



UK Government

**LEVELLING
— UP —**

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Investment Plan

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Your location

To be eligible for funding, you will need to be applying on behalf of a lead authority in one of the [delivery geographies](#).

Select the lead authority

For Scotland and Wales only: Who else is this investment plan being submitted on behalf of? Select all that apply

Your details

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Local challenges and opportunities

In this section, we will ask you:

- If you've identified any challenges or opportunities, you intend to support
- Which of the UKSPF investment priorities these fall under

ARE THERE ANY LOCAL CHALLENGES YOU FACE WHICH FALL UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY?

(If yes) Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible

The West Midlands has enormous economic potential, where the success of our region is critical to the success of the UK more widely. Prior to the pandemic we were the fastest growing region outside of London, breaking through the £100bn economic output mark in 2019-20. This success was powered by a young and diverse population, a strong Higher Education base and many Good and Outstanding schools, colleges and training providers. We experienced growth in high value-added sectors, new investment and infrastructure, and a growing digital capability. However, underlying this growth there are significant issues with inequality, poverty, youth unemployment, low skills, poor health and school performance.

Our ambition is to build a better connected, more prosperous, fairer, greener and healthier West Midlands. Inclusive growth is at the heart of our vision. We want to build a region where people thrive in the places they live and work, a region that is focused on people as well as place.

In order to achieve this ambition, our [2021 State of the Region report](#) identified five key challenges to shape future strategic activities across partners. These were agreed through the WMCA Board:

1. Delivering good jobs

- a. Although employment has returned to pre-pandemic levels, parts of the region have low levels of employment and high levels of unemployment. Despite a tight labour market, part of the region continue to display stubborn levels of long-term unemployment
- b. WM has a strong start up rate, but with new businesses most vulnerable to economic shocks. The insolvency rate is also high.

2. Supporting thriving places and communities

- a. Affordable housing – the region is building houses at a good rate but house prices continue to rise, resulting in a decline in affordable housing and additional affordable rented homes
- b. Visitor numbers – prior to the pandemic, visitor numbers were growing steadily. The region relies heavily on business tourism which has been heavily impacted as a result of covid

3. Embedding our green ambitions

- a. The region is a net importer of energy, due to a lack of natural assets for renewables. Despite this, the low-carbon manufacturing sector is the fastest growing in the region.
- b. Even before recent price hikes, WMCA had one of the highest rates of fuel poverty.

4. Tackling inequality and levelling up

- a. While disposable income per person continues to rise, this remains lower than the UK average. Nearly 20% of the region is in the top 10% most deprived.
- b. Pre-covid, health life expectancy was improving, though a gap remains with the national average.

5. Preventing a lost generation

- a. Prior to covid, the WM was a strong apprenticeship performer. However, since then, we have seen a significant drop in opportunities for young people and with SMEs in particular.
- b. The WM has fewer people qualified to Level 4+ (37% vs 43% UK) and more people with no qualifications (9.6% vs 6.6% UK) compared to other areas.

In addition:

- Access to green space across the WMCA region is not equitable. Furthermore, as the population in the WMCA area increases, the levels of publicly accessible park and green space provision per person are likely to fall below the minimum standard of provision. Many of the same communities are also vulnerable to flooding and overheating. Measure to tackle this are outlined in the [West Midlands Natural Environment Plan](#).
- The region has in excess of 10,500 heritage assets, many of which are buildings that are not being used to their full potential, whilst costing a great deal to run and maintain. These assets have been mapped [here](#), and would benefit from further investment to build pride in place.
- The [social economy](#) in the WMCA area is diverse, but that diversity does not lead to asset wealth, or the rewards of growth being shared equitably. A literature review led by Locality (2020), indicated that diverse-led organisations are more likely to be micro enterprises (turnover of less than £10k per year), with lower levels of paid staff and barriers to accessing grants, funding and finance. Addressing this will help to address the region’s lower uptake of social investment.
- West Midlands Police has the highest crime severity score of all forces in England and Wales and a much higher rate of domestic abuse-related incidents per 1,000 population than other forces, leading to harm, disruption and homelessness for those women and children. This undermines the stability of communities and pride in place, and prevents victims from contributing to, or benefiting from social capital.
- [Research by Local Trust](#) has indicated that 20 wards in the WMCA area contain ‘left behind places’ with a lack of places to meet, lower levels of engagement and activity, and poor connectivity (in all respects) to the wider economy.

ARE THERE ANY LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY THAT YOU INTEND TO SUPPORT?

(If yes) Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible

As well as deploying UKSPF funds for the improvement of high streets and town centres, community and neighbourhood infrastructure, and local green spaces, we anticipate using funding within the ‘communities and place’ investment priority to build capacity and support local civil society and community groups.

ARE THERE ANY LOCAL CHALLENGES YOU FACE WHICH FALL UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?

(If yes) Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible

Compared with other regions, the West Midlands has suffered the sharpest decline in economic output over the last two years, as a result of the Covid pandemic, supply chain disruptions and new trade frictions. The region is responding through the West Midlands [Plan for Growth](#) which pinpoints clusters where the region has comparative advantage and there is additional growth potential, alongside an ambitious Trailblazing Devolution Deal to secure more resources and powers for the region.

