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West Midlands
Combined Authority

**WEST MIDLANDS
COMBINED AUTHORITY
CONSTRUCTION GATEWAY
(DPS14)
OPERATIONAL PLAN**

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1. Purpose

This document has been created to assist providers in effectively delivering Skills Programme funding provided by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). It outlines the conditions and expectations for appropriate spending on the Construction Gateway (DPS14) contract.

This operational plan should be read alongside your contract agreement, and the guidance documents listed in Annex A, which provide additional information on programme management, monitoring, and control requirements.

All information, including any hyperlinks, was correct at the time of publishing. Providers should note that funding guidance will be updated yearly in line with the academic year (August- July). The WMCA reserves the right to make changes to this document and associated funding rules, throughout the academic year and will publish any updated versions on the WMCA website. It is your responsibility to ensure that you regularly visit the [WMCA website](#) and comply with the current version of this document.

2. Understanding the terminology

The terms 'WMCA', "Our" "Us", and "We "refer to the West Midlands Combined Authority.

When WMCA refers to 'You', "Your" or 'Providers', this includes but is not limited to Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, Contract for Services including Independent Training Providers, voluntary community sector providers and Local Authorities who receive funding from Us to deliver Skills programmes and training to WMCA residents.

WMCA will use the generic terms 'You', "Your" or 'Provider' unless the requirements only apply to a specific provider type.

We use the term 'Agreement' to include:

- conditions of funding (grant).
- grant funding agreement/grant agreement.
- contract for services

We use the terms 'resident' and 'learner' to cover the individuals who are receiving services funded by Us.

3. Background

The construction sector in the West Midlands employs over 200,000 people and contributes £7.8 billion GVA. To address skills demand, and take advantage of these opportunities, it is imperative that we fund quality provision and training programmes related to these opportunities. The key challenges that we need to be able to help address through training include:

- Skills shortages, namely professional services in construction, plant operatives, traditional/wet trades, and emerging trades such as steel erection, concrete formwork, dry lining, and modern methods of construction.
- An additional 50,000 staff are required in the construction sector to meet the demands of planned developments.
- Shortage of women in the construction sector, particularly in the aforementioned four key shortage areas.
- Shortage of disadvantaged groups in the future workforce, including ex-offenders, care leavers, Global Majority and residents with disabilities.

4. Contract Overview

The core focus of the Construction Gateway is to provide residents with the skills and knowledge required through industry-standard outcomes e.g., the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) and work with employers who will shape the training content and provide job vacancies for residents to be matched into

Construction Gateway is designed to support unemployed and underemployed residents, including those in part-time contracts, zero-hour contracts, self-employed and inactive. Including those in work without basic skills, and sections of the community who suffer from inequality in the workplace, for example, disabled residents.

In line with the specification, Providers must have the capacity and capability to deliver a good quality, rounded training offer that will increase Skills, Knowledge and support progression, aligned to labour market needs and sector plans.

The content of the delivery should be influenced by employers to enable the progression into employment and each resident, should be linked to a job vacancy, which they will have the opportunity to be matched against through an interview.

Delivery will follow a 3-phased approach and will be supported by wrap-around support. All of which, is set out and agreed upon in the delivery plan, at the beginning of each contract year.

A full overview of the phase requirements is set out within the specification and further details are listed in the [Skills Programme Funding rules](#). The coding requirements are set out in the [Skills Programme Coding Guidance](#).

5. Priority Wards

Providers should ensure they meet the requirements of the contract, in ensuring that at least 70% of the learners enrolled are from the priority wards outlined in the specification and listed below;

Birmingham & Solihull

Priority wards in Birmingham:

Alum Rock, Glebe Farm & Tile Cross, Small Heath, Bromford & Hodge Hill, Heartlands, Ward End, Sheldon, Shard End, Yardley West & Stechford, Yardley East, South Yardley, Tyseley & Hay Mills,

Balsall Heath West, Garretts Green.

Stockland Green, Kingstanding, Perry Barr, Perry Common, Oscott, Pype Hayes, Castle Vale, Bordesley & Highgate, Gravelly Hill.

North Edgbaston, Handsworth, Holyhead, Newtown.

Frankley Great Park, Rubery & Rednal, Longbridge & West Heath, Allens Cross, King's Norton North, King's Norton South, Highter's Heath, Druids Heath & Monyhull, Hall Green North, Weoley & Selly Oak.

