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## 1.0 Background and context

The purpose of the Community Recovery Fund project is to support those individuals and local communities who were already at disadvantage in the labour market, and who have been even further distanced from active participation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The fund will achieve this by appointing and working with a lead Voluntary or Community Sector organisation to reach small VCS organisations who have direct contact and trusted relationships with local communities. Building individuals’ and community resilience is a key pillar within WECA’s Regional Employment and Skills Plan, but the need to do this to ensure that no one is left behind is now greater than ever.

Below is a summary of some of the national and regional strategies and research which set the context and backdrop to the key aims of the Community Recovery Fund (CRF).

### 1.1 National context

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| **National Context** |
| **Social Inclusion and Mobility: ‘The long shadow of deprivation’ (September 2020).**The Social Mobility Commission states in its report that: “the impact of COVID-19 is felt most by those already facing disadvantage. This is creating new and immense challenges for policy. We may expect the hardest-hit areas, with shrinking labour market opportunities, to face the longest impact of this recession.”“This new evidence tells a story of deep unfairness in the context of place. However, it is not a story of north versus south or urban versus rural; it is a story of local areas side by side that have vastly different outcomes for the disadvantaged sons growing up there. And crucially, this is not a problem that equalising education alone can fix. We find compelling evidence that the greatest inequality is driven by factors outside education, and in these areas it is far harder to escape deprivation.Although this is a national study and report, it has synergies with individual geographies and communities across the West of England. Through the Community Recovery Fund, WECA is looking for projects and interventions that address the impact of Covid-19 on communities. It is expected that the fund will help to tackle existing social inclusion and mobility issues and support with building community cohesion and resilience. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-long-shadow-of-deprivation-differences-in-opportunities>  |
| **‘Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19’ (August 2020).**This national report by Public Health England highlights a number of key disparities in risk which may have impacted on communities across the West of England. These include:* The largest disparity found was by age. Among people already diagnosed with COVID19, people who were 80 or older were seventy times more likely to die than those under 40;
* Working age males diagnosed were twice as likely to die as females;
* Local authorities with the highest diagnoses and death rates were found to be mostly urban;
* People who live in deprived areas have higher diagnosis rates and death rates than those living in less deprived areas. The mortality rates from COVID-19 in the most deprived areas were more than double the least deprived areas, for both males and females.
* The report found a particularly high increase in all cause deaths among those who:
	+ were born outside the UK and Ireland;
	+ in a range of caring occupations including social care and nursing auxiliaries and assistants;
	+ drive passengers in road vehicles for a living including taxi and minicab drivers and chauffeurs;
	+ working as security guards and related occupations; and
	+ those in care homes.

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| **BAME: ‘Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups’ (June 2020).** Public Health England’s report highlights some important statistics and facts:* emerging data illustrates that BAME groups have been harder hit by the pandemic and that longstanding inequalities affecting BAME groups have been exacerbated by Covid-19
* many from these groups had lost colleagues or family members to the disease, and nearly all are experiencing the impact of the disease on their communities with significant social, physical and mental health impacts and complications;
* recent research from the UK suggests that both ethnicity and income inequality are independently associated with COVID-19 mortality;
* linked to income inequality, economic disadvantage is strongly associated with the prevalence of smoking, obesity, diabetes, hypertension and cardio-metabolic complications, all of which increase the risk of disease severity;
* individuals from BAME groups are more likely to work in occupations with a higher risk of COVID-19 exposure;
* Individuals from BAME groups are are less likely to seek health care when needed and, as NHS staff, are less likely to speak up when they have concerns about Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or risk.

The above, when read in conjunction with the wider socio-economic data, highlights the potential impact(s) of Covid-19 on BAME groups within communities across the West of England.  |
| **The Sutton Trust: COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief #5: Graduate Recruitment and Access to the Workplace (July 2020)**Key highlights from the report which may have an impact on the prospects of young people within our communities include:* Opportunities for young people to get experience of the workplace have been impacted considerably by the COVID-19 crisis. Many firms who previously offered internships or work experience placements have cancelled them, with just over three fifths (61%) of employers surveyed cancelling some or all of their placements. Only about a third of firms continued all their usual placements either in person or online.
* Research from previous economic downturns suggests the current economic crisis is likely to have a considerable impact on young people entering the job market this year. However, so far, the pandemic appears to have had a mixed impact on employers’ plans for graduate employment going forward. While a sizable proportion of the graduate employers surveyed said they are expecting to hire fewer (33%) or no (6%) graduates over the next year, 27% anticipated hiring more.
* With far fewer opportunities likely to be available in the workplace in the aftermath of the pandemic, promoting social mobility and fair access to those that remain will be more important than ever. Encouragingly, just under a third (29%) of the employers surveyed said social mobility and socio-economic diversity would be more of a priority in the next two years in the aftermath of the pandemic, although a small proportion (11%) said it would be less of a priority for them due to the crisis.
* Encouragingly, employers surveyed were asked whether they thought social mobility and socio-economic diversity would be more or less of a priority in their sector over the next two years. Encouragingly, nearly a third (29%) of respondents said they thought it would be more of a priority for businesses in their industry, reflecting a continuation of increased awareness in recent years. However, just over 1 in 10 (11%) said that the areas are likely to be less of a priority (Figure 6). One of the employers we spoke to told us that both before and during the pandemic they have been seeing social mobility rise up the agenda with their corporate clients, who wanted to know what the organisation was doing to promote it amongst their staff. In some cases, the pandemic has increased the salience of diversity issues in the workplace.

