual profile pages on the [LEP website](#). The register of interest is signed within 28 days of taking up the role on the Board and in advance of participation in the role. Board members are required to review their declared interests before each meeting. Senior staff at WECA and the LEP and those who advise on decisions are also required to complete a register of interest form. That of the WECA Chief Executive is published on the LEP website.

## Publication of Meetings and Agenda Items

39. The agendas, reports, minutes and forward plan for the [WECA](#) and West of England [Joint Committees](#) are published on the West of England Combined Authority [website](#). The Committees receive a regular report with the recommendations made by the West of England Chief Executives which is published as part of the papers.
40. Stakeholders are able to submit questions, petitions or statements to the WECA and Joint Committee.
41. The agenda, reports and minutes of the LEP Board are available on the WECA [website](#). The agenda and reports for the Board are published 5 clear working days in advance of the meeting. The minutes of Board meetings are published within 2 weeks of the meeting. Any recommendations made by the LEP Board relating to the LEP funding programme will be published through the notes of the meeting. The LEP Board is not a decision making body, and aside from the Annual Meeting the Board meetings are not held in public.

### *2.2.2 Complaints, Whistleblowing, Freedom of Information Requests and Data Protection*

42. Any complaints related to the arrangements, processes or decision making associated with the investment programme will follow the formal complaints process of WECA. The [procedure](#) published on the WECA website and looks to manage any complaints that should arise appropriately and effectively. The complaints process makes provision for third parties or the public to make confidential complaints.
43. In addition to the above, there is also a [Whistleblowing Policy](#) in place. which outlines the process to follow when reporting a perceived wrongdoing within WECA and the LEP, including something that is believed to contravene the core values and Nolan Principles of Public Life. The LEP will inform the Cities and Local Growth Unit should any concerns be raised through the whistleblowing procedure.

44. Procedures are in place to manage [Freedom of Information](#) requests related to the activities of WECA and the LEP, including the investment programme. Appropriate data protection arrangements are in place in line with the Data Protection Act 1998, the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. The existing WECA [Data Protection Policy](#) is to be presented to the LEP Board, at the earliest possible time, with the proposal for the LEP to formally adopt the Policy
45. In the interests of transparency, WECA and the LEP are committed to ensuring relevant information related the business of the LEP Board or decisions at the Joint Committee is published aside from where there are matters of commercial or other sensitivity.

### *2.2.3 Communications and Local Engagement*

46. WECA and the LEP are committed to ongoing engagement with public and private sector stakeholders. This includes engaging stakeholders to inform key decisions and ensuring that there is local engagement with feedback to the general public about future LEP strategy and progress. A WECA Operational Framework and Business Plan has been formally approved and progress with the delivery of the Plan is reported annually. The LIS has been informed by consultations with key stakeholders and partner agencies from across the West of England.
47. Key information related to the arrangements for, and activities of the LEP, and the LEP funding streams, are published on the [LEP website](#). This is kept up to date to ensure the information remains current, and for the [funding programme](#) it reflects the latest position regarding scheme funding and approval status. References to material and documents published on the website are included in various places within this assurance framework, but for ease a checklist is provided in Appendix 5.
48. The LEP Annual General Meeting will be openly advertised and open to the public.
49. Information related to the operation of the WECA funding streams is published on the WECA [website](#). For AEB, a process of engagement with providers was undertaken in developing the application process and arrangements, and relevant documentation and guidance are published on the WECA [website](#).
50. Aside from the situations where Committee approval of an OBC may not be required (as set out in paragraph 91), all scheme Outline and Full Business Cases are published before funding approval is given. External opinion expressed on these business cases by the public and other stakeholders will be made available to the WECA or Joint Committee to inform decision making.
51. WECA and LEP are committed to working with the LEP Network and where appropriate to engage with other LEPs and develop joint strategies and investments and share best practice.
52. WECA will comply with Government communications and branding guidelines for schemes funded through the LGF including the branding and wording used on websites, signage, social media, press notices and other marketing material. These requirements have been shared with all LGF scheme promoters and compliance is a condition set out within grant offer letters.

## 2.3 Accountable body role and financial management

### 2.3.1 Investment Decisions

53. All investment decisions, including ensuring the effective allocation of the investment programme in line with the WECA and LEP Operating Framework and Business Plan, together with the LIS and other West of England plans and strategies, will be the responsibility of the WECA or West of England Joint Committee.

### 2.3.2 The Role of the Accountable Body

54. WECA will be the Accountable Body for all funds within the investment programme and will be responsible for the proper administration and financial probity of the funds received. WECA will ensure the effective use of public money and have responsibility for the proper administration of funding received and its expenditure.

55. As the Accountable Body, WECA will be responsible for overseeing policy, the prioritisation of funding, ensuring value for money, evaluating performance and managing risk. WECA will:

- Hold investment programme funds and make payments in accordance with the decisions of the WECA or Joint Committee.
- Ensure that funding is approved and allocated in a manner that is lawful, transparent, evidence-based, consistent and proportionate.
- Ensure that the decisions and activities conform to the legal requirements with regard to equality and diversity, environmental regulations and other relevant legislation and guidance.
- Ensure through its Section 73 Officer that the funds are being used appropriately, prudently and are in accordance with decisions made by the WECA or Joint Committee, or through delegation, together with adherence to relevant guidance/legislation for the intended purpose.
- Record and maintain the official record of proceedings relating to decisions made on all investment projects.

56. Should a decision related to funding not conform to this assurance framework eg not meeting legal requirements or representing inappropriate use of funds then WECA, as accountable body, will not action this decision.

### 2.3.3 Accounts and Financial Information

57. The WECA [Statement of Accounts](#) is published on the Financial Information section of the WECA website. For [2018/19 and 2019/20](#) the LEP income and expenditure is dealt with in note 21 to the accounts (page 69 of the linked report). An Annual Report is published setting out grant payments made each year for all projects within the programme, the 2019/20 report can be viewed [here](#). Expenditure at the programme level, alongside key outputs and outcomes, across all of the LEP programmes is shown in the [2019/20 Delivery Plan](#).