Priority wards in Solihull:

Chelmsley Wood, Smith's Wood, Kingshurst and Fordbridge. Lyndon, Bickenhill, Castle Bromwich

Coventry - Priority wards:

Foleshill, Lower Stoke, Radford, Henley, Upper Stoke, Westwood, Wyken, Woodlands, Sherbourne, Bablake, Cheylesmore

Dudley - Priority wards:

Belle Vale, Brierley Hill, Brockmoor and Pensnett, Castle and Priory

Coseley East, Cradley and Wollescote, Gornal, Halesowen North

Lye and Stourbridge North, Netherton, Woodside and St Andrews, Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood, St James's, St Thomas's, Upper Gornal and Woodsetton

Sandwell - Priority wards:

Due to the high number of adults in working age who have no or low-level qualifications, all wards in Sandwell are a priority.

Walsall - Priority wards:

Pleck, Blakenall, Palfrey, Birchills Leamore, Willenhall South, Darlaston South, St Matthew's, Bentley and Darlaston North, Bloxwich East, Bloxwich West, Brownhills, Willenhall North, Short Heath, Rushall-Shelfield, Aldridge North and Walsall Wood, Pelsall

Wolverhampton - Priority wards:

Bushbury South and Low, Hill, Bilston East, Ettingshall, St Peter's, Heath Town, East Park, Blakenhall, Graseley, Bilston North, Fallings Park, Spring Vale, Park, Wednesfield South, Wednesfield North, Oxley, Bushbury North.

6. Outputs and Outcomes

As outlined in line the specification, providers will set out their planned outputs and outcomes in the delivery plan, these should be in line with the minimum requirements as set out below. Providers should note, they will be monitored as part of the performance management process.

Outputs

- Achievement rate of those starting an accredited qualification should be at least 5% above the National Benchmark for the specific qualification.
- A minimum of 65% of adults who start as unemployed, progress into employment and sustaining employment within 3 months of completion.
- All learners who have not successfully progressed into sustainable employment to receive additional IAG, mentoring and/or coaching to support them in sustainable employment or further learning
- Evidence of sustainable employment within 3 months of finishing the programme.
- 65% of adults who started as employed achieve one or more of the in-work progression outcomes:
 - Increased salary
 - Increased hours
 - Promotion

Outcomes

- Number of learners successfully completing the learning programme
- Number of adults participating and completing a Phase 1 pathway, progressing onto the Phase 2 pathway

- Number of learners provided with additional wrap-around support elements (such as mentoring/coaching/etc.) that have been successful in securing sustainable employment after receiving the mentoring/coaching/etc.
- Number of learners that have successfully progressed into sustainable employment, enrolled on further vocational pathway provision (Phase 3).
- Numbers of learners enrolled on further vocational pathway provision successfully progressing in work (e.g. increased salary, increased hours, promotion).

7. Data collection and validation

As a provider, you must have the capacity and capability for accurate data and evidence collection, management, and reporting, and must be able to comply with the submission requirements of the WMCA and external funding agencies such as DfE and the ESFA. This will include but is not limited to, the ILR or Earnings Adjustment Statement (EAS) and any associated evidence.

It is a requirement of WMCA that data is submitted monthly. Where you do not intend to submit a return for any reason, please notify your WMCA contact.

Guidance on the requirements of data submission and how to submit data will be covered in the [Payment and Performance Management rules](#) and the [Coding Guidance](#). Please ensure you refer to these documents and meet the requirements set out.

8. Performance Monitoring

To ensure the success of your contract, we will support, develop, and maintain effective working relationships with all delivery partners, encouraging collaboration and consistency of delivery, and the sharing of best practices and lessons learnt through regular engagement with partners and stakeholders.

At the centre of our Provider Management approach is the delivery plan, which we agree with providers at the beginning of each contract year. The delivery plan once agreed upon, will form the basis of monitoring and performance management throughout the year. Any over-delivery or delivery outside the agreed delivery plan will not be funded, in line with our [Skills Programme Payment & Performance Management Framework](#).

Performance monitoring will take place throughout the year using risk-based RAG rating obligations criteria as set in the services agreements related to quality assurance and raising standards.

Contract reviews

Your allocated Skills Delivery Officer will meet with you regularly, to review delivery activity, which may include.