Although the CRF is not directed at Graduates per say, the impact of Covid on work placements and young people entering the job market could have considerable impacts within families and communities. Recent research has contextualised the scarring effects of being unemployed young. <https://esrc.ukri.org/about-us/50-years-of-esrc/50-achievements/unemployment-scarring/#:~:text=Decades%20of%20research%20has%20shed,is%20harmful%20for%20one's%20health>. It is for this reason we have included the above for context.  |
| **An Unequal Crisis: The Impact of the pandemic on the youth labour market (Feb 2021)** Some of the stark findings and key points from this recent report include:*“Falls in employment during the pandemic have widened the employment rate gap from 22 percentage points to 26 points for Black people and to 25 points for Asian people. The fall in employment rates has been four times greater for young Black people than for young white people, while the fall for young Asian people has been nearly three times greater.* *This is particularly concerning because fewer than half (46%) of Black and Asian young people were in work pre-crisis, compared with around two thirds (68%) of white young people (although part of these differences is explained by higher participation in education)”**“Furthermore, even where education participation has increased, there have been sharp falls in the numbers of young people able to combine work and study – which may have significant financial consequences in the short term for those on low incomes and not eligible for other maintenance, and in the longer-term will mean fewer young people gaining early work experience and workplace skills”*[*https://youthfuturesfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IES-Report\_12Feb2021\_-FINAL.pdf*](https://youthfuturesfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IES-Report_12Feb2021_-FINAL.pdf) |
| **Mental Health, Wellbeing and Resilience: COVID-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveillance Report(s)**There is evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a larger adverse impact on the mental health and wellbeing of particular groups within society across England. As stated on the Gov.UK website, the reports found that:* Young adults (aged between 18 and 34, depending on the study) and women have been more likely to report worse mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic than older adults and men, respectively;
* family and caring responsibilities play a role, as do social factors. Women are more likely to have made larger adjustments to manage housework and childcare during the lockdown than men, and these adjustments are associated with increased distress.
* adults living with children have been more likely to report worse mental health than adults living without children since the onset of the pandemic and that lone mothers may be particularly vulnerable.
* Adults with pre-existing mental health conditions have reported higher levels of anxiety, depression and loneliness than adults without pre-existing mental health conditions.
* A greater proportion of adults with low household income or relative socioeconomic position reported symptoms of anxiety and depression than adults with higher household income or socioeconomic position;
* having a low income was associated with loneliness and increasing levels of loneliness during the lockdown;
* Adults who experienced loss of income early in the lockdown also reported higher levels of anxiety and mental distress;
* Other factors that were identified in the reports were:
	+ adults with long term physical health conditions reported worse levels of depressive symptoms than adults without long term physical health conditions’
	+ adults living in urban areas report worse and increasing loneliness; and
	+ adults who have had COVID-19-related symptoms were more likely to report high levels of mental distress and loneliness than adults who had not had such symptoms

[COVID-19: mental health and wellbeing surveillance report - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report) |
| **MindUK ‘Mental Health Emergency’ Report (June 2020)**This report states that pre-existing inequalities have been worsened by the Covid pandemic.It highlights how the pandemic’s effects on mental health have been disproportionate, with the following groups of people are more likely to report that their mental health has declined:* Women
* People with disabilities
* Those living in social housing
* People with eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, or personality disorders
* Frontline workers.

Other interesting and relevant findings include:* Over a third (37%) of adults who rated their current mental health as poor or very poor went to charities for mental health advice and information, in comparison to under a third (31%) of those who did not rate their mental health as poor.
* Young people with poor mental health are more likely to speak to friends and teachers, but less likely to speak to family – highlighting the importance of community and community cohesion.
* More than two thirds of both adults and young people said that the information or advice they received from charities, their workplace, family and friends, their GP, helplines, TV or radio was very or quite helpful. This again highlights the importance of community and community cohesion.
* Charities were more helpful than any other source, with over three quarters of adults (79%) and just under three quarters of young people (73%) who used them saying they were very helpful.

[https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/5929/the-mental-health-emergency\_a4\_final.pdf June 2020](https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/5929/the-mental-health-emergency_a4_final.pdf%20June%202020) |

### 1.2 Regional context

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| **Regional Context and Insights** |
| **West of England Regional Recovery Plan – see section below**The Recovery Plan is a key strategy for the Community Recovery Fund. There are further details about the Recovery Plan in the following sections of this paper, however, in summary the recovery priorities are:* Rebuild business
* Get residents back into jobs
* Strengthen inclusion – which includes ‘Launch new Community Grant scheme to build local capacity and resilience in the ‘hardest hit’ communities creating pathways to employment and skills.’
* Green recovery
* Renew Places.