58. The investment funds are accounted for in such a way that they are separately identifiable, with individual cost centres. WECA will prepare quarterly financial statements for the WECA or Joint Committee in relation to the overall fund, costs of the investment projects, and profiling of spend.

#### *2.3.4 Managing Contracts*

59. All contracts awarded by WECA will follow the authorities Contract Standing Orders which include WECA's Financial Regulations and the Public Contracting Regulations 2015. Where projects are delivered by other organisations business cases will set out the procurement strategy, compliance with regulations and how value for money will be ensured. Where there are changes to scheme cost or scope which arise through the procurement process or in delivery these will be reported and considered through the agreed change management process. As set out in paragraph 22, the LEP Board receive regular reports on progress with schemes across the programme so they are sighted on performance and risks.

#### *2.3.5 Risk Management*

60. A key role of the assurance framework is to ensure that risk is identified, monitored and managed appropriately, both at a corporate level for WECA and at a programme and project level. The risks associated with individual investment programme projects are discussed in Section 3.5.1 and these will require consideration as part of the business case development through into delivery. The risks associated with the overall investment programme are identified and, in conjunction with plans to mitigate these risks, managed by the Chief Executives. Significant risks will be escalated and will be added to the WECA Corporate Risk Register. WECA's Corporate Risk Register is reviewed by the Senior Management Team each month and activities are reported to Audit Committee.
61. For the LEP funding programme, the current and last reported risk rating for each scheme (based upon a matrix score for progress against milestones, changes in spend profile or cost and potential reputational impact) is periodically reported to the LEP Board as part of a programme dashboard. Deep dives are initiated for projects where progress is of concern.

#### *2.3.6 Internal and External Audit*

62. All investment programme funding from HM Government will be held and managed by WECA. In doing so the funds will be subject to financial management arrangements and subject to Internal Audit in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations (2015) and in compliance with the mandatory Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. This will provide independent and objective assurance regarding the effectiveness of WECA's risk management, control and governance processes.
63. The Section 73 Officer will be responsible for reporting on the financial management and assurance of the investment programme to WECA Audit Committee through the delivery and outturn of the annual Internal Audit plan and published accounts.
64. All investment programme funding decisions taken by the WECA or Joint Committee will also be subject to review through WECA annual external audit, which undertakes a review of value for money

arrangements by assessing whether the Authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resource.

65. Audit reports related to the LEP produced by either internal or external audit will be shared with the LEP Board and the Cities and Local Growth Unit.

## 3 Investment Programme - Project Lifecycle

### 3.1 Scheme Identification and Prioritisation

#### 3.1.1 Prioritisation Process - LEP Investment Programme

66. The LGF is fully allocated and overprogrammed to ensure full delivery of grant. The way that any scheme can be considered for inclusion in the funding pipeline in an open and transparent way is through the submission of an Outline Business Case. Information on the form of these submissions, and the governance process through which they will be considered, is provided on the LEP [website](#). In addition, a [Support Manual](#) and [Step by Step Guide](#) is provided on the LEP website to assist promoters and to encourage them to draw on best practice when producing a Business Cases.
67. Should a decision be made to extend LGF funding to further pipeline schemes these would be considered through a prioritisation process including their strategic fit, impact and value for money and deliverability. Owing to the nature of the funds, the EDF (which is predicated on borrowing against future business rates growth in the Enterprise Zone and Areas) and the RIF (which requires repayment) are only available to the West of England Councils. The same OBC process still applies.

#### 3.1.2 Prioritisation Process - WECA Investment Programme

68. For the WoEIF and TCF a robust and transparent process of prioritisation is being undertaken based upon agreed thematic criteria to establish a joint investment programme. The detail of the thematic methodology to be used, including prioritisation process and metrics, was agreed in advance of its application. The outcomes will be published on the WECA website and an audit trail retained. The prioritisation process and WECA investment programme will be subject to regular, and at least annual review.

#### **Scheme Identification**

69. Candidate schemes for funding through the WECA investment programme will be identified by WECA and the constituent Councils through their fit with the strategic and economic policy and plans for the area including the WECA Operational Framework and Business Plan, LIS, Joint Spatial Plan, Joint Local Transport Plan and the Energy Strategy, together with the [WECA Investment Strategy](#). This scheme identification process will be guided by a set of eligibility criteria. The long list will be subject to 'gap analysis' to ensure that key interventions at the programme level have been considered for inclusion.

#### **Scheme Assessment**

70. Once a long list of interventions is agreed this will be subject to a multi-criteria assessment using a prioritisation tool. This will use a weighted scorecard approach applied to thematic allocations for transport, other infrastructure, business and skills. This will draw on quantitative and, where not readily available, qualitative data. Guidance will be provided to scheme promoters to ensure

consistency of data and requirements. Data inputs will be reviewed through a challenge session to ensure robustness and identify any information gaps.

71. The output of this process will be used to formulate a 20 year investment programme, including a pipeline of proposals. Schemes will be able to seek funding through completion of a Strategic Outline Business Case and a Feasibility and Development Funding Application Form to seek formal entry into the programme.