The West Midlands’ local context and needs include:

- Productivity (GVA per hour worked) is 11% lower than the national rate, with slower growth over last five years, particularly in Walsall, Dudley and Wolverhampton.

- Below average 5-year business survival rate in Coventry, Sandwell, Walsall, and Wolverhampton; lower job density across all areas except Solihull, and decreasing job density in Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall.
- Declining high growth firms: 10% (over 5 years) and lower business demand for innovation.
- Job density is slightly below the national average, though this varies across the area from +22% in Solihull to -13% in Sandwell.
- Manufacturing remains important to the economy with the highest GVA of all sectors, though total employees has fallen (-10%).
- Information & communication and professional, scientific & technical sectors are the two fastest growth sectors in GVA terms with strong employment growth.

In responding to these challenges, we have identified four key areas of economic opportunity for the West Midlands which covers:

- **Support SMEs with low to mid-level productivity:** New jobs and higher wages depend on having more successful businesses. A 1% rise in productivity each year for 5 years, would increase output per head to £26,735, reducing the productivity gap from £17.4bn to £12bn and supporting higher wages.
- **Expand & attract frontier firms:** The number of £1m+ turnover firms is falling in the West Midlands (-0.8% in 2018/19), whilst it is rising in the UK overall (3.4% increase in the same period). Reversing this trend would deliver and safeguard significant numbers of jobs and opportunities for progression.
- **Catalyse growth in target clusters where the region has a competitive advantage:** 10,000 new jobs in priority sectors (Business, Professional & Financial Services, Creative & Digital and Low Carbon & Environmental tech) will provide more than twice as much output and higher wages than in non-priority sectors.
- **Support business transformation to boost jobs growth & safeguard existing jobs:** Supporting even a return to the 2018/19 job growth rate of c.1% through effective business support in priority sectors alone would create 22,857 new jobs and safeguard 135,000 jobs over 5 years, using Government figures.

ARE THERE ANY LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY THAT YOU INTEND TO SUPPORT?

(If yes) Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible

As a result of LEP integration and institutional change, public and private partners across the region are repositioning business support in the West Midlands in accordance with the West Midlands Business Support Review. The Supporting Local Business investment priority will be a central plank of the cohesive, sustainable system advocated by the Review, including an integrated customer journey and core support offer to firms across the West Midlands, but with flexibility to respond to hyper-local needs and opportunities. There will also be a range of commissioned specialist programmes targeting shared priorities including decarbonisation, improving investment readiness of firms and supporting firms to grow by adopting new technologies and processes

ARE THERE ANY LOCAL CHALLENGES YOU FACE WHICH FALL UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY? (In Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland this should also include challenges relating to Multiply)

(If yes) Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible

The West Midlands has enormous economic potential, where the success of our region is critical to the success of the UK more widely. Prior to the pandemic we were the fastest growing region outside of London. This success was powered by a young and diverse population, a strong Higher Education base and many Good and Outstanding schools, colleges and training providers. We experienced growth in high value-added sectors, new investment and infrastructure, and a growing digital capability.

However, the region also faces long-standing challenges in relation to 'people and skills', including:

- **lower GVA per head** compared to national figures (£25.5k in the region compared to £30k nationally).
- **Relatively low employment and high unemployment**, particularly in some parts of the region.

- **Growing in-work poverty, driven by low wage levels** (average full-time wages in the WM 7 Met area are £2k lower than the national average).
- **Low skill levels in the population**, with fewer people qualified to Level 4+ (37% vs 43% UK) and more people with no qualifications (9.6% vs 6.6% UK) compared to other areas; 85% of residents are qualified to Level 1 (vs 88% UK), 72% to Level 2 (vs 78% UK) and 55% to Level 3 (vs 62% UK).
- **Persistent skills shortages** faced by employers; around 1 in 4 vacancies in the region are classed as 'hard to fill', particularly in roles that require advanced and/or higher skills
- **Lack of digital skills:** 56% of people in the West Midlands do not have the essential digital skills needed for work. As a result, the WM has the highest proportion of employers who say they find applicants with digital skills difficult to find (38%).
- **Uneven development and attainment by young people** through early years, primary, secondary and tertiary education and training (69% of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception, compared to 72% nationally in 2019).

More recently, the region was hit hard by Covid-19, with a high number of workers furloughed to the end of the scheme, alongside significant job losses and large numbers of benefit claimants. Young people and those from BME communities were hit hardest, particularly those who are less well qualified, and who live in areas with already high levels of unemployment and deprivation. While the economy has now begun to recover, this is uneven with a real risk that some places and people will be left behind. In particular, challenges remain in relation to:

- The **variability of recovery across the region**, across places, sectors and demographic characteristics. Recovery is slowest in areas with high levels of deprivation.
- A **high level of unfilled vacancies** reflecting where many businesses are struggling to fill roles due to labour market and skills shortages.
- **Pockets of high unemployment**, particularly among young people in some areas (Walsall, Sandwell, Wolverhampton)
- **Stubborn levels of long-term unemployment**, with 84,272 residents across the WMCA area claiming Universal Credit and Seeking Work, but who have been unemployed for 12+ months.
- **Economic inactivity**, with a growing number of older people and those with both short-term and long-term health conditions leaving the labour market.