[**https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Recovery-plan-version-2.pdf**](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Recovery-plan-version-2.pdf) |
| **West of England Economic Briefing on Covid-19 Business Impacts (November 2020)**Labour market: * 5.0% of the region’s workforce claimed out of work benefits in October 2020 (37,405 residents).
* Job vacancy data is continuing to rise but is 15.3% lower than in January 2020.
* As of 18 October 2020, a total of 9.6m people in the UK have been furloughed at some point, by 1.2m employers, with claims amounting to £41.4bn.
* 5.0% of the region’s workforce claimed out of work benefits in October 2020 (37,405). This is similar to the reported figure for September 2020 **and lower than the average figure for England**.
* 5.1% of the region’s population of 16-24 year olds claimed out of work benefits, which is **below the national average** of 7.4%.
* According to the EMSI job-postings analysis tool, there were 50,784 unique job postings advertised in the West of England in October 2020, up over 11.2% from September 2020. This suggests some level of recovery in terms of available jobs last month. However, this is 15.3% lower than the jobs advertised in January 2020.

While the labour market remains relatively resilient (at present) in the WoE compared to the national ave, impact on individuals is growing and is clearly impacting those in most deprived communities.[**https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/201112-WofE-covid19-economic-briefing-002.pdf**](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/201112-WofE-covid19-economic-briefing-002.pdf) |
| **West of England Labour Market Intelligence Pack (December 2020)** This document collates evidence about the labour market in the West of England, highlighting the current challenges posed by the COVID pandemic as well as identifying longer term issues. The analysis looks at the characteristics and spatial distribution of the labour force, and business and employer demand. It covers both short and long term Labour Market Intelligence and provides interpretation around the available data. The key point is that unemployment is rising in the SW.Key statistics which may link to proposals submitted under the Community Recovery Fund include:* As of November 2020 5.0% of the working age population in the West of England were claiming unemployment benefits (37,285 residents). There are now 21,510 more claimants in the West of England than there were in February 2020, before the effects of the pandemic hit. Unemployment remains highest in the areas which had high unemployment pre-covid. The rate remains below the national rate of 6.4% for November 2020, however, the claimant rate in Bristol matches the national rate.
* The number of ‘young’ claimants has remained broadly stable, with 4.9% of the regional population of 16-24 year olds claiming unemployment benefit in November 2020. This remains below the national rate of 7.3%. This is however an increase from 1.9% of the region’s young people claiming unemployment benefit in March 2020.
* The number of ‘older’ claimants remained broadly stable at 3.9% of the regional 50+ population. This is an increase from the 1.8% of the population reported in March 2020. The proportion of ‘younger’ and ‘older’ proportions are both below the national rates although there are variations across the unitary authorities; with Bristol having a ‘older’ claimant rate higher than the national rate.
* The Labour Force Survey confirms unemployment is rising in the South West region, with males experiencing a greater increase in unemployment than females since January – March 2020 (1.5 and 0.6 percentage points respectively) and a higher overall rate of unemployment.
* There were 12,255 unique job postings advertised in the WoE in Nov 2020, down 14% from September 2020.
* Comparing the type of jobs advertised by industry, the recovery has in part been driven by increases in the number of postings in human health and social care which is up on its February posting level. Moderate recoveries have also been seen in most sectors, although many are not yet at pre-pandemic levels, most notably Accommodation and Food, and Administrative and Support Service Activities.​

In summary, unemployment rates across the West of England appear to be stable, however the overall number of claimants has risen since February 2020 and remains highest in areas which had high unemployment prior to the pandemic. The number of job postings have not yet at pre-pandemic levels, with the ‘types of jobs’ being advertised having changed in nature. [**https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/October-2020-External-LMI-Pack-Draft-A1.0.pdf**](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/October-2020-External-LMI-Pack-Draft-A1.0.pdf) |

Please note: The above table summarises some of the key strategies and reports which set the Community Recovery Fund aims into context. This is not intended to be a complete list and proposals submitted under the CRF will need to demonstrate the ‘need’ for their proposal using localised data and intelligence as well as national and regional context.

## 2.0 West of England Regional Recovery Plan

The West of England Regional Recovery Plan (September 2020) sets out the regions plan to support recovery and renewal following Covid-19. Key responsibilities of the recovery plan include identifying challenges and opportunities and finding ways to help people to access employment, skills and training to support economic renewal and resilience.

The Recovery Plan priorities are:

* Rebuild business
* Get residents back into jobs
* Strengthen inclusion – which includes ‘Launch new Community Grant scheme to build local capacity and resilience in the ‘hardest hit’ communities creating pathways to employment and skills.’
* Green recovery
* Renew Places.



All proposals, interventions and/or actions implemented and delivered as part of the CRF will need to demonstrate how they meet the ‘Strengthening Inclusion’ priority above as well as any other of the above priorities (where applicable).

WECA is looking for innovative solutions which improve progressions onto employment and skills provision whilst also building capacity and resilience within communities, encouraging longer term sustained impacts and benefits as a result of the funding.