## 3.2 Business Case Development

### 3.2.1 Business Case Stages and Proportionality

72. The business case development and appraisal process will apply the principle of proportionality, with more detailed information being required for large, complex or contentious projects. The application and appraisal process for the investment programme will involve the following stages:
  - **Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC)/Scheme Concept** – this will provide the underlying justification for the project and will support the prioritisation and programme development stage. For schemes over £20m or which are innovative or likely to be contentious an SOBC will be required. Innovative or contentious schemes will include those which plan to deploy cutting edge technology, use new or complex techniques or approaches in their delivery or operation or are expected to attract significant interest from stakeholders and the public. Smaller or less complex schemes will develop a Scheme Concept, which will sit alongside any request for development funding (see paragraph 74). These schemes can progress direct to Outline, or where appropriate, Full Business Case.
  - **Outline Business Case (OBC)** – this will confirm the strategic context, make a robust case for change and identify the preferred option for delivery from a shortlist of options considered based upon how well it meets scheme objectives.
  - **Full Business Case (FBC)** – this will include a detailed business case for the project consistent with HMT’s guidance on the five case business case model which is developed to a level where it is capable of being given final approval (aside from larger schemes as below), including detailed design and having secured all necessary powers, consents and land to enable the delivery of the scheme. The assessment of Value for Money (VfM) will, in particular, underpin the economic case and the decision to proceed. This will follow the latest Green Book business case guidance and take account of project specific appraisal guidance published by the relevant government department (see section 3.3 on Appraisal). The OBC and FBC template is shown in Appendix 7 and guidance on completion is shown in Appendix 8.
73. In the interests of efficiency and to avoid duplication, business cases will build upon, augment and draw upon the recommendations from the previous stages. The final content of and recommendations on the FBC will be included in the contractual agreements for funding. Where assumptions have been made, these will be clearly set out in the Business Case, with sufficient

sensitivity testing carried out on these assumptions to demonstrate the robustness of the economic assessment.

74. Where 50% or more of the funding for a project has been awarded by a Government department or Homes England through a specific funding application which gives final funding approval for delivery (equivalent to a Full Business Case), a separate business case may not necessarily be required to access match funding through the funds in scope of this framework. In such cases it may be assumed that the business case and value money will already have been suitably established by the external funder as part of the funding award.
75. Where this applies, funding applications will be published, and suitable Monitoring and Evaluation arrangements will be put in place to ensure the needs of both the external funder and WECA are met (see section 4 on Monitoring and Evaluation). Match funding awards for streams in the scope of this framework will be approved by the WECA or Joint Committee.

### *3.2.2 Scheme Development Funding*

#### **WECA Funding Streams**

76. Projects within the investment programme funded by WECA funding streams will be eligible to submit for scheme development support from the WoEIF. This will be based on the submission of a Scheme Feasibility and Development Funding Application Form, supported by an SOBC/Scheme Concept (see paragraph 72) which will identify tasks, timescales and costs for bringing forward an FBC. The template is shown in Appendix 9. All submissions will be appraised by WECA and approved by the WECA Committee.

#### **LEP Funding Streams**

77. Projects within the investment programme funded by LEP funding streams are expected to meet their own development costs until they secure Outline Business Case approval. Development costs incurred from Outline Business Case approval can be recovered once a scheme has secured Full Business Case approval.

### *3.2.3 Due Diligence*

78. WECA is committed to undertaking due diligence activities that support effective decision-making and project appraisal. In relation to the investment programme applications, the nature and timing of due diligence will depend on the individual project or scheme, the cost of the scheme and the potential impact of the project. WECA will be responsible for determining when the due diligence is carried out and by whom. A level of due diligence will be carried out by WECA, but external agencies may also be commissioned to support this function as appropriate.

## 3.3 Appraisal

### 3.3.1 Appraisal Criteria

79. The appraisal process for the investment programme will be consistent with HM Treasury's Green Book and Business Case Appraisal process, including supplementary and departmental guidance, such as the Department for Transport's (DfT) WebTAG appraisal guidance for transport schemes and MHCLG's Appraisal Guide. This will be based on the five cases model:
- **Strategic case** – which provides a compelling case for change and explains how the project fits with the objectives of the organisation and wider public sector agendas.
  - **Economic case** – which describes how the project/preferred option represents best public value.
  - **Commercial case** – which demonstrates that the deal is attractive to the market, can be procured and is commercially viable.
  - **Financial case** – which confirms that the proposed spend is affordable.
  - **Management case** – which confirms that what is required from all parties is achievable.
80. Projects will be appraised against these criteria and should also meet minimum thresholds and requirements (for example, a Benefit Cost Ratio that is at least acceptable and meets the established guidance or recognised benchmarks for that project type).

### 3.3.2 Assessing Value for Money

81. It is useful to keep in mind that good VfM, as defined by HM Treasury is the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes. 'Optimal' being 'the most desirable possible given expressed or implied restrictions or constraints'. VfM is not just about achieving the lowest initial price, it is defined as the optimum combination of whole life costs and quality, with due regard to propriety and regularity.
82. The NAO uses three criteria to assess the VfM of government spending i.e. the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes:
- **Economy** - minimising the cost of resources used or required (inputs) – spending less.
  - **Efficiency** - the relationship between the output from goods or services and the resources to produce them – spending well.
  - **Effectiveness** - the relationship between the intended and actual results of public spending (outcomes) – spending wisely.
83. For the investment programme, WECA and the LEP will make investment decisions based on a range of evidence, such as the strategic case and other local impacts and analysis of cost effectiveness (including GVA impact at the local level), as well as the wider VfM appraisal. This evidence will be

consistent with HM Treasury's Green Book and other relevant departmental appraisal guidance. These are set out in Appendix 6.

84. Whilst recognising the national BCR will remain the universal metric to assess VfM, WECA will take account of a range of evidence when deciding to invest in a project (such as the local impacts on the economy and investment unlocked) within the context of a wider VfM appraisal. In the event that a scheme does not offer at least 'high' VfM (ie that the national BCR is below 2 and once significant non-monetised impacts and key uncertainties have been considered) , WECA may still decide, exceptionally, to invest in a project based on the strength of evidence presented within the overall business case, including the strategic case and local impacts (see paragraphs 88 and 89) .
85. Aside from the circumstances set out in paragraph 74, independent advice will be sought, including where required external support, for review of business cases. The assessment will be proportionate to the relative size of the scheme being considered, but will, as a minimum, provide independent validation of the assumptions made by scheme promoters.
86. Further safeguards will put in place to avoid any conflict of interest that may arise between consultants acting on behalf of scheme promoters and those that are being asked to provide independent assessments on behalf of WECA.
87. Full Business Case, including their value for money, will be signed off by the s73 Officer or Chief Finance Officer of the promoting organisation. As is the case for VfM statements, Full Business Case Assessment Summary Reports will be signed off by the WECA s73 Officer and these will be included in the report to the WECA or Joint Committee where the FBC is being considered. Where WECA is the scheme promoter separation of roles will be ensured and business case sign off will be provided by another member of the WECA Senior Management Team or the s73 Officer from one of the constituent Councils. The appraisal reports will be presented to the WECA Committee as part of the decision-making process.