ARE THERE ANY LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY THAT YOU INTEND TO SUPPORT? (In Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland this should also include challenges relating to Multiply)

(If yes) Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible

Within the 'people and skills' investment priority, we intend to predominantly focus on employment support interventions, recognising the particular challenges faced in each local area and the need to preserve and develop critical local infrastructure. We will also focus on supporting digital inclusion and developing the digital skills required to access employment and progress at work. We have chosen not to prioritise wider skills interventions within our UKSPF. Instead, we will use alternative skills funding available to the region (Adult Education Budget, National Skills Fund, Multiply), to reduce the demands on UKSPF whilst increasing our overall capacity to deliver skills and training that meet the needs of local residents and businesses.

Interventions

In this section, we will ask you about:

- Interventions you've chosen for each year of funding
- Outcomes you want to deliver
- Any interventions that are not listed here
- How these interventions fall under the UKSPF investment priorities, and your rationale for them
- Interventions not included in our list will be assessed before being approved, where you will need to show a clear rationale, how the intervention is value for money, what outcomes it will deliver and how you will monitor and evaluate the intervention. This may include a theory of change or logic chain.

WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES YOU WANT TO DELIVER UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

Outcome	Tick if applicable
<i>Note – this section will be updated when finalised expenditure and deliverables info is shared with us by LAs.</i>	
Jobs created	✓
Jobs safeguarded	✓
Increased footfall	✓
Increased visitor numbers	✓
Reduced vacancy rates	✓
Greenhouse gas reductions	✓
Improved perceived/experienced accessibility	✓
Improved perception of facilities/amenities	✓
Increased number of properties better protected from flooding and coastal erosion	✓
Increased users of facilities / amenities	✓
Improved perception of facility/infrastructure project	✓
Increased use of cycleways or paths	✓
Increase in Biodiversity	✓
Increased affordability of events/entry	✓
Improved perception of safety	✓
Reduction in neighbourhood crime	✓
Improved engagement numbers	✓
Improved perception of events	✓
Increased number of web searches for a place	✓
Volunteering numbers as a result of support	✓
Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support	✓
Increased take up of energy efficiency measures	✓
Increased number of projects arising from funded feasibility studies	✓
Number of premises with improved digital connectivity	✓
None of the above	

SELECT THE INTERVENTIONS YOU INTEND TO USE WHICH MEET THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY. YOU CAN SELECT AS MANY AS YOU LIKE.

E1: Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people, including capital spend and running costs.
E2: Funding for new, or improvements to existing, community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects including those that increase communities' resilience to natural hazards, such as flooding. This could cover capital spend and running costs.
E3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments, along with incorporating natural features into wider public spaces.
E5: Design and management of the built and landscaped environment to 'design out crime'.
E6: Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities.
E8: Funding for the development and promotion of wider campaigns which encourage people to visit and explore the local area.
E9: Funding for impactful volunteering and/or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places.
E11: Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.
E12: Investment in community engagement schemes to support community involvement in decision making in local regeneration.
E13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change.
E14: Funding to support relevant feasibility studies.
E15: Investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities.

DO YOU PLAN TO USE ANY INTERVENTIONS NOT INCLUDED IN THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE LIST?

State the name of each of these additional interventions and a brief description of each of these

We do not plan to use any interventions not included in the communities and place list.

Explain how each intervention meets the Communities and Place investment priority. Give evidence where possible, including why it is value money and the outcomes you want to deliver.

n/a

Do you consider that any of these interventions may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the intervention's planned activity?

All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).

Yes

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the intervention is a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

n/a

HAVE YOU ALREADY IDENTIFIED ANY PROJECTS WHICH FALL UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY?

Describe these projects, including how they fall under the Communities and Place investment priority and the location of the proposed project.

Specific projects under the communities and place investment priority have not yet been identified.

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?

All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).

Yes

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

n/a

WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES YOU WANT TO DELIVER UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

Outcome	Tick if applicable
Jobs created	✓
Jobs safeguarded	✓
Increased footfall	
Increased visitor numbers	
Reduced vacancy rates	✓
Greenhouse gas reductions	✓
Number of new businesses created	✓
Improved perception of markets	
Increased business sustainability	✓
Increased number of businesses supported	✓
Increased amount of investment	✓
Improved perception of attractions	
Number of businesses introducing new products to the firm	✓
Number of organisations engaged in new knowledge transfer activity	✓
Number of premises with improved digital connectivity	✓
Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes	✓
Number of new to market products	✓
Number of R&D active businesses	✓
Increased number of innovation active SMEs	✓
Number of businesses adopting new or improved products or services	✓
Increased number of innovation plans developed	✓

Number of early stage firms which increase their revenue following support	✓
Number of businesses engaged in new markets	✓
Number of businesses increasing their export capability	✓
Increased amount of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed	✓
Number of businesses with improved productivity	✓
Increased number of projects arising from funded feasibility studies	
Increased number of properties better protected from flooding and coastal erosion	
None of the above	

SELECT THE INTERVENTIONS YOU INTEND TO USE WHICH MEET THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY. YOU CAN SELECT AS MANY AS YOU LIKE.