Projects supported through this fund must be supported by clear evidence of need and demonstrate how they are additional to current provision. They must not be an extension of current provision already being funded through other funding streams (e.g. AEB funded provision). There is a list of ‘What cannot be funded’ later in this paper.

Projects must also clearly set out how they include outreach, capacity building (for the voluntary and community groups accessing the grant funding), identifying specific need(s) and how they address these. A key requirement of the funding will be signposting service users/organisations and residents to other skills and employment support that already exists. WECA will support with providing details of other provision available across the West of England.

## 3.0 Focus of the fund and issues to be addressed

**Priority** will be given to funding projects (and organisations) which reach the most vulnerable, including those who have suffered disproportionately from Covid-19. This can include those residents, groups or communities (including, the young, disabled, lone parents, BAME, women etc)) who face the greatest risks and detrimental social, health or economic impact(s) as a result of the pandemic.

Projects funded under the CRF will address identified issues, gaps in provision and/or areas of need and support one or more of the following with a clear economic outcome and progression onto employability, skills and/or training:

* Fostering and supporting community cohesion, addressing the impact of Covid-19 on people, their networks and communities;
* Addressing the impact of Covid on people – helping to them to ‘rebuild’ (i.e. through new or improved life skills and access to advice, guidance and support), and gain the confidence to move closer to and/or into employment;
* Local voluntary, community or not-for-profit organisational projects which help groups of vulnerable residents and communities across the West of England to recover (both economically and socially) from the Covid-19 pandemic;
* Emotional and mental health wellbeing activities helping to foster social community cohesion that will have a legacy impact/benefit on communities post the pandemic;
* Reducing barriers to accessing pre-existing adult education available within communities. Projects must demonstrate how they will support progression/pathways onto adult education which will thus in turn result in improved skills and access to employment and work opportunities with measurable employment and/or skills outcomes and progressions;
* Outreach projects or services (either face-to-face or online) tackling social exclusion. Rather than being digital training courses (for which there is already significant provision across the West of England), these projects or services are likely to be specific, targeted and adapted to supporting the most vulnerable within our communities and addressing the impact(s) of social isolation;
* Promoting all employment, employability and skills support programmes/services/provision available to communities (including current digital training), especially to residents in the hardest to reach areas. This includes rural communities where inclusion and engagement can be challenging; and
* Raise awareness of and access to community and cultural activities (see p24 of the West of England Regional Recovery Plan) which foster strong community links, cohesion and resilience. Projects will be linked and signposted to (where appropriate) to the Cultural and Creative Fund.

Projects must demonstrate how they will achieve a **minimum of two or more** of the following outcomes:

1. Developing and encouraging sustained community resilience – fostering strong community cohesion and ‘rebuilding’ people (life skills) who have experienced the greatest impact as a result of Covid;
2. Contribute to alleviating barrier(s) with a preference to addressing barriers to accessing existing skills and employability provision. Projects must not fund digital/skills projects and interventions which are either already being funded by or are capable of being funded by existing funding (e.g. through DWP, AEB, gov funding streams and/or other community funds such as the Bristol Impact Fund). They must demonstrate a) how they are additional to any existing provision, b) why the provision can’t be funded by any existing funding and c) will create pathways onto other existing provision.
3. Addressing identified and localised needs within a community which, if addressed, will lead to improved social, economic and community outcomes;
4. Residents are better able to identify and access support services and are supported to engage fully with current provision and services;
5. Participants and/or groups experience improved family and community cohesion – linked to improved life chances, employment, training and personal wellbeing
6. Participants are more likely to access existing skills and employment provision, gain work experience or secure employment through improved skills, personal development, cohesion and resilience;
7. Participants and/or groups seek financial inclusion and support to access debt and/or money management advice and support;
8. The emotional and mental health wellbeing of participants, groups and/or communities is supported through targeted interventions (not available through other existing services), helping to build resilience and cohesion within communities.
9. Residents and communities are more resilient to the social and economic effects of Covid-19; and
10. The funding helps to reduce benefit claims and increase participation in work and/or work experience, with a clear demonstrable economic outcome.

In order to measure the impact of the above, applicants will be asked to provide information and data to demonstrate how they will achieve the intended outcome(s). This must include:

* assessment of the current situation (including baseline figures),
* how the benefits and impacts of the proposal will be measured (including how these will be monitored and evaluated);
* How the proposal links to other WECA programmes (see Sustainability and Impact section below). Any proposals must identify how these links will be established and any systems/processes for making cross-referrals and signposting.
* how they will ensure sustainability of the project and its benefits/impacts, post the end of the funded project; and
* outcomes – showing significant progress from the baseline

We will work with the successful Managing Partner under this call to further map and develop the long term benefits of activity by the totality of this project, so that value for money and long term impact can be measured.

##

## 4.0 Sustainability and impact

### 4.1 CRF position and context within the employment and skills ‘support’ eco-system

As mentioned above (see also p24 of the West of England Regional Recovery Plan), the CRF is a localised grass-roots intervention to help establish new and innovative methods of helping disadvantaged communities and groups to access existing employment and skills support, building capacity for recovery and resilience.

