

AMBITIOUS

CREATIVE

COLLABORATIVE

SUPPORTIVE

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:	Project Manager (Recovery Fund Initiatives)
MANAGED BY:	People & Skills Programme Manager
GRADE:	Grade 11

BACKGROUND

The Employer: The West of England Combined Authority (WECA)

The West of England is an economic leader with an economy worth over £33 billion a year. With a population of over 1.1 million people, one of the highest rates of employment in the country, and over 45,000 businesses, the region competes on a global scale. The West of England is a place where highly-skilled people work, where ideas flourish, and where businesses grow. It's also a place that a diverse population of people call home.

The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) was formed in 2017, to champion the region and drive clean and inclusive economic growth. As a result, significant powers and funding have been transferred to the region through the new Combined Authority and West of England Mayor.

Our aim is to deliver economic growth for the region and address some of our challenges, such as productivity and skills, housing and transport.

Covid-19 has had a big impact on the West of England, and we are leading the regional economic recovery, bringing people together to ensure our region remains a thriving, successful and innovative place to live and work. By joining WECA, you will be helping us with this important work.

WECA is made up of three of the local authorities in the region - Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire. Building on a strong track record of partnership working in the region, the West of England Combined Authority continues to work closely with North Somerset Council. The Combined Authority also the accountable body for the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership.

WECA is an equal opportunities employer, in line with the Equalities Act 2010, and invite applicants to contact us to identify any additional support they may need during the recruitment process.

PURPOSE OF THE JOB

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought real and significant challenges to our region's people and economy. While the government's furlough scheme has protected jobs, we know that the real impact of the economic downturn has yet to be felt. Unemployment is already growing in some sections of our community and amongst certain groups, residents are facing career changes as a result of shrinking sectors within our economy and those that were disadvantaged before Covid are now facing even greater disadvantage and have become more vulnerable. WECA needs to ensure that these individuals are not left isolated and unable to access the range of support programmes available to help them.

The People and Skills Service 'Employment and Skills Plan' sets out our vision for inclusive growth: ensuring our young people can access the support and opportunities they need to do well; ensuring those in work know how to improve their positions or progress; ensuring adults with lower or no skills can access the training and qualifications they need; and ensuring our employers are able to recruit and plan for their staffing needs in order to thrive. Our plan remains vitally important and relevant, and supported by WECA's Recovery Plans and the additional funds that have been secured, we can now do even more to put new projects in place to support our residents.

The main purpose of this post is to take the lead in delivering a number of new initiatives that have been enabled by the Recovery Funds. The two initial projects are the Community Recovery Fund and the Digital Skills Project.

This will entail a high level of project management and coordination in order to ensure not only the robust, appropriate and smooth initiation and implementation of these projects, but a very high level of alignment of these initiatives with all the services and projects being delivered by WECA and its partners across the region.

The postholder will need to ensure that the projects deliver the outputs, outcomes and benefits that are needed, while managing funding rounds, transparent assessment and governance processes, risks and issues, budget and delivery timeframes. The postholder will need to maintain strong communications about the projects and will work as part of the collaborative and supportive People & Skills Team and wider Skills Officer Group, to ensure that these projects form part of our 'system' approach under development. This role will demand a high level of autonomy as well as team work.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Manage approx. £3 million budget across the two initiatives: Community Recovery Fund and the Digital Skills Project working with WECA Business and Skills, Finance, Procurement, Legal, IT, Information Governance, Audit, Infrastructure, Policy and Strategy and Communications teams to plan, set up, deliver and report on the funded delivery, including reallocation of funding if required
- Integrate the initiatives into Employment & Skills and WECA strategy, objectives and policies: promoting inclusive growth, supporting residents holistically to overcome barriers to career progression, promoting good practice amongst employers and linking employment support to business needs
- Establish a strong working relationship with the chosen Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Partner, ensuring that delivery is in line with project outcomes, that a strong working relationship between the Local Authorities designated Point of Contact, WECA and VCS partner is established and maintained, any risks or issues are flagged, appropriate links to other services are made and that all monitoring and evaluation requirements are met.
- Manage and negotiate funding contracts between WECA and the projects funded under the relevant initiatives, overseeing grant funding agreements with local delivery partners, managing grant claims
- Manage funding rounds, coordinate the Assessment Panel meetings (including minutes and paperwork) bids and proposals, and ensure that thorough evaluation takes place according to WECA procedures. Manage the establishment of all processes from project launch through to successful conclusion
- Establish project governance, chair strategic, operational and evaluation project boards, and present reports to Senior Management Boards and Scrutiny Committee. Write supporting reports, updates or other documentation required for the successful scrutiny of delivery (including Recovery Fund Updates, Skills Officer Updates, People & Skills Updates and regular monitoring and evaluation reporting etc)
- Set strategy for delivery, training, evaluation, communications and sustainability, ensuring delivery aligns with current and future WECA priorities
- Design bespoke multi-project database or other systems for comprehensive monitoring and evaluation and to maintain records of budget, forecast and spend
- Develop clear and consistent branding for the projects, aligned with WECA values, building project website(s) if required or to ensure that information is prepared and maintained in a timely manner for the WECA website. To liaise with Communications colleagues, the P&S Programme Manager and Head of Service to ensure coordination of communications with overarching P&S comms strategy
- Build successful collaborative relationships with delivery partners, which may include spending time at each of the Local Authorities to ensure close working with their own Community Teams. Manage and support performance and where necessary address underperformance. This will be particularly required for the Community Recovery Fund where a single external organisation is likely to be delivering to WECA and Local Authority requirements