- Performance against the contract, including current deliverables, risks, and agreed priorities.
- Future intent, such as innovative provision and stakeholder engagement plans.
- Contribution towards organizational aims and objectives.
- Progression against set outcomes, forecasted outcomes, and quality checks.
- Quality, Ofsted outcomes, learner feedback, and audit/compliance

These meetings may take place virtually or face-to-face. Notes and actions from these meetings will be captured and shared with attendees.

9. Performance Management Reviews

The expectation is for formal performance management reviews to take place up to three times a year. Should the provider be classed as [high risk](#), then the WMCA reserves the right to change the performance management arrangements it has with you.

Performance reviews will be conducted by your Skills Delivery Officer and Relationship Manager (where applicable) Reviews may include, but are not limited to, performance, quality, delivery, finance, compliance, and your overall progress against your delivery plan and impact.

For more information on the PMR process, please refer to the [Payment and Performance Management rules](#).

10. Escalation and intervention

Should you fail to meet the requirements and obligations arising from your contractual agreement, the WMCA may take appropriate informal/formal action against you as required. This involves a three-stage approach which is set out within our [Payment and Performance Management rules](#) and in the Minimum Standards section of your contract.

11. Funding

Funding is provided for the sole purpose of delivering the Construction Gateway (DPS14) as detailed in your contract.

In line with the awarded specification, we reserve the right to extend contracts in line with the contractual terms. Allocations will be awarded yearly, based on performance and funding availability.

Providers should ensure that budgets are managed within the agreed contractual timeframe. Allocation and funding cannot be carried forward from one year to the next.

Providers will need to issue a delivery plan and financial profile. At key funding review points, we reserve the right to recover funds where underperformance against the

delivery plan/financial profile is a significant concern. The tolerances at key performance points are set out within the [Payment and performance management rules](#).

12. Significant Provider change

Throughout the Contract Period, providers are required to notify WMCA of any new or emerging, Quality Standards which could affect the provision of Services.

The majority of these may be minor and can be made through updating your contact to action the amendment. However, there are instances where a review of the provider risk may need to take place in relation to any specific structural changes and may need to be considered through the schemes of delegation related to financial and delivery risk.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Changed to any service which has been agreed in accordance with the specific contract requirements and any tender document submitted. (See [contract variation](#))
- Changes which impact its ability to meet the due diligence or financial health/required standards, including but not limited to.
 - a material deterioration in its financial position or prospects
 - suspected fraud or any other impropriety
 - financial irregularity in the delivery of the Contract
- Issues with Supply chain partnerships, including that your organisation may as a result be required to terminate the contract.
- Sanction/s from an awarding body
- Events which may affect the provider's ability to meet its obligations.
- Actual or potential non-compliance with Data Protection
- Safeguarding issues
- Changes in the company name (notification to be received - 1 month before the change)
- Change of legal status organisation or ownership (structural) – (notification to be received - 12 weeks before the change)
- Key staff change in overall responsibility of the organisation (structural) – (notification to be received - 12 weeks before the change)
- New CEO or Principal.
- Change of bank details – (notification to be received - 1 month before the change)
- Change of main contact person

Providers should ensure these are reported in a suitable timeframe for review and consideration.

13. Contract variations

Providers must not make any changes to the programme or the information contained within the programme delivery plan, without initially consulting with the WMCA.

Through the lifecycle of the contract agreements, and to support our skills portfolio, there may be a need to vary contracts held at the provider level. There are several reasons, including but not limited to changes to the scope of the programme, changes to expenditure and financial profiles or variations to volumes of outcomes and outputs.

Contract variations will need to be formalised through a [Business case](#). Contract variations will be reviewed in line with the [Business case process](#). We will confirm the outcome in the timeframes listed in the [Business case process](#). Please note: that over-delivery or delivery outside the agreed delivery plan will not be funded.

14. Payments

The WMCA will run the BACS payments on the 15th working day of each month. You must ensure that you have cash flow available to accommodate these payment terms.

Contract for Services Providers will receive payment based on actual delivery, paid monthly in arrears. You will be advised in writing in advance of any in-year changes being made to the value of your Contract.

WMCA reserves the right to cease payments, should you be in breach of your contract terms.

The normal payment timeline is shown below: however, please ensure you refer to the [Payment and Performance Management Rules](#).

Day of month	Action
Workday 4	Provider submits ILR to ESFA
Workday 5	ESFA runs validation checks
Workday 6	WMCA receives occupancy report
7 – Workday 14	WMCA checks the accuracy of returns
Workday 15	WMCA Bacs run to providers

Providers must ensure that data is updated regularly to ensure overpayments are minimised.