E18: Supporting Made Smarter Adoption: Providing tailored expert advice, matched grants and leadership training to enable manufacturing SMEs to adopt industrial digital technology solutions including artificial intelligence; robotics and autonomous systems; additive manufacturing; industrial internet of things; virtual reality; data analytics. The support is proven to leverage high levels of private investment into technologies that drive growth, productivity, efficiency and resilience in manufacturing.

E19: Increasing investment in research and development at the local level. Investment to support the diffusion of innovation knowledge and activities. Support the commercialisation of ideas, encouraging collaboration and accelerating the path to market so that more ideas translate into industrial and commercial practices.

E20: Research and development grants supporting the development of innovative products and services.

E21: Funding for the development and support of appropriate innovation infrastructure at the local level.

E22: Investing in enterprise infrastructure and employment/innovation site development projects. This can help to unlock site development projects which will support growth in places.

E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems, and supporting businesses at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks.

E24: Funding for new and improvements to existing training hubs, business support offers, 'incubators' and 'accelerators' for local enterprise (including social enterprise) which can support entrepreneurs and start-ups through the early stages of development and growth by offering a combination of services including account management, advice, resources, training, coaching, mentorship and access to workspace.

E26: Support for growing the local social economy, including community businesses, cooperatives and social enterprises.

E27: Funding to develop angel investor networks nationwide.

E28: Export Grants to support businesses to grow their overseas trading, supporting local employment.

E29: Supporting decarbonisation and improving the natural environment whilst growing the local economy. Taking a whole systems approach to invest in infrastructure to deliver effective decarbonisation across energy, buildings and transport and beyond, in line with our legally binding climate target. Maximising existing or emerging local strengths in low carbon technologies, goods and services to take advantage of the growing global opportunity.

E30: Business support measures to drive employment growth, particularly in areas of higher unemployment.

DO YOU PLAN TO USE ANY INTERVENTIONS NOT INCLUDED IN THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS LIST?

State the name of each of these additional interventions and a brief description of each of these

We do not plan to use any interventions not included in the supporting local business list.

Explain how each intervention meets the Supporting Local Business investment priority. Give evidence where possible, including why it is value money and the outcomes you want to deliver.

n/a

Do you consider that any of these interventions may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the intervention's planned activity? All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as set out in the guidance.	
Yes	No
Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the intervention is a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.	
n/a	

HAVE YOU ALREADY IDENTIFIED ANY PROJECTS WHICH FALL UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?	
Describe these projects, including how they fall under the Supporting Local Business investment priority and the location of the proposed project.	
Specific projects under the supporting local business investment priority have not yet been identified.	
Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity? All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as set out in the guidance.	
Yes	No
Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.	
n/a	

WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES YOU WANT TO DELIVER UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.	
Outcome	Tick if applicable
<i>Note – this section will be updated when finalised expenditure and deliverables info is shared with us by LAs.</i>	
Number of economically inactive individuals in receipt of benefits they are entitled to following support	✓
Increased active or sustained participants of UKSPF beneficiaries in community groups [and/or] increased employability through development of interpersonal skills	✓
Increased proportion of participants with basic skills (English, maths, digital and ESOL)	✓
Number of people in supported employment [and] number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services	✓
Number of people sustaining engagement with keyworker support and additional services	✓
Number of people engaged in job-searching following support	✓
Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support	✓
Number of people sustaining employment for 6 months	✓
Increased employment, skills and/or UKSPF objectives incorporated into local area corporate governance	✓
Number of people in education/training	✓
Increased number of people with basic skills (English, maths, digital and ESOL)	✓
Fewer people facing structural barriers into employment and into skills provision	✓
Increased number of people familiarised with employers' expectations, including, standards of behaviour in the workplace	✓
Fewer people facing structural barriers into employment and into skills provision	✓
Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support	✓
Number of people gaining qualifications, licences, and skills	✓
Number of economically active individuals engaged in mainstream skills education, and training.	✓
Number of people engaged in life skills support following interventions	✓

Number of people with proficiency in pre-employment and interpersonal skills (relationship, organisational and anger-management, interviewing, CV and job application writing)	✓
Multiply only - Increased number of adults achieving maths qualifications up to, and including, Level 2.	
Multiply only - Increased number of adults participating in maths qualifications and courses up to, and including, Level 2.	
None of the above	

SELECT THE INTERVENTIONS YOU INTEND TO USE WHICH MEET THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY. YOU CAN SELECT AS MANY AS YOU LIKE.

E33: Employment support for economically inactive people: Intensive and wrap-around one-to-one support to move people closer towards mainstream provision and employment, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English, maths* and ESOL) support where there are local provision gaps.

E34: Courses including basic skills (digital, English, maths (via Multiply) and ESOL), and life skills and career skills** provision for people who are unable to access training through the adult education budget or wrap around support detailed above. Supplemented by financial support for learners to enrol onto courses and complete qualifications.

E35: Activities such as enrichment and volunteering to improve opportunities and promote wellbeing.