Projects and proposals coming forward under the CRF must reach the most vulnerable, including those who have suffered disproportionally from Covid-19 and who face the greatest risks and detrimental social, health or economic impact(s) as a result of the pandemic. The projects and proposals must also support communities and individuals to access wider employment and skills support through other programmes, projects and services (see section 4.2 below). 

### 4.2 Referrals and linkages to other programmes

As mentioned above, it is expected that proposals submitted under the CRF demonstrate how they link into, will benefit from and/or add value to other WECA programmes. These include:

* Workforce for the Future (Phase 2);
* AEB provision (inc employability skills, Sector Based Work Academies (SBWA), basic skills, careers advice and support with finding a job);
* Future Bright;
* Careers Hub;
* Employability and Skills Portal and mapping (see [www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/skills/employment-skills-portal/](http://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/skills/employment-skills-portal/) );
* Growth Hub;
* Business Growth Grant;
* Talent Retention Platform; and
* the Recovery Fund priorities.

**WECA Recovery Plan 5 Key Priorities:**

1. Rebuild Business
2. Get residents back into jobs
3. Strengthen inclusion
4. Green recovery
5. Renew places

Future Bright

AEB provision

Workforce for the Future

**Community Recovery Fund**

Access Hub mapping documents

Employment & Skills Portal

Careers Hub

**Growth Hub for businesses**

Talent Retention Platform

Redundancy support package

Business Growth Grant (eligibility criteria apply)

It is expected that proposals submitted under the CRF will address localised and granular community issue(s). In terms of sustainability and longevity of impact of the funding (and activities delivered through it), proposals must set out how the activities and outcomes link to other programmes and lead to progressions onto employability and skills training. These links should include (where possible), signposting and referrals onto other programmes and services.

The monitoring and evaluation requirements of any approved proposals will also include the recording and reporting on cross-referrals/progression onto other funded programmes, services and/or provision such as those listed below. The Employability and Skills Portal will act as a key mechanism for identifying other areas of provision and making cross referrals

For example, an individual may access a community based service or activity funded through the CRF, which helps them to address (for instance), confidence building moving closer to learning, training and/or employment.

At the end of the community based activity, they may then be referred onto one of the WFTF partners or to an AEB provider who is delivering work based learning in order that they can progress onto training, an apprenticeship or employment.

It is these potential links (and ways of monitoring and recording them), that we would like community groups to think about when they shape their proposals. These links will need to be recorded, reported and evaluated as part of the end of scheme evaluation.

##  Building capacity for delivery

### 5.1 Workforce for the Future (WfTF)

In terms of building capacity within the community groups and not-for-profit organisations delivering under the CRF, it may be possible for such groups to seek small business support and/or training and development through the WFTF delivery partners and programmes. Please visit the Skills section of WECA website for further details: [www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/workforce-for-the-future](http://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/workforce-for-the-future)

There is also a full list of WFTF partners and the types of service/support they are delivering at the end of this document.

### 5.2 Universal Business Support

The Universal Business Support (UBS) service can support with longer-term business planning, including sustainability of the projects to be supported.

Further details about the Universal Business Support service can be found by visiting the Growth Hub: [www.wearegrowth.co.uk](http://www.wearegrowth.co.uk)

### 5.3 Mapping of provision

WECA has undertaken a significant piece of mapping, identifying a plethora of services, support, training and skills development programmes for individuals and business across the West of England.

It is recommended that these mapping documents are reviewed as part of the development of any proposals submitted under the CRF as they may assist with identifying gaps, appropriate partners and/or referral routes. Please visit Employability and Skills Portal ([www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/skills/employment-skills-portal](http://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/skills/employment-skills-portal) ) to access the latest mapping documents.

## 6.0 Delivery model

In scoping out the delivery model for the CRF, WECA has undertaken consultations with other Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) in the UK. Many of the larger MCAs have pre-existing and well-established Community Fund schemes operating across their MCA area(s).

Although these schemes have evolved as a result of Covid, the delivery models have remained the same and thus have several rounds of proven delivery and evaluated benefits. WECA has therefore based the design of the CRF delivery model on the experience of other MCAs, taking on board feedback regarding lessons learnt, what is working well and examples of best practice from elsewhere in the UK. We have also consulted and learned from experience gained in similar programmes by our Unitary Authorities.

The delivery model for these funds has therefore been developed after significant review which also took into account the current capacity availability within Unitary and Regional Authorities, the most cost effective model (and economies of scale) and, most significantly, the best way to ensure that whichever partner manages the fund, they are seen as a valued and trusted partner for small community based organisations.

It is for this mix of reasons that WECA will appoint one lead VCS organisation (a ‘managing partner’) who will deliver the programme in the region on our behalf, working with and seeking out the range of smaller projects which can address issues at the community level. It is expected that this partner will bring match to the delivery of this project. See VCS Managing Partner Specification Document for further details.