Please note; that to minimise overpayments and reconciliation, R13 payments will be withheld while the provider data cleanses end-of-year claims. Any remaining monies owed to a provider will be paid at R14, additionally, overpayments will be reconciled as part of the R14 reconciliation.

15. Financial due diligence

Financial health will be tested regularly to gain some assurance that providers are financially resilient. Financial tests will enable us to be able to identify and address the

potential risk of failure. We will work collaboratively with providers and put in place, where required, early intervention to ensure delivery remains viable.

It is mandatory for all providers to submit the information requested by the deadlines provided. More information on the Financial Due Diligence and Financial Health Monitoring for Independent Training Providers (ITPs) can be found [here](#).

16. Audit and Risk Assurance

Financial handbook

To support assurance, we will adopt the ESFA financial handbook conditions and approach for the 2024/25 contract year. Contract for service providers will be expected to ensure they meet the requirements set out in the handbook.

Where appropriate, the handbook provides guidance on the required obligations under the following sections.

- governance
- financial management and oversight
- assurance

Please refer to the [Financial Handbook](#) for more information on these requirements.

17. Quality and Standards

As part of our assurance work, the WMCA will be monitoring the data you submit. To gain assurance, the WMCA will undertake regular reviews of all providers in line with the [Quality and Standard Framework](#).

Reviews will include, but not be limited to:

- Systems and processes
- ILR Data
- EAS submission
- Sample check of learner files
- Sub-contracting arrangements
- Other contractual requirements

To provide further assurance, the WMCA may use the services of external suppliers to undertake field-based activity as part of our annual assurance programme of work, comprising funding compliance audits and targeted thematic funding assurance reviews.

Please refer to the [Quality and Standard Framework](#) for more information on the quality assurance processes and requirements.

18. Operation Model

Providers are required to have in place a robust and effective Operating Model.

This should include but not be limited to:

- A Quality Assurance Framework and a Quality Improvement Cycle driven by the necessary staff structures with relevant professional expertise.
- Evidence of continuous improvement, informed by data insights, learner voice and feedback from key stakeholders to deliver strong outcomes for learners.
- A well-sequenced curriculum with a clear intent and supported by effective Schemes of Work to ensure learners achieve the programme's goals and the provider makes a positive impact on the community they serve.
- Effective mechanisms, processes and tools to support individualised learning with the provision of Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance throughout the learner journey, and to ensure learners achieve their individual goals to the best of their ability.
- Effective marketing and communications systems, capable of identifying and penetrating underserved areas in the locality where the provider operates.
- Effective [policies and processes](#) to support and reinforce expectations of residents, staff and supply chain partners. This includes but is not limited to; Supply chain policy, whistleblowing and complaints, and safeguarding.

19. Ofsted

Providers will have the primary responsibility for improving standards and will need to demonstrate to the WMCA satisfaction that it has an effective quality assurance system based on the implementation of its quality improvement process.

Providers should continuously seek to improve the Services and raise standards to benefit residents. As part of our [Quality and Standards Framework](#), we reserve the right, to ask for evidence to support the quality improvement processes.

Ofsted may, at any time, undertake an inspection of the Provider. When the provider receives notification from Ofsted that the Services are to be inspected, the provider shall on request, provide the WMCA with details of its quality improvement activity, and any other relevant information in accordance with the required timescale of Ofsted.

The Provider must notify the WMCA of the date of the meeting at which Ofsted will give feedback on the inspection and allow the WMCA's nominated representative to attend the meeting or; confirm to the WMCA in writing the outcome of the inspection within 5 working days of receiving the feedback from Ofsted.

Please refer to the [Payments and Performance Management Rule](#) for more information on the requirements and process.

20. Branding and Publicity

At WMCA, we believe in the power of collaboration and collective impact. As a testament to our commitment to our partnership, we require you to display our logo and our funding partner's logo prominently on your platforms. This signifies your affiliation with the West Midlands Combined Authority and other funding partners.

We understand that each training provider may also need to feature other logos based on the specific programmes you deliver.

Where to use our logo

- Website: Include our logo and hyperlink it to <https://wmca.org.uk> on web pages mentioning funded courses.
- Printed material: Add our logo to printed materials like flyers and banners
- Social media: Tag us in posts about funded courses and use our logo in paid campaigns if including other logos.
- Press releases: Seek approval from our media team for press releases and send any materials with our logo for approval to brand@wmca.org.uk.