E36: Intervention to increase levels of digital inclusion, with a focus on essential digital skills, communicating the benefits of getting (safely) online, and in-community support to provide users with the confidence and trust to stay online.

E37: Tailored support to help people in employment, who are not supported by mainstream provision to address barriers to accessing education and training courses. This includes supporting the retention of groups who are likely to leave the labour market early.

E38: Support for local areas to fund local skills needs. This includes technical and vocational qualifications and courses up to level 2 and training for vocational licences relevant to local area needs and high-value qualifications where there is a need for additional skills capacity that is not being met through other provision.

E39: Green skills courses targeted around ensuring we have the skilled workforce to achieve the government's net zero and wider environmental ambitions.

E40: Retraining support for those in high carbon sectors.

E41: Funding to support local digital skills.

DO YOU PLAN TO USE ANY INTERVENTIONS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS LIST?

State the name of each of these additional interventions and a brief description of each of these

We do not plan to use any interventions not included in the people and skills list.

Explain how each intervention meets the People and Skills investment priority. Give evidence where possible, including why it is value money and the outcomes you want to deliver.

n/a

Do you consider that any of these interventions may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the intervention's planned activity?

All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).

Yes

No

Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the intervention is a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

n/a

ENGLAND ONLY: People and Skills interventions can only be used in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 if you have identified a local voluntary and community provision, previously supported by the

European Social Fund, at risk of closure. If you have not identified a suitable provision, you will not be able to select interventions for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 and your investment plan will not be approved.

HAVE YOU ALREADY IDENTIFIED ANY PROJECTS for 2024-2025 WHICH FALL UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?

Specific projects under the people and skills investment priority have not yet been identified.

Describe the projects for 2024-25, including how they fall under the People and Skills investment priority and the location of the proposed project.

n/a

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?

All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).

Yes	No
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Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

n/a

HAVE YOU IDENTIFIED A LOCAL VOLUNTARY PROVISION AT RISK AS PART OF YOUR PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITIES?

Yes	No
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(If Yes) Describe the local voluntary provision at risk and your rationale for supporting it.

Provide the European Social Fund Project Names and Project References for this voluntary and community provision at risk.

n/a

What year do you intend to fund these projects? Select all that apply.

2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
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Describe the projects for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, including how they fall under the People and Skills investment priority and the location of the proposed project.

n/a

Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?

All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).

Yes	No
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Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.

n/a

Approach to delivery and governance

In this section, we will ask you about:

- Structures you have in place to support delivery
- Support you have from stakeholders and the local community
- How you've engaged with MPs as part of your investment plan
- Opportunities you have identified to work with other places

Places need to show how MPs that cover the lead local authority have been engaged on the investment plan and whether they support it. More detail on the role of MPs can be found here.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Have you engaged with any of the following as part of your investment plan? Select all that apply.

Public sector organisations ✓	Private sector organisations ✓	Civil society organisations ✓
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Describe how you have engaged with any of these organisations. Give examples where possible.

In developing our UKSPF Investment Plan, we have engaged extensively with a wide range of stakeholders – from the public sector, private sector and civil society – across the WMCA area. We will continue to engage with stakeholders as we develop detailed project and implementation plans, and review these throughout the duration of the programme.

Engagement has taken place through:

- A series of bilateral meetings with officers and leaders from the 7 Local Authorities that comprise the WMCA area.
- Engagement with existing networks and groups – for example LA/LEP skills officers’ group, LA/LEP Employment and Skills Boards, Colleges West Midlands, WMCA/Universities check-in meetings, West Midlands Combined Universities, Regional Business Council, WMCA Economic Impact Group, VCS Chairs Group, WMCA Faith Strategic Partnerships Group, WMCA Cultural Officers Group
- Engagement with WMCA taskforces and commissions – including homelessness task force, race equalities task force, Young Combined Authority
- Presentations for and meetings with individual organisations and sub regional groups/networks, on request – for example Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- A series of interactive webinars – open to all stakeholders, with recordings made available for those unable to attend
- Dedicated [webpage](#) and [email address](#) providing a single source of information and contact for queries.

Summarise the governance structures you have in place, including how any advisory panels or associated partnership groups are made up

WMCA have robust processes in place through a Single Assurance Framework (SAF) to ensure programmes meet our corporate aims and objectives. Our SAF is a set of systems, processes and protocols designed to provide the Combined Authority with a consistent approach for appraisal, assurance, risk management and performance through the lifecycle of a programme. This includes processes for ensuring accountability, probity, transparency and legal compliance, and for ensuring value for money is achieved across investments. This high level UKSPF Investment Plan has been taken through this SAF process, providing initial internal assurance and oversight. As we move into detailed project planning and delivery, project businesses cases will be developed using the green book 5 case business model which will also go through this SAF approval process.

In addition to the SAF processes, oversight, implementation and monitoring of the WMCA UKSPF Investment Plan and delivery activity will be the responsibility of the WMCA Economic Growth Board. Representation on this Board includes the WMCA Mayor and Leaders of our 7 constituent Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnership Chairs, Chair of WM Innovation Board, Chair of WM Growth Company and representatives from Midlands TUC, WM Chambers of Commerce and the Higher Education sector. The UKSPF will be monitored through this Board throughout the delivery period.