### *3.3.3 Transport Projects*

88. For transport projects, WECA and the LEP will ensure that modelling and appraisal is sufficiently robust and fit for purpose for the scheme under consideration, and that modelling and appraisal meets the guidance set out in WebTAG. WebTAG will be used for all schemes but for schemes with low cost (below £5m) a more proportionate approach will be taken. In addition to WebTAG, other robust or evidence based assessments or methodologies may be employed to prioritise and assess the overall business case for a scheme.
89. The expectation is that all schemes must achieve "high" VfM (where benefits are at least double costs as set out within DfT's guidance) at all stages of the approval process. VfM for these schemes will be independently scrutinised on behalf of WECA as part of the assessment process. This will be via a commission to a specialist transport consultant, fully independent from the scheme promoter and with no involvement in the development of the scheme being appraised. The independent assessment will be published and made available to the WECA or Joint Committee as part of the decision making process.

90. Notwithstanding the above principles on VfM, WECA and the LEP will be able to approve transport schemes with lower VfM, having regard to specific circumstances including:

- Evidenced and compelling wider economic, social and environmental benefits
- The ability of the scheme to address multiple WECA and the LEP policy objectives.
- Significant levels of match funding being provided by the scheme promoter.

Examples of such exceptional circumstances could include where a transport scheme:

- Unlocks a major development site.
- Can be directly attributed to job creation and/or GVA growth.
- Stimulates significant land value uplift which can subsequently be captured.
- Has a low BCR, but is part of a programme that can evidence a 'high' BCR as a minimum.

The justification will be clearly set out in the report before the WECA or Joint Committee at the point of decision making.

91. Such projects must have been subject to earlier rigour to assess options for de-scoping, or to explore higher VfM alternatives, and these considerations will be tested as part of the independent review of the business case and reported as part of decision making to the WECA or Joint Committee. This will include considering the robustness of the evidential basis to enable WECA and the LEP to determine the relative weights to be afforded to the different aspects of the case.

92. The recommendations to the WECA or Joint Committee will clearly explain the rationale for approving a scheme with medium or worse VfM and the implications of the recommendation.

## 3.4 Approval process

### *3.4.1 Approval process and timeline*

93. To ensure the investment programme is managed strategically the WECA s73 officer, supported by officers in the Investment and Corporate Services Directorate, will be responsible for the overall management of the programme and that linkages are made within the portfolio of projects seeking investment. The time taken to assess projects will depend on the nature and complexity of the proposal, but typically business case submissions will be around 2 months prior to decision making at the WECA or Joint Committee. For schemes costing under £20m which are not innovative or contentious, formal Committee approval of an OBC may not be required providing scheme scope or cost has not changed since the Scheme Concept and Feasibility and Development Funding Application stage. In this instance the OBC will still be submitted, reviewed, signed off by the WECA S73 officer and published at the next Committee meeting.

94. The outcome of the independent assessments of investment programme schemes will be reported to the WECA or Joint Committee as part of the recommendations made on the merits of individual applications. An Assessment Summary Table will form an appendix to these reports, and will be part of the WECA or Joint Committee's public agenda pack that is available to view on-line.
95. Aside from where WECA is the scheme promoter, WECA will prepare a Grant Offer Letter for agreement by the applicant. The offer letter will, in particular, set out the following which will be monitored by WECA:
  - A financial profile including quarterly expenditure.
  - A profile of outputs and outcomes to be achieved with key milestones for delivery.
  - Projected impacts and a timetable for their achievement.
96. WECA have appropriate processes in place to recover non-compliant funding. Should a decision be made not to recover funding, a strong and compelling justification will be required which will be formally documented.

### 3.5 West of England Investment Programme Management

97. A performance management system is used to collate, record and report on the progress of individual projects and the investment programme overall. Where projects do not achieve their milestones for delivery, projects will need to provide evidence to demonstrate that they will be able to get back on track or seek approval for change. Projects that consistently fail to meet projected performance (financial and outputs) may have funding withdrawn. Projects 'at risk' will be reviewed, and the outcomes of this process will be referred back to the WECA or Joint Committee, prior to any withdrawal of funding and decision on expenditure incurred. For the LEP funding programme the LEP Board will also be regularly advised on progress, issues and risks.
98. There are a number of mechanisms that will ensure effective management of the investment programme to maximise the economic impact within the area. These include:
  - Designation of the WECA s73 officer as having overall responsibility for management and reporting on the performance of the investment programme to the Departmental Accounting Officer within MHCLG.
  - Ensuring suitable mechanisms and resources are in place to effectively monitor, evaluate and review the performance of projects in the investment programme in respect of delivery, expenditure and outputs/outcomes.
99. A monitoring system is in place for the investment programme to record financial expenditure and claims and the achievement of outputs and outcomes. Quarterly Highlight Reports are submitted to WECA providing progress against key milestones and actual and forecast spend. In addition, the achievement of key performance metrics – capturing outputs and outcomes achieved in pursuing WECA and the LEP Operating Framework, Business Plan and overall growth and wider objectives will

be periodically reported linked to scheme Monitoring and Evaluation Plans. The template Highlight Report for approved schemes is shown in Appendix 10.

### *3.5.1 Risk Management*

100. A programme risk register for the overall investment programme is maintained and regularly reported to WECA's Senior Management Team. As set out in section 2.3.5, key risks added to the Corporate risk register will be monitored (alongside the performance monitoring procedures) by Internal Audit and reported to the Audit Committee. The WECA Chief Executive will be responsible for the identification and management of risk for the investment programme.