It is essential (as detailed in 4.1 above) that the CRF does not sit in isolation to other programmes and areas of delivery, and that this ‘grass-roots’ intervention establishes progression routes for individuals, into training, education employment and/or career progression. These progression pathways will help to ensure that the CRF has a legacy impact within communities, helping to mitigate against the long-term impact of Covid-19 on these communities.

To ensure that the CRF feeds into a) other critical areas of delivery (see 4.1 above), b) emerging recovery fund projects, c) LA services and d) delivery and the various mainstream programmes which are both currently available and emerging from Government in response to Covid-19, a Project Manager (PM) will be employed by WECA. The PM will provide the strategic oversight of CRF (and the Digital Skills proposal - another Recovery Fund project) and be responsible for ensuring that all appropriate links are made between these programmes and the wider employment and skills landscape. The Project Manager will work closely (on a daily basis) with the Managing Partner to ensure that management of the fund is as streamlined and effective as possible, to ensure full accountability and visibility of all aspects of delivery, and to support the Managing Partner with linkage to other initiatives and all partners who can contribute to the success of this project.

Working across the Digital Skills and CRF projects, the PM will ensure that the grass roots interventions delivered by CRF are linked to the progression routes being delivered through AEB funded delivery, the Digital projects and other programmes and services (including LA, WECA and mainstream – supported by the Employability & Skills Portal [www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/skills/employment-skills-portal/](http://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/skills/employment-skills-portal/) ).

The PM and the Managing Partner will together work with Local Authorities (as detailed in section 7.0 below), to add capacity to overstretched teams/services by either leading on and/or supporting with key tasks including:

* LA engagement with community groups, projects and proposals;
* Act as a centralised contact between the CRF project, other services and programmes and the selected VCS partner. This will ensure a strategic oversight and cross-referral into other programmes such as WfTF, Ways2Work, Future Bright, Digital Funds etc;
* Organise the Assessment panels, circulate paperwork, take notes and provide minutes;
* Work closely to monitor progress of approved proposals and schemes;
* Working to coordinate and produce the evaluation report for the scheme.



As identified during the consultation discussions with other MCAs and the LAs, the fundamental benefits of this delivery model are:

* Creation of a system which facilitates links and progression pathways between community projects and other areas of delivery such as AEB funded skills and employability provision, WFTF, Future Bright, Careers Hub, Growth Hub and Employability and Skills portal;
* Ensuring that the CRF projects link into and benefit from (where applicable) other work streams and funded programmes;
* Creation of a ‘trusted partner’ in the Managing Partner who is able to engage with and support a range of VCS projects directed towards communities and groups which the LAs and WECA may not have links with;
* Facilitate philanthropy and match (via the VCS partner), thus increasing the value, impact and benefits of the CFR;
* Ensuring that the VCS partner is fully informed of other programmes, provision and services and is referring into these;
* Aligning the overall objectives of the CRF with other programmes;
* Ensuring that individuals and groups can access wider support available to them – thus encouraging progression;
* Identifying where individual community proposals may act as potential referral routes into other work streams (where applicable);
* Having oversight of the fund, thus producing regular progress management reports for circulation to People and Skills Team (WECA), the SOG, CRF Task and Finish Group and Regional Recovery Task Force.

## 7.0 Key roles and responsibilities

|  |
| --- |
| **WECA** |
| * Prepare the CRF Full Business Case (early 2021);
* Take the business case through the various stages of the approval process;
* Provide LMI and lists of services/provision (mapping) to provide context to proposals;
* Recruitment of PM and PSO to work across the LA’s and WECA;
* Lead on the call for the VCS Managing Partner – working with the LAs to select the preferred applicant;
* Support with the call for proposals, assessment of individual proposals and initiation of these;
* Report on the progress of the CRF at the SOG and Regional Recovery Task Force;
* Arrange and manage the CRF Task and Finish Group & ongoing Steering Groups
* Support with the overall end of scheme evaluation reporting;
* Promote the fund and linkages to key partners and stakeholders as well as other relevant projects.
 |
| **PROJECT MANAGER & PROJECT SUPPORT OFFICER** |
| * Work closely with the LA’s and VCS partner on the application and approval process, initiation of approved projects and monitoring the implementation of these;
* Co-ordinate and manage the assessment panels (made up of the LA’s, VCS partner and WECA;
* Work closely with the VCS Managing Partner to ensure delivery meets approved timescales and that the required monitoring and evaluation takes place throughout the project delivery;
* Work closely with a designated point of contact within each LA, to report on progress, flag any issues/risks and also ensure that appropriate links are made to other LA services;
* Act as a link to signpost to other projects and programmes inc WFTF, AEB, mapping, FB, CH etc;
* Produce monthly monitoring reports which will be circulated to Regional Recovery Task Force, WECA People & Skills Managers, SOG and CRF Task and Finish Group and ongoing project Steering Groups.
 |
| **LOCAL AUTHORITIES** |
| * Work in partnership with WECA to select the preferred VCS Managing Partner;
* Lead on raising awareness of the scheme in the LA area, encourage the submission of proposals, participate in Assessment Panels and other support for initiation of the scheme; The PM will offer capacity within existing teams to support with this, but LAs will remain the ‘front door’ locally to the CRF, encouraging the submission of proposals/applications to the VCS partner;
* Provide localised intelligence and LMI to support with the assessment of proposals;
* Promote the scheme to their network, bringing key local projects, groups and organisations into the bidding process – based on local knowledge of gaps, issues and areas of need (supported by LMI etc) thus encouraging the submission of proposals to the VCS partner;
* Attend the CRF Task and Finish Group and ongoing Steering Group meetings to report on the scheme from an LA perspective;
* Support the end of scheme evaluation process – to be coordinated by the PM and VCS partner.
 |
| **VCS MANAGING PARTNER (UNDER A GRANT AGREEMENT) – SEE VCS MANAGING PARTNER SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT** |
| * Help to raise awareness of the CRF and encourage relevant proposals from a range of suitable organisations to come forward with an application;
* Support community groups with the application process – this may include support with writing applications;
* Co-creation of the application forms, monitoring forms and any other paperwork needed to establish project delivery as required;
* Lead on the due diligence, project initiation and monitor progress of proposals (once approved);
* Manage the payment of funds (held by WECA) and monitor financial as well as project performance;
* Support groups/projects approved facing difficulty to resolve issues – thus ensuring that project outcomes are met;
* Work alongside the LA’s teams and PM providing regular updates on the progress of approved proposals;
* Attend the CRF Task and Finish Group and Steering Group meetings to report on the scheme from a VCS perspective;
* Act as a link to signpost to other projects, programmes and services inc WFTF, AEB, Digital Provision, mapping, Future Bright, Careers Hub, Way2Work etc;
* Provide localised information, intelligence and data to support grass roots proposals;
* Lead on collating monitoring and evaluation information from approved projects – provide progress reports to the LA’s/WECA and input into the overall programme evaluation.
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## 8.0 Funding availability and assessment