WMCA have also established a UKSPF Local Partnership Group, with representation across a wide variety of sectors, stakeholders and partners, aligned to the guidance as set out in the UKSPF Prospectus. A first meeting of the Group was convened to consider the outline Investment Plan and a second meeting took place in October to provide sector input and subject matter expertise into our more detailed proposals. Contact details for all members of the Group are provided on the [WMCA UKSPF webpage](#), alongside the terms of reference for the group, clearly outlining its role in supporting development of the Investment Plan, strategic fit and deliverability. Clear processes have been established around declarations of conflicts of interest and how these are managed as part of this Group.

The West Midlands Combined Authority Board provide final approval to submission of the plan and will receive updates annually as the plan is refined and programme delivery commences.

Confirm all MPs covering your lead local authority have been invited to join the local partnership group.

Yes

No

We have written to MPs sharing our Investment Plan and offering individual meetings to discuss this. All MPs were also invited to an MP engagement group. Local Authorities have also engaged with their local MPs in developing local plans. We will continue to engage with MPs as the programme develops.	
Are there MPs who are not supportive of your investment plan?	
Yes	No
(If Yes) Who are the MPs that are not supportive and outline their reasons why.	

PROJECT SELECTION	
Are you intending to select projects in any way other than by competition for funding?	
Yes	No
(If Yes) Describe your approach to selecting projects, and why you intend to do it this way.	
<p>The WMCA UKSPF Investment Plan has been developed in collaboration with our 7 Local Authority partners, recognising their key strategic and delivery role at a local level, aligned to local need. Through our detailed project planning process, a proportion of WMCA UKSPF funding will be awarded to support projects at a local level delivered by our Local Authorities, with a clear focus on community and place interventions.</p> <p>In developing more detailed project plans aligned to the objectives and interventions set out in our Investment Plan, we have established a process for Local Authorities to profile deliverables, including local interventions, outputs, outcomes and costs. Through regular one to one meetings with our Local Authority partners we will consider proposals in more detail, ensuring they are deliverable, compliant and will achieve maximum benefits to the area and region. We are also exploring opportunities to align regional and local offers through other funding streams, including our devolved AEB and Multiply, whilst also identifying opportunities for local projects or programmes to be expanded to cover a wider WMCA geography.</p> <p>Whilst the investment plan brings our local and regional proposals together into a clear consistent regional offer, we have a clear understanding of specific local interventions, outputs and outcomes that will form this wider plan. We will work with local partners as they progress to implementation, ensuring any onward commissioning of delivery activity is compliant with the requirements set out in the UKSPF MoU/Funding Agreement that is issued to the WMCA.</p> <p>The higher level interventions, outputs and outcomes as set in this plan have been considered by a number of Boards and Groups, both within the WMCA Governance process but also at Local Authority levels. This includes our WMCA UKSPF Local Partnership Group, WMCA/LA Heads of Economic Development, WMCA Economic Growth Board, West Midlands WMCA/LA Finance Directors, through to final approval by our WMCA full Board.</p> <p>Following submission and approval of the WMCA UKSPF Investment Plan, and a requirement of our WMCA assurance processes, we will update our UKSPF Programme Business Case to provide further detail on delivery activity against the themes set out in the UKSPF prospectus, for approval by our SAF Investment Board, aligned to the Green Book 5 stage business case model (as set out in the governance structures above).</p> <p>We have established a process to consider/assess at-risk VCS projects and brought together Local Authority partners and WMCA officers to consider businesses cases and potential to support these going forward. Our Local Authority partners have made commitments to work closely with the VCS sector in their areas, in particular to support delivery of community and place interventions. Our Local Authorities have also reviewed projects that have operated across more than one LA area and are working collaboratively to identify approaches to continue to support these projects or to re-shape offers based on current and evolving economic circumstances, ensuring flexibility can be built into local offers to meet changing needs and demands.</p>	

The processes proposed above are subject to the Grant Funding Agreement issued by government. In addition to this, full account is being given to the Government Functional Standards 015: Grants, and the Cabinet Office Guidance for General Grants. We anticipate a mix of open and closed/restricted competitions throughout the lifecycle of the programme and have dedicated legal, procurement and assurance resources who will ensure processes are compliant and transparent.

DO YOU INTEND TO WORK WITH OTHER PLACES ON ANY OF THE INTERVENTIONS WHICH FALL UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY?

Which interventions do you intend to collaborate on? Select all that apply.

Intervention	Tick if applicable
<i>A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.</i>	
Describe any interventions not included in this list?	
n/a	
Who are the places you intend to collaborate with?	
We do not currently intend to work with other places on any of the interventions under the communities and place investment priority.	

DO YOU INTEND TO WORK WITH OTHER PLACES ON ANY OF THE INTERVENTIONS WHICH FALL UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?

Which interventions do you intend to collaborate on? Select all that apply.

Intervention	Tick if applicable
<i>A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.</i>	
Describe any interventions not included in this list?	
n/a	
Who are the places you intend to collaborate with?	
We have not identified specific interventions under the supporting local business investment priority where we intend to work with other places. However, we are keen to maintain relevant economic geographies where appropriate and will therefore review this as the programme develops.	