101. A risk management strategy and risk register forms part of the management case of each scheme OBC or FBC. Risks will be managed through appropriate mitigation measures agreed with the project applicant prior to approval of the scheme. Key and current risks will form part of the regular scheme highlight reporting.

102. Overall risk management for the investment programme will have regard to the ongoing monitoring of achieved investment performance against that projected. Appropriate measures will be adopted to ensure that the monitoring of investments provides an informed basis for future investment decisions.

### *3.5.2 Project Closure*

103. All projects are required to produce an End of Project Delivery Report at the end of the project (within 3 months of completion), which demonstrates that:

- All activities have been delivered in accordance with the offer letter.
- All funding has been spent appropriately in line with the projected financial profile for the project. In addition, final grant claims are accompanied by an audit report.
- There are no outstanding risks or actions that need to be taken to sign the project off by WECA.
- All relevant outputs and key milestones have been achieved.
- The key successes and lessons learnt from the project.
- Confirmation of the evaluation activities to be subsequently undertaken, when these will take place and the lead contact who is responsible for ensuring this occurs.

104. A summary of these reports is published on the LEP website.

## 4 Monitoring and Evaluation

### 4.1 Overview

105. WECA's overall approach to Monitoring and Evaluation is underpinned by the following key principles:

- Reporting requirements are locally defined and support delivery of local strategies
- Evaluation is meaningful and proportionate
- Data is collected once and used many times
- Baseline information is consistent across key initiatives
- Monitoring and evaluation is a core part of all activities
- Lessons learned are used to inform future policy development

This will enable WECA to:

- Demonstrate local accountability. Show how funding is being spent and benefits achieved against local strategies and action plans, demonstrating the value and effectiveness of local decision making and shaping future priorities
- Comply with external scrutiny. Together with the Assurance Framework demonstrate progress and delivery to the constituent council members, senior government officials and Ministers
- Understanding what works. Provide a feedback loop and enables the lessons learnt to be fed back into policy making and communicated to stakeholders, as well as supporting the case for further devolution and investment in the area.
- Developing an evidence base. Provide a mechanism for collecting, collating and analysing data which can be used across the organisation and by others, following the principle of collecting data once and using many times.
- Ensure quality assurance. For interventions funded through investment programme, Monitoring & Evaluation plans form part of business case submissions and these are independently reviewed and published to support business case approval decisions by the WECA or Joint Committee

### 4.2 Performance Monitoring

106. All projects funded through the investment programme, regardless of the size, will have an effective monitoring and evaluation plan in place which will form a key part of the business case. This will enable assessment of the effectiveness and impact of investing public funds, and the identification of best practice and lessons learnt that can inform decisions about future delivery. The monitoring plan will guide the collection of data from individual projects and will be designed to ensure that it captures information required by WECA and government.

107. Individual monitoring and evaluation plans will be proportionate, correspond with procedures for appraisal, and be in line with the latest government department guidance where relevant. These plans will identify the resources required to deliver the proposed monitoring and evaluation activities. All transport schemes will follow Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance for Local Authority Major Schemes.
108. All monitoring and evaluation plans (which will form part of FBCs/FABCs) and interim and final monitoring and evaluation reports will be published on the WECA website.
109. The offer letter will set out the key milestones for the delivery of the scheme together with the outputs and outcomes detailed in the business case and embodied in the monitoring and evaluation plan. Quarterly monitoring returns will be used to capture progress against these agreed milestones and metrics and will include information related to:
  - Delivery
  - Expenditure
  - Outputs and outcomes
110. The individual project monitoring information will feed into an overall monitoring plan for the investment programme, which will be published and periodically reported to the WECA Committee, including the extent to which projects are contributing to the overall objectives of WECA.
111. For the WoEIF, the evaluation component of individual projects' monitoring and evaluation plans will complement the five-year Gateway Review. This government evaluation will focus on identifying the impact of investments made using this funding.

### 4.3 Evaluation and Benefits Realisation

112. Monitoring and Evaluation Plans, which form part of business cases, should identify the outcomes (benefits) planned to be delivered, how outcomes will be measured, a baseline assessment, and how it is intended to implement, monitor and assess the project to identify whether the benefits have been realised in line with the approach and timescales set out in the Plan. As set out in section 3.5.2, the End of Project Delivery Report will confirm the monitoring activities set out in the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. This report will also identify lessons learnt to inform the future delivery of projects through the WECA and LEP investment programme and more widely.

## 5 Appendix 1

### Adult Education Budget

The Adult Education Functions Order 2018 details the adult education functions in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 being transferred from the Secretary of State for Education to the West of England Combined Authority. Through this transfer of functions, the Combined Authority took responsibility for AEB in the WECA area from 1 August 2019 to make sure eligible learners, aged 19 and over, have appropriate education and training.

The budget covers a number of elements including:

- Statutory Entitlements
- Other AEB (Formula Funded)
- Non-Formula Funded Community Learning
- Learner and Learning Support

#### First academic year of funding 2019/20

The grant allocation approach for 2019/20 was developed based on the following key principles:

- To maintain funding stability for providers
- To align allocations with 2017/18 actual performance /earn levels
- Continue to support statutory entitlements
- To ensure the process is fair, efficient and transparent

Following a consultation to ensure that providers were aware of the 2019/20 devolved AEB funding process, including access routes to grant funding and timelines for applications. WECA allocated funding of [£14.2m to 30 providers](#) through WECA Committee on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2019. The approach and processes closely aligned with those used by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). [The information and documents for strategic partners and providers for 2019-2020](#) sets out how the funding was paid, the funding rules and the performance management framework.

#### The 2020/21 academic year

On the 20th March 2020 the WECA Committee approved a series of [draft AEB provider allocations for the 2020/21 academic year](#). The individual allocation amounts were based on the provider's 2019/20 academic year allocations with some system changes.