Relevant logo assets can be found linked [here](#)

21. Policies, Due Diligence and Data Protection

WMCA require providers to apply proportional due diligence across all aspects of Skills programmes and comply with Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and Public Sector Equalities Duty, ensuring that you comply with legislation to ensure individuals' safety and well-being, equal treatment and access to provision and correct handling of data and information.

Each provider will be expected to ensure they have in place evidence in the form of policies, which may from time to time be required for audit and compliance purposes to WMCA.

- Policies that will be required are listed but not limited to:
 - Safeguarding,
 - Prevent,
 - Health and Safety,
 - Equality and Diversity,
 - GDPR and document retention,
 - Data Protection,
 - Freedom of Information and Whistleblowing,

- Complaints and Appeals,
- IAG Policy,
- Safer Recruitment Policy,
- Indemnity Insurance,
- Intellectual Property,
- Supply chain policy

Providers will also be required to provide project risk registers that are kept up-to-date and demonstrate identified risks, mitigations, actions, and improvements across all elements of the projects.

Further details of the requirements around intellectual property, confidentiality, data protection and freedom of information are detailed in your contract.

22. Whistleblowing and Complaints

Providers, and where appropriate sub-contractors and/or supply chain members, must ensure that all applicants, learners, and staff are aware of the [Whistleblowing](#) and [Complaints](#) policies and processes

Providers should ensure this information is passed on to residents.

23. Procurement, Subcontracting and Supply Chain

The WMCA considers the term 'supply chain delivery member' to encompass all third-party arrangements you may have with other organisations, where they are managing and delivering a proportion of your WMCA delivery plan - this encompasses 'learner find' services, job placement services as well as any delivery of teaching, learning or assessment.

As part of the yearly delivery plan process, a declaration of supply chain information and values will be requested. A letter of approval will be sent confirming our agreements, where applicable.

You cannot enter into a supply chain relationship without the express written agreement of the WMCA at any point in the year.

If providers intend to source, through procurement or otherwise, additional supply chain members, then the WMCA must be notified in advance of the publication of the procurement opportunity. We would want to understand particularly how this provision would enhance the offer to residents and see alignment with the [WMCA Regional Skills Plan](#) priorities.

For full details on our Supply Chain rules, please refer to the Skills Programme [Supply chain rules](#).

24. Impact and Evaluation

The WMCA has commissioned a regional project-wide evaluation, and we will be keen to learn, what works well in our region and how your activity has supported and delivered against the outcomes and outputs.

We are keen to bring projects together to share learning and experiences whilst also providing an opportunity for you to feedback on processes that have been put in place to support you to help us shape future similar activity. As part of this process, the evaluation team will collaborate with providers, stakeholders, and learners to ensure that we gather all feedback.

We will also require the collection of case studies, which will form part of the monitoring return. Your Skills Delivery Officer will work with you on examples of case studies and collaborate on marketing and communication opportunities, however, we welcome you to submit case studies via our portal, which can be found linked [here](#).

25. Key Contacts

General enquiries: Skillsprogrammes@wmca.org.uk
Data Enquiries: AEBDataReturns@wmca.org.uk
Quality and Standard: Qualityandstandards@wmca.org.uk

26. Associated Documents and Links

Providers need to ensure that the learner's eligibility is based on the start date of their learning programme. Providers should verify that they are using the correct version of the Funding rules by checking the WMCA website.

- [WMCA website](#)
- [WMCA Skills Programme Funding Rules](#) – please refer to the website for the latest version.
- [Skills ILR coding guidance](#) – please refer to the website for the latest version.
- [Payment and Performance Management Framework](#) – please refer to the website for the latest version.
- [Supply Chain funding rules](#) – please refer to the website for the latest version.
- [Postcode checker](#)
- [How to return monthly individualised learner record \(ILR\)](#)
- [ILR Learner Entry Tool](#)
- [Set up your ILR and collect data with the Learner Entry Tool](#)
- [Submit Learner Data known issues](#)
- [ESFA business operations: help and support](#)
- [How to register on the Learning Records Service - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- [Find a learning aim](#)
- [Whistleblowing & Fraud](#)
- [Complaints](#)
- [High-risk policy](#)
- [Privacy notice](#)
- [It all starts with skills: campaign assets and brand guidelines It all starts with skills: brand guidelines and social assets](#)
- [WMCA branding guidelines](#)

Annex A - Specification



DPS14 Construction
Gateway-Specification