DO YOU INTEND TO WORK WITH OTHER PLACES ON ANY OF THE INTERVENTIONS WHICH FALL UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?

Which interventions do you intend to collaborate on? Select all that apply.

Intervention	Tick if applicable
<i>A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.</i>	
Describe any interventions not included in this list?	
n/a	
Who are the places you intend to collaborate with?	
We do not currently intend to work with other places on any of the interventions under the people and skills investment priority.	

PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

How have you considered your public sector equality duty in the design of your investment plan?

We have considered the public sector duty in the design of our investment plan, particularly with regards to stakeholder engagement and in the selection of our interventions and outcomes.

How will you consider your public sector equality duty when implementing your investment plan, including in the selection of projects?

Our investment plan outlines our high-level approach to UKSPF, and we have not yet identified specific projects. As we select projects, we will consider the public sector equality duty in line with the Equality Act 2010. In developing projects, we will set out information on equalities impact, identification of affected groups based on protected characteristics, and what, if any, measures have been identified in response to these impacts. This will enable us to ensure equality considerations shape the design of projects and appropriate mitigations are put in place. As we move into delivery, through our monitoring and evaluation processes we will seek supporting qualitative and quantitative data against these impacts, in order to review how these are being delivered and managed.

RISKS

Have you identified any key risks that could affect delivery, for example lack of staff or expertise?

Yes No

(If Yes) Describe these risks or issues, including the contingency measures you have in place to mitigate them.

This is a high-level UKSPF investment plan, with projects not yet fully detailed. As this activity progresses, we will closely work with all delivery partners to capture and monitor any specific project level risks. We will develop a risk register with contingency measures to mitigate risk at both project and programme level.

We have identified a number of programme-level risks that could affect delivery, associated with the inability to carry funds across financial years and the inability to invest in 'people and skills' until 24/25. These parameters and processes impose national restrictions in a way that prevents us from being agile and responsive and are counter to the principles of devolution. We have outlined these risks and our proposals for mitigation to DLUHC ministers and officials.

At a regional level we have identified a risk to spend for year 1 activity. Our rationale for this is based on the short delivery window the WMCA and delivery partners will have to mobilise and move into delivery for year 1 activity, particularly where onward commissioning activity is required. To mitigate this, we are engaged in ongoing dialogue with partners to re-check activity and delivery timescales, as well as working with regional and local finance directors to establish processes now to progress mobilisation of delivery activity as soon as the Plan is approved.

Have you identified any key fraud risks that could affect UKSPF delivery?

Yes No

(If Yes) Describe these risks or issues, including the contingency measures you have in place to mitigate them.

Controls are in place within WMCA to identify potential fraud risks; these are incorporated into assurance and appraisal processes aligned to project development, award and delivery stages. This includes an internal review to check organisations are eligible to receive funding including cross checks at companies' house where applicable. Where delivery leads are looking to sub-contract or work with delivery partners, we will require a full flow down of funding agreement terms and conditions to be put in place.

Contract monitoring processes will be put in place throughout the lifetime of the UKSPF programme, replicating processes we already have in place for the Adult Education Budget (AEB), Community Renewal Fund and other funding streams, including regular reporting on financials, performance and milestones. Payment schedules will be put in place with delivery leads, this will include a requirement for leads to submit financial claims and supporting evidence. These are checked by WMCA Finance Officers and submitted to a payments and performance board, chaired by our S151 Officer.

Capacity and capability

In this section, we will ask you about:

- The capacity and capability of your team to manage funding
- The resources you have in place for work related to UKSPF

Your answers here will help us know how to support you with delivery. They will not affect the amount of funding you will get.

Answer as honestly as possible.

TEAM RESOURCE
<p>How many people (FTE) will be put in place to work with UKSPF funding?</p> <p>A total of 6.5 employees will be employed by the WMCA to oversee the implementation, marketing and communications, monitoring and reporting, and refresh requirements for SPF. This does not include existing internal WMCA resources who provide guidance and support on assurance, compliance, finance, legal, procurement, and data requirements.</p> <p>Our 7 Local Authority partners will also receive an allocation from the 4% management fee, to support local monitoring, reporting and oversight working closely with the WMCA UKSPF Programme Team.</p> <p>In-kind support is also being provided by the WMCA and Local Authorities in order to develop proposals, engage with local providers, oversee and lead on governance requirements, reporting and briefings and provide full oversight of the programme as it is developed and once in delivery.</p>
<p>Describe what role these people will have, including any seniority and experience.</p> <p>The dedicated resources will support as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • x1 Senior Delivery Manager, UKSPF – Leading day to day operational and contractual delivery. To have full oversight of UKSPF projects including performance, risks and issues. To work with delivery leads to ensure successful delivery of projects, share lessons learned, best practise and support annual updates to WMCA UKSPF Investment Plan. To provide updates to respective Boards, Meetings, Group on SPF activity. • x1 UKSPF Monitoring and Evaluation Officer – To provide performance management and monitoring of projects/programmes. To include contract, performance and relationship management and programme compliance. • x2 UKSPF Project Officers – To lead and support on development and implementation of projects including assurance support, advice, guidance and support to delivery partners and monitoring and managing risks. To support UKSPF Partnership Group and other forums as required. • X0.5 Modelling and Forecasting Analyst – To provide data support in compiling UKSPF returns and analysis against targets/delivery. • X 1 Delivery Manager: Business Support – to lead on development, implementation and oversight of SPF related Business support interventions. • X 1 Delivery Manager (Cluster Leadership) - responsible for convening and commissioning business-led cluster activities, including driving innovation and connections across the clusters to maximise benefits and opportunities in these areas. • x1 Marketing and Communications Officer – Senior level role providing support to the WMCA and 7 Local Authority Partners in raising awareness, good news stories and other related marketing and communications activities as required. • Resource Support will also be in place across our 7 Local Authorities to work with the WMCA team as outlined above. Providing project management, monitoring and evaluation capability on local delivery activity.