In order to confirm their allocations, the providers were required to develop and agree with WECA a Curriculum and Delivery Plan (C&DP) for 2020/21. The CDP's are required so that WECA can start to affect a transition to a planned and collaborative approach to the delivery of Adult Education, where providers

are demonstrably planning their provision against the agreed regional priorities as opposed to reacting to demand as it presents itself.

Due diligence, was conducted in line with WECA's published [Due Diligence Approach and Funding Higher-Risk Organisations 2020/21](#). Monitoring of financial status will be ongoing with a focus on any provider that has a financial or quality risk alert identified by WECA or through joint discussions with the ESFA.

The funding terms and conditions have been set out in a Grant Funding Agreement, this will form the basis of the contractual relationship between WECA and the provider, alongside the following published AEB Policies;

- [Funding and Performance Management Rules 2020/21 \(PDF 140kb\)](#)
- [Funding Rates and Formula 2020-21 \(PDF 121kb\)](#)
- [Provider Performance Management Framework 2020/2021 \(PDF 137kb\)](#)

### **The 2021/22 academic year and the future**

The Adult Education Commissioning Strategy is currently being developed and will set out how WECA intends to utilise the adult education provision that we fund to implement the [Local Industrial Strategy](#) and [Employment and Skills Plan](#). This will inform both purchasing decisions and shape provision from the 2021/22 academic year and beyond.

### **Governance**

Decisions for awarding grant are made by the WECA Committee, they resolved to delegate authority during the academic year to the West of England Combined Authority Chief Executive Officer, in combination with constituent councils' Chief Executive Officers to:

- a) Confirm final provider allocations once agreed provider curriculum delivery plans are in place.
- b) Make in-year exceptions funding decisions.
- c) Make in-year growth funding decisions.
- d) Make decisions on provider re-allocations at mid-year and end-of-year points.
- e) Make decisions relating to distribution of funding for continuing learners.
- f) Make decisions relating to procurement of WECA's devolved provision.

The WECA Regional Skills Board provides strategic guidance and advice to the WECA Committee on Employment and Skills matters and the WECA Programme Board makes high level operational decisions, recommendations to the Chief Executives and WECA Committee, and reviews the risk register for Adult Education Funding on a monthly basis.

## **Audit and Assurance**

WECA have established a joint working arrangement with the ESFA in respect of AEB, the service level agreement covers the following:

- Audit and Assurance
- Fraud and Investigations
- Financial Health

Annual assurance statements will be shared between the ESFA and WECA on an April to March financial year basis. The annual assurance statement will be supported by a code of practice detailing the approach taken by the organisation to obtain assurance over the provision funded.

In 2019/20 WECA was able to request their learners were tested in a maximum of three providers through the ESFA service agreement. For 2020/21 WECA are arranging a procurement exercise to establish a pool of accredited external auditors ready to call on to carry-out audits on our AEB Providers between April and October 2021.

Results of audit activity and financial health assessments will be shared with MCAs/GLA via the data sharing agreement, which ensures the data being shared is consistent, safe and secure.

If the ESFA or WECA suspect fraud or financial irregularity or receive information and/or allegations in relation to a provider, including a subcontractor (that is funded by both ESFA and WECA) an approach has been agreed and adopted by both organisations.

## **Risk Management**

Risk management is integral to the structuring and presentation of AEB provision and risk mitigation measures have been agreed with providers prior to approval of GFA's where appropriate. During delivery, the AEB Team maintain a risk log which is regularly reviewed and reported on. Significant risks will be escalated and will be added to the WECA Corporate risk register. This is reviewed by the AEB Programme Board regularly and activities are reported to the Audit Committee.

## **Stakeholder Engagement**

WECA is actively working with a range of stakeholders to support the development of the AEB system which delivers provision to WECA residents. These stakeholders include: providers, provider representative bodies, key local stakeholders (e.g. Local Authorities, DWP, VCSE infrastructure organisations, DfE/ESFA etc.). This work is conducted both through formal engagement routes (pre-arranged group meetings) and informal meetings (group & 1-2-1).

The Combined Authority uses its website to engage with the wider community and it will be use it as a platform for transparent sharing of the AEB commissioning processes and objectives.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

WECA's approach to monitoring and managing AEB performance is outlined in the Funding and Performance Management rules document. Following the issuing of a Grant Funding Agreement, the responsibility for overseeing the successful implementation and delivery of projects will rest with the AEB

team, comprising of the AEB Programme Manager, Senior Relationship Manager, Senior Funding & Assurance Officer, the Adult Education Data Analyst, Information Officer and Project Coordinator.

There is a legal requirement on providers to submit data to the Secretary of State for all provision funded by DfE. Learner data will continue to be gathered from providers in a national Individual Learner Record data system, via the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) that the ESFA will use to share data to support the Combined Authority in the development and maintenance of the AEB functions devolved.

The DfE has set out Monitoring and Evaluation guidelines for AEB, which include:

- Consideration for the statutory entitlements detailed in the Orders;
- The need to consider how funding of the AEB will align to Strategic Skills Plans and support the delivery of local economic objectives;
- Arrangements for enabling effective and meaningful engagement of local (and national) partners in proposed use and evaluation of the AEB; and
- Robust monitoring and evaluation plans going forward, to help identify and measure the impact of AEB spending in their area.

All monitoring and evaluation reports will be published on the WECA website. The first Annual report is due to be published in March 2021. WECA will report on the previous academic year findings to date, referencing the most up to date publicly available data at that point in time. This submission will include:

- a. The policy for adult education
- b. AEB spend
- c. Analysis of delivery to WECA residents
- d. Local Impact with regard to:
  - Overall participation in AEB funded provision.
  - Number of learners exercising their statutory entitlement to full funding for: i) english and maths up to Level 2; ii) first full level 2 (learners aged 19-23); and iii) first full level 3 (learners aged 19-23).
  - Completion and achievement rates.

WECA is developing its own robust monitoring and evaluation plans going forward, to help identify and measure the impact of AEB spending.