- Ensure that the projects funded are embedded into a skills 'system' and that all funded partners, projects and key stakeholders are aware of the wider support available. Act as a central link to signpost onto other key programmes and provision (inc Workforce for the Future, Future Bright, Careers Hub, AEB provision, other Recovery Fund projects, Employability & Skills Portal and Local Authority provision/service) as a key requirement of the CRF project(s) is to ensure that residents progress and move onto further training or employment and secure sustained outcomes. This will require a strong understanding of the provision available and ensuring this is regularly communicated.
- Identify where projects which may not be suitable for CRF or Digital Skills may be picked up by other programmes either funded by WECA, Local Authorities or other strategic partners. Facilitate the appropriate introductions and referrals.
- Develop network of referrers and stakeholders, working with CEOs and senior management, and participating in regional or national fora to represent the projects and share best practice and lessons learned
- Develop a sustainable delivery model and produce robust evaluations to inform the business case for continuing delivery, including identifying funding partners, for the long-term benefit of residents and employers of the West of England

PERSON SPECIFICATION

ESSENTIAL (MUST HAVE)

Qualifications and Knowledge

- Degree level or equivalent qualification in project management
- Knowledge and understanding of the issues and barriers faced by disadvantaged residents, and those seeking to upskill, in light of recent events

Experience

- Proven experience of successfully leading and managing complex and challenging initiatives to their conclusion.
- Experience and proven achievement of working with a range of organisations or clients, building effective working relationships and working across differing groups and project managing, co-ordinating work programmes or projects
- Proven experience of being able to persuade and influence partners and stakeholders
- Proven experience of successfully managing project finances and payments to partner organisations including grant funding agreements

Skills and Competencies

- Ability to develop partnerships with a range of different organisations and stakeholders
- Demonstrable ability to undertake critical analysis to identify challenges stopping the project succeeding and thinking creatively/innovatively to generate related solutions
- Team working skills
- Ability to self manage and motivate, with ability to prioritise workload to achieve desired outcomes and meet deadlines
- Ability to assimilate new information quickly and accurately as part of a team along with analytical thinking

- Good working knowledge of IT and ability to learn new systems
- Ability to chair or manage meetings with a sense of ownership and responsibility
- Good organisation skills and ability to promote an organised working environment
- Ability to write reports and present information to a variety of audience
- Can do, flexible attitude focused on delivering results in a positive and supportive way
- Must be willing to undertake travel across the WECA area and to work in a variety of locations on a regular basis.

DESIRABLE

Qualifications and Knowledge

Understanding of relevant local and national policy relating to skills and economic development

Experience

Experience in a project management role managing people focused results

Skills and Competencies

REWARDS AND BENEFITS

WECA staff receive:

- 25 days annual leave, rising to 30 after five years' continuous service, plus bank holidays, pro rata
- Auto-enrolment into the Avon Pension Fund
- Cycle to work scheme and secure bike parking
- Free eye tests for all display screen equipment (DSE) users
- Commuter Travel Club - WECA employees can sign up to receive discounted monthly bus tickets, unlimited bus travel for work or leisure within your chosen zone, automatic ticket renewal and price freeze for 12 months.