Up to £1.4 million will be made available for community projects across Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire. An element of this will cover the costs of the VCS Managing Partner, the remainder will go to the range of smaller projects that are sought under this proposal.

All proposals submitted under the CRF will need to demonstrate how they will:

* Align with and deliver against strategic and recovery plan objectives without duplicating current provision (see section below);
* Meet the relevant CFR assessment criteria set;
* Address identifiable issues, gaps and areas of need (as detailed in Section 3 above) that exist within communities. Proposals will be required to provide robust evidence of need. This evidence must be underpinned by supporting information and data including:

	+ population figures for the community/area/geography to which the proposal relates;
	+ Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) data – a range of LMI data sources are available to view via the WECA website;
	+ Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) - widely-used datasets within the UK to classify the relative deprivation (i.e a measure of poverty) of small areas. They go down to Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) so are granular geographically. Multiple measures are provided (reflecting types of deprivation), which can be compiled into a single score of deprivation.​ These individual measures include: Income, Employment, Education, Skills and Training, Disability, Crime, Barriers to Housing and Services, and Living Environment. Proposals need to demonstrate how they plan to tackle one or more (or all) of the above ‘types of deprivation’ many of which have been made worse as a result of Covid; and
	+ localised data which illustrates the specific area(s) of need/gaps/issues to be addressed.
* Deliver on a range of outputs and benefits (see Section 3 above); and
* Plan for sustainability of the project and/or benefits that result from it.

Assessment of proposals will be based on the above. However, WECA reserves the right to ensure a level coverage of CRF across the West of England and its communities.

The final allocation will be determined by a panel made up of WECA and each Local Authority, with support and input from the VCS Managing Partner.

Funding will only be awarded to those projects which meet a robust assessment and quality threshold. Should an insufficient number of quality projects come forward in one area, funding will be allocated to a higher ranked project in another area. If insufficient quality projects come forward overall, WECA will work with the VCS Managing Partner and LAs to address any identified issues and actions required to encourage quality applications to come forward.

WECA will discuss with the VCS Managing Partner the holding back of circa £500K of the funding to form a ‘phase 2’ of the CRF. It is anticipated that the CRF projects (once up and running), will lead to the identification of additional projects and/or areas of need.

By withholding an element of the fund for a second phase, the CRF will be able to dovetail into any further funding rounds of Workforce for the Future (WFTF) and the Digital Skills project(s), whilst also addressing any gaps, new initiatives and/or additional areas of need that are highlighted through the phase 1 of the CRF.

**All funding must support new projects including those funded under any second call.** The CRF will not fund projects that were funded under the first phase, or duplicate projects funded by other grant/funding sources available through WECA or other partners, including (list not exhaustive):