## 6 Appendix 2

### South West Energy Hub

#### Rural Community Energy Fund

From 2019/20 WECA, as accountable body for the South West Energy Hub, became responsible for administering the Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF) within the wider SW of England, including West of England, Gloucestershire (Gfirst), Dorset, Heart of Southwest, Solent, Swindon and Wiltshire and Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership areas. Grant funding decisions for RCEF will be made with full consideration to the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy.

The RCEF provides grants up to £40,000 to community groups to undertake feasibility studies and up to £100,000 towards project development, such as planning and legal fees. There is a total fund of £1.8m.

The Fund's aims are to:

- Support rural communities – by helping them to maximise the income generating potential of renewable energy and put this to work locally;
- Increase the uptake of community and locally owned renewable energy, to support the Government's targets for renewable energy and carbon reduction; and
- Promote rural growth, job creation and volunteering opportunities – to enable communities to access the economic benefits associated with renewable energy schemes.

The SW Energy Hub has worked with BEIS and the 4 other energy hubs in England to develop support materials including:

- Application forms and guidance documents
- A process for assessing bids
- A scoring matrix for transparent and consistent assessment of bids

WECA is the Accountable Body for the RCEF, use of funds will be compliant with agreed WECA policy and process, ensuring transparent oversight and allocation of public funding.

The WECA Joint Committee is ultimately accountable for the RCEF, with a delegation in place to the WECA Chief Executive in consultation with the SW LEP Chief Executives. WECA's Chief Executive is required to provide periodic updates to the Joint Committee.

All grant applications will be reviewed by the Energy Hub team, using a scoring matrix agreed with BEIS and the other Energy Hubs. Where additional technical support is required to assess an application the Energy Hub team will source this externally from the public or private sector.

Recommendations for grant funding will be provided to the SW Energy Hub Board in its advisory capacity, who will challenge or endorse as appropriate. The SW Energy Hub Board will then agree recommended grant decisions for the WECA Chief Executive to consider.

Grant recommendations are only made through a majority decision by the Energy Hub Board which comprises one representative from each LEP

The WECA Chief Executive in consultation with the SW LEP Chief Executives is the decision-making body for the approval (or otherwise) of recommendations made by the Regional Energy Hub Manager and Energy Hub Board.

SW LEP Chief Executives will be able to challenge Energy Hub Board recommendations, on issues related to correct application of the scoring criteria. Any challenge to the process will trigger a review and report to the WECA Chief Executive who will make the final decision.

SW LEP Chief Executives will be asked to confirm their response to decisions within 5 working days.

SW LEP Chief Executives can confirm delegation of their role to their Energy Hub Board representative by writing the WECA Chief Executive.

## Local Capacity Support

The South West Energy Hub also provides a support service to organisations, which is not a grant, to develop local energy projects. The Joint Committee is accountable for the SW Energy Hub Local Capacity Support programme, with delegation to the WECA Chief Executive. WECA's Chief Executive is required to provide periodic updates to the Joint Committee.

## 7 Appendix 3

### Change Management Delegations for the Investment Programme

Category		Scale	Approval
1	Cost Increases	Cost increases of up to 10% to a ceiling of £100k (Feasibility and Development Funding) and £3m (approved scheme funding) subject to funding being available and there being no impact on any other project ion the programme	<b>WECA funding streams:</b> WECA CEO, in consultation with WECA CEOs  <b>LEP funding streams:</b> WECA CEO in consultation with the West of England CEOs
		Cost increases above this threshold	WECA or Joint Committee
2	Reductions in Match Funding	Reduction in match funding up to 10% to a ceiling of £300k	WECA CEO in consultation with CEOs
		Reduction in match funding above this level	WECA or Joint Committee
3	Reprofiling of Spend (with no cost increase overall)	Reprofiling of up to £50k (Feasibility and Development Funding) and £100k (approved scheme funding) between financial years	WECA CEO in consultation with CEOs
		Reprofiling between financial years above this level	WECA or Joint Committee
4	Time	Slippage of milestone(s) for approved schemes less than 3 months	WECA CEO in consultation with CEOs
		Slippage of milestones of 3 months or more	WECA or Joint Committee
5	Scope, Benefits and Quality	Up to 10% change in value of quality as percentage of project value and/or 10% change in one or more metrics of benefits and/or minor change to the scope of the scheme	WECA CEO in consultation with CEOs
		Over 10% change in value of quality as percentage of project value and/or over 10% change in one or more metrics of benefits, or a fundamental change to the scope of scheme	WECA or Joint Committee

## 8 Appendix 4

### WECA and LEP Joint Statement

#### **Advisory and challenge function:**

The West of England LEP provides a strategic advisory role at the heart of regional governance structures. The Chair has a seat at the table (non-member) at both the West of England Combined Authority and West of England Joint Committee ensuring that the business view is at the centre of regional decision making. All business board members are senior leaders, with a range of sectorial experience and bring invaluable sector expertise and insight on regional growth opportunities for the Local Industrial Strategy.

The role of the LEP Board as defined within it's Terms of Reference is:

- Shaping a compelling and ambitious strategic vision, strategy and brand for the region.
- Promoting, developing, supporting and championing the economic success of the region.
- Supporting the attraction of new inward investment and nurturing business development, innovation and creativity.
- Defining and articulating the LEP Boards view of regional infrastructure to support and reflect the region's continuing economic success and enabling a healthy and productive population to thrive.
- Shaping regional policy to ensure that the region has the higher-level skills it needs to deliver its ambitions for a high skills economy.
- Shaping regional policy to ensure all residents can compete for jobs and can benefit from the region's success.
- Promoting the regions' interests with Government

The membership of the Board ensures there is active and constructive debate at LEP Board meetings. Well evidenced, considered reports and presentations ensure that LEP Board members have the information and advice they need to engage effectively on all matters.

The LEP Board and Chair are able to draw directly on the expertise of the staff of the integrated WECA and LEP officer team to ensure appropriate support is provided.