- Strong capability: Has extensive experience and/or a proven track record of delivery in this area.
- Strong capacity: High degree of confidence that there is enough staffing/resource to manage funding in this area.
- Some capability: Has previous experience of delivery in this area.
- Some capacity: Confident that there is enough staffing/resource to manage funding in this area.

- Limited capability: Does not have previous experience and/or no track record of delivery in this area.
- Limited capacity: Limited confidence that there is enough staffing/resource to manage funding in this area. Additional resource may be needed to support delivery.

CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY		
How would you describe your team's current experience of delivering funding and managing growth funds?		
Very experienced	Some experience	No previous experience
How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for procurement?		
Strong capability	Some capability	Limited capability
How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for procurement?		
Strong capability	Some capability	Limited capability
How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for procurement?		
Strong capacity	Some capacity	Limited capacity
How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for subsidies?		
Strong capability	Some capability	Limited capability
How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for subsidies?		
Strong capacity	Some capacity	Limited capacity

COMMUNITIES AND PLACE CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY		
Does your local authority have any previous experience of delivering the Communities and Place interventions you have select?		
Yes	No	
How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for Communities and Place interventions?		
Strong capability	Some capability	Limited capability
Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering Communities and Place interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.		
n/a		
Describe what further support would help address these challenges.		
n/a		
How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for Communities and Place interventions?		
Strong capability	Some capability	Limited capability
Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering Communities and Place interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.		
n/a		
Describe what further support would help address these challenges.		
n/a		

SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY		
Does your local authority have any previous experience of delivering the Supporting Local Business interventions you have select?		
Yes	No	
How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for Supporting Local Business interventions?		
Strong capability	Some capability	Limited capability
Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering Supporting Local Business interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.		

As a result of LEP integration and BEIS' decision to reduce funding to Growth Hubs by 50%, partners across the West Midlands are establishing the shape and structure of a future cohesive business support system that is co-designed and commissioned regionally, with local delivery. The West Midlands Business support review sets the vision direction, with the WMCA's Economic Growth Board taking on new decision-making responsibility. The challenges include the system's agility to work alongside private sector provision to meet changing business needs such as energy costs and changing market needs.

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

Clear positions from Government about the structure and funding of business support activities, including the position on Growth Hubs, national programmes like Help to Grow and the local interface with national agencies like British Business Bank and HMRC.

How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for Supporting Local Business interventions?

Strong capability	Some capability	Limited capability
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Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering Supporting Local Business interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.

n/a

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

n/a

PEOPLE AND SKILLS CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

Does your local authority have any previous experience of delivering the People and Skills interventions you have select?

Yes	No
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How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for People and Skills interventions?

Strong capability	Some capability	Limited capability
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Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering People and Skills interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.

n/a

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

n/a

How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for People and Skills interventions?

Strong capability	Some capability	Limited capability
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Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering People and Skills interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.

n/a

Describe what further support would help address these challenges.

n/a

SUPPORT TO DELIVERY UKSPF

All lead authorities can use up to 4% of their UKSPF allocation to support the delivery of their chosen interventions but by exception, lead authorities will be able to use more than 4%. Are you planning to use more than 4%?

Yes	No
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(If Yes) Explain why you wish to use more than 4%.

n/a

Approvals

Before submitting your investment plan, you should have approval from your:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Section 151 Officer
- Leader of your lead authority

Do you have approval from your Chief Executive Officer for this investment plan?

- Yes
- ~~No~~

Do you have approval from your Section 151 Officer for this investment plan?

- Yes
- ~~No~~

Do you have approval from the leader of your lead authority for this investment plan?

- Yes
- ~~No~~

If you do not have approval from any of these people, please explain why this is:

n/a

Additional documents

You will have received an email giving you access to a folder where you will need to upload supporting evidence to your investment plan. All applicants must complete and upload the following spreadsheet to the folder prior to submitting their investment plan:

- UKSPF Expenditure Profile spreadsheet
- UKSPF Indicative Deliverables spreadsheet

Your investment plan submission will be considered incomplete without the required documents.

Have you completed and uploaded the two spreadsheets to the SharePoint folder as requested?

- Yes
- ~~No~~