* WECA Recovery Fund;
* DWP Flexible Support Fund;
* Adult Education Budget (AEB). CRF projects will need to link to pre-existing AEB provision (a list can be provided by the AEB Team at WECA) to maximise opportunities for learners. It is anticipated that many of the participants benefiting from the CRF projects may then go on to benefit from provision funded through the AEB.
* Provision already funded through WECA programmes such as Workforce for the Future, Future Bright, Careers Hub, Growth Hub, Small Business Grant Scheme, Talent Retention etc. Signposting will be expected as part of the wider benefits of the CRF, including into:
	+ **Workforce for the Future (WFTF)** – a multi-agency programme supporting careers advice, training and development, apprenticeships and other skills provision.
	+ **Future Bright** - supporting low income in-work residents in the West of England to increase their confidence, motivation, wellbeing, skills and incomes.
	+ **West of England Works** – a partnership which aims to help unemployed and economically inactive people in the West of England find employment.
	+ **Careers Hub** – the Careers Hub works with schools to improve career opportunities for young people by ensuring young people have more opportunities to connect with the world of work and potential future employers, and a potential route to engaging with parents.
	+ **Digital Skills Investment Programme** (part of the Recovery Fund) – providing a programme of skills support packages including ‘basic digital skills and access’ and ‘medium to higher level digital skills.’
	+ **WE work for Everyone** - a single, unified approach to improving employment outcomes for people with learning difficulties living in the West of England Combined Authority area and North Somerset.
	+ **Apprenticeship Diversity Hub** – this seeks to increase diversity amongst under-represented groups and those facing barriers to enter an apprenticeship.
* Provision already funded through national funding streams such as FE provision, Kickstart, Traineeships, Apprenticeship Levy and/or other.

In terms of delivery, applications from organisations who have previously received funding will be accepted so long as the original funding has been spent and monitoring provided. Depending on available funds, priority may be given to organisations who have not been awarded a grant from a similar fund previously.

## 9.0 How much can be applied for?

In terms of the delivery organisations (those funded under the project to deliver directly to individuals and communities), the following is a summary of the anticipated grant sizes available through the CRF (though this may be adjusted in light of advice and input from the VCS Managing Partner):

* Small grants of between £1K - £9,999K
* Medium sized grants of between £10K - £50K
* £50K- £100K for exceptional proposals which are multi-partner approaches addressing the same issues across differing communities and/or cross-boundary geographies. These proposals would also need to bring an element of match funding (either financial and/or in-kind) of 20% or above.

## 10.0 Who can the CRF support?

In terms of delivery, this funding should support local initiatives and projects. The groups and organisations for which this funding is intended to support include:

* Local voluntary and community sector organisations – including those services support groups that have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19 (e.g. young (16+), SEND, BAME);
* Churches and faith based groups and organisations;
* Registered charities (minimum turnover to be confirmed with VCS Managing Partner);
* Not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises;
* PTA’s; and/or
* Parish and Town Councils.

Organisations and groups accessing this funding should be formally constituted and prove the ability to both deliver the project proposed and properly manage and use the funding. Applications from newly established groups are also welcomed, however, please note that all organisations will need to be able to comply with and show full transparency of their proposed delivery via an application form. The application form will be created by the Managing Partner and WECA and will be as simple and clear as possible, while meeting the project requirements for transparency.

## 11.0 What cannot be funded?

* Individuals
* Organisations with less than 3 unrelated Trustees/Directors/Management Committee members
* Projects and activities classed as a statutory responsibility
* Any provision or projects already funded (e.g. AEB, Workforce for the Future, Future Bright, Kickstart, Apprenticeships etc) and/or additional accredited or regulated provision already available. This funding should be focused on reducing barriers for residents in accessing existing adult skills provision and should be additional activity/provision.
* Not a Limited company or sole trader i.e. the fund is for third sector organisations, social enterprises or charities – broadly private businesses or CICs limited by shares
* Retrospective funding
* National organisations that cannot demonstrate local governance and control of local finances
* Politically connected or exclusively religious activities – projects must demonstrate how they benefit the wider community and address specific barriers.
* Reimburse expenditure that occurs before the grant offer. Any prospective expenditure must be detailed in the application and cannot occur until the grant is offered.
* Partially fund property, plant or equipment that costs more than £5,000 in total
* Purchase equipment or consumables associated with PPE and social distancing measures
* Fund wage subsidies
* Support working capital

## 12.0 Project timescales and deliverables

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| --- | --- |
| **Milestone completion dates**  | **Baseline**  |
| Call launched for VCS Partner, full criteria published  | w/c 22 March 2021   |
| Opportunity to book a 1-2-1 slot to discuss proposals (this will be a max 30 min slot on a day tbc – please contact skills@westofengland-ca.gov.ukif this is of interest)  | w/c 5 April 2021   |
| Application deadline  | 28 April 2021   |
| VCS Partner proposals assessed & due diligence  | By 12 May 2021  |
| Selection of a VCS partner organisation.  Applicants informed & GOL issued  | By 14 May2021  |
| Mobilisation  | Late May/early June 2021  |
| CRF Programme Delivery starts  | Late May/early June onwards  |
| Delivery  | June 21 - November 2022  |
| Monthly Monitoring Reports produced and circulated by the PM  | By the 20th of each month  |
| Task & Finish Group review meetings  | Dec 2020, March 2021, June 2021 and September 2021, Dec 2021, March 2022, June 2022, Sept 2022  |
| Mid-point evaluation   | January 2022  |
| Full project evaluation   | November 2022  |

## 13.0 Documentation

The following documentation will be required to be submitted with any proposals:

* Full application form;
* Supporting information