#### **Alignment of decision-making across a clear geography:**

The West of England Local Enterprise Partnership covers the unitary authority areas of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City Council, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. There are no boundary overlaps with surrounding Local Enterprise Partnerships.

There is a history of joint working across the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership geography that includes the development of a Joint Spatial Plan and Local Transport Plan.

In 2017 the West of England Combined Authority was established and covers the unitary authority areas of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire.

As part of the establishment of WECA a new regional governance structure was introduced; this followed a full regional governance review. The structure aligns WECA and LEP decision-making to support close working and the delivery of economic growth projects across the West of England. The governance structure was developed in partnership and agreed with the Local Enterprise Partnership.

This governance structure, alongside the integrated WECA and LEP officer team, ensures that the relationship between the Combined Authority and Local Enterprise Partnership is strong and effective.

The LEP Board and Chair operate in an advisory capacity. All decisions related to funding are taken by the WECA or Joint Committee.

**Accountability:**

The accountable body for all LEP funding is the West of England Combined Authority. WECA is responsible for the proper administration and financial probity of the funds received. WECA will ensure the effective use of public money and have responsibility for the proper administration of funding received and its expenditure.

**Efficiency and corporate identity:**

The Chief Executive of WECA is also the LEP Chief Executive. WECA and the LEP have a shared officer team which promotes effective and efficient operation.

WECA and the LEP have their own branding and identity recognising that some work of the LEP is separate from and extends beyond WECA.

**Overview and scrutiny:**

The role of the WECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee is primarily to scrutinise the work and decisions made by the WECA or Joint Committee. In so far as the business of the LEP relates to the discharge of functions of WECA, the WECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall have the power to scrutinise the LEP.

## 9 Appendix 5

### LEP Publication Checklist

<a href="#">The Local Growth Assurance Framework</a>
<a href="#">Annual Financial Statement [from 2019/20]</a>
<a href="#">Annual Report and Delivery Plan</a>
<a href="#">Statement on the publication of LEP Board meeting papers, minutes and agenda items</a>
<a href="#">LEP Board meeting agendas, papers and minutes</a>
<a href="#">LEP Board membership and Terms of Reference</a>
<a href="#">Annual Assurance Statement from the leadership of the LEP</a>
<a href="#">The LEP's Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest policy</a>
<a href="#">Board Members' registers of interest</a> and the register of the <a href="#">Chief Executive Officer</a>
<a href="#">The LEP gifts and hospitality register</a>
<a href="#">Complaints policy</a>
<a href="#">Whistleblowing policy</a>
<a href="#">The LEP funding programme with a description of the scheme, the promoter and the funding awarded</a>
<a href="#">Annual Funding Report detailing projects in receipt of funding and grant payments made [2018/19]</a>
<a href="#">Strategic Economic Plan</a>
<a href="#">WECA Operating Framework</a>
<a href="#">WECA Business Plan</a>
<a href="#">Local Industrial Strategy</a>
<a href="#">WECA Committee Reports</a> and <a href="#">Joint Committee Reports</a>

# 10 Appendix 6

## 10.1 Methodology to Assess Value for Money for Various Scheme Types

### 10.1.1 Transport

Schemes will be subject to the minimum requirements on VfM assessment, assurance and evaluation of transport projects set out in Annex B of the National Local Growth Assurance Framework Guidelines. The minimum requirements are set out below. These will apply to all transport schemes aside from those in the LGF programme which are below £5m and have already secured Outline Business Case approval under the requirements of the previous LEP assurance framework.

- The modelling and appraisal of schemes contained in business cases must be developed in accordance with the guidance published in WebTAG at the time the business case is submitted for approval.
- Central case assessments must be based on forecasts which are consistent with the definitive version of NTEM (DfT's planning dataset). Alternative planning assumptions may be considered as sensitivity tests the results of which may be considered in coming to a decision about whether to approve a scheme.
- The appraisal and modelling will be scrutinised to ensure it has been developed in accordance with WebTAG principles. This will be undertaken independent of the management unit or authority promoting the scheme.
- A value for money statement for each scheme in line with published [DfT WebTAG guidance](#) and [DfT advice on assessing VfM](#) will be presented for consideration at each approval stage.
- The VfM assessment must be signed off as true and accurate by WECA's s73 Officer.
- Only schemes that offer at least "high" value for money, ie with a BCR above 2 and accounting for significant non-monetised impacts and key uncertainties have been considered, as assessed using DfT guidance will be approved aside from the circumstances outlined in section 3.3.3 of this framework. Schemes will be assessed against the relevant thresholds at each approval stage.
- Business cases must be published (and publicised) before a decision to approve funding is made so that external comment is possible. Opinions expressed by the public and stakeholders must be available to decision makers when decisions are being taken (see section 2.2.3)
- Schemes will be monitored and evaluated in line with the latest DfT guidance on the evaluation of local major schemes.

### 10.1.2 Housing and Commercial Interventions

Arrangements will be based on Homes England good practice, advice and guidance, alongside MHCLG's appraisal guide for residential and non-residential development. For projects beyond housing and transport interventions, for example enabling works, land assembly, utilities and/or public realm projects,

the HMCLG appraisal guide will be useful in helping to appraise the costs and benefits of these types of interventions.

### *10.1.3 Skills Capital*

ESFA Skills Funding Agency good practice, advice and guidance will provide a reference for skills capital projects. These projects will be expected to follow the same business case process and requirements as other schemes within the investment programme.

### *10.1.4 Growth Hubs*

The Growth Hub will comply with the 'principles of funding' which includes using robust monitoring and evaluation systems to exercise continuous service improvement, ensure excellence in quality delivery and deliver greater levels of impact on business.

## 11 Appendix 7

11.1 [Outline and Full Business Case Template](#)

## 12 Appendix 8

12.1 [Outline and Full Business Case Guidance](#)

## 13 Appendix 9

13.1 [Feasibility and Development Funding Application Form Template](#)

## 14 Appendix 10

14.1 [Scheme Highlight Report Template](#)