

# West Midlands Futures

Grand  
Challenges –  
Lessons Learned  
from Elsewhere



## Selected paraphrased interview quotes.

“Devolution in itself is not a panacea for anything. It's what you do with it over the long term strategically when you've got it.”

“I think cross sector policy making is the big, the big potential payoff for regional policymaking compared to national policy making.”

“Most regions that have done a really good job of this have made clear choices about what they are going to do and what they are not going to do. They've articulated both of those things and then they've stuck to them.”

“In the WM we don't compromise, we fudge. We just go up a level of abstraction and get some like high level language everyone can agree with”.

“I think one of the things that make experiments really valuable is that you can start small and you see what works and doesn't, and there's space for adjustment. Then you can scale up, or you can scale out. Or you can do both.”

“I think it's too easy just to go “Well, that's central government's problem. That's why we can't do it”. And I think we should get better at being resourceful and innovative and strategic within the region.”

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# Executive summary

The report is part of the first phase the West Midlands Futures (WMF) project. WMF aims to create a shared vision for the region's long-term future and its places in the UK's and global economy. The vision will be developed jointly with our Local Authority, business, community, and other partners.

The first phase of this project – the clarify phase – seeks to identify the big questions and opportunities which the vision will likely need to address to drive change in the West Midlands in the long-term.

This report takes insights gained from 79 academic, think-tank and government papers; 53 interviews with more than 70 interviewees from the private sector, civil service, academia, local government and think tanks; and a workshop testing initial findings (see Annex 1 for full list) to identify common lessons from around the world in successfully addressing Grand Challenges. These lessons are:

1. Take collective regional leadership, set the strategic direction and settle in for the long-term.
2. Build an authentic narrative on existing strengths and identity.
3. Rally wide and deep political and public support to give the strategy momentum.
4. Don't just fix markets, shape and create them.
5. Take risks, experiment and learn from doing.
6. Collaborate with and crowd-in partners.
7. Invest in internal capabilities and capacities.
8. Focus economic and innovation strategy on raising the productivity ceiling and floor.
9. Use policy tools to pre-distribute and re-distribute the benefits of economic prosperity so all benefit.
10. Consider economic & urban development together.

In the next phases of WMF we will explore how these lessons could be applied to the West Midlands' own Grand Challenges.

# What lessons can we learn from around the world on how to effectively respond to Grand Challenges at a systems level?

Drawing from the research findings, we have summarised (see Annex 1 for full list of resources) ten lessons on what good looks like in addressing Grand Challenges.

## Lesson one: Take regional leadership, set the strategic direction and settle in for the long-term

Successful regional transformation requires significant investment and policy intervention over the long-term across multiple political cycles. While leadership from regional government is vital, it is a necessary but not sufficient condition of success. The scale of an appropriately ambitious challenge is beyond the capacities of regional government alone. This means taking regional leadership, setting the strategic direction, crowding-in regional stakeholders (see lesson 6) – who can bring their own resources to bear – and maintaining focus and direction on the long-term outcomes to give partners the certainty needed to convince them to lean in. Workshop participants thought that local leaders who are recognised across the region would be important for helping us action this lesson. However, other participants also thought that this regional leadership needs to be wider than just the mayor and more representative than is currently the case. Others thought that there was a lack of shared political will across different parties and places in the West Midlands and too many people were focused on parochial rather than regional concerns. There were also concerns that although local leadership in the West Midlands had been able to set out different visions it had been unable to articulate the how.

In the interviews, participants elaborated on this theme in more detail. They said they would like to see a regional vision set a clear vision with long-term and tangible objectives that we can work towards achieving by the selected date. This vision should be constructed in such a way a golden thread can be developed flowing from a regional vision all the way down to the policy design and delivery of projects. This framework should enable us to make hard choices about the prioritisation of resources to realise long term objectives – i.e., strategy undertaken to work towards a regional vision should not be promising everything to everyone. The vision should be specific enough to be able to distinguish between the types of investment and activity it is aiming to drive over the long term and the types that it isn't. Workshop participants did not think the West Midlands had done a good job in setting out a long term strategic direction so far. Quite a few participants pointed out the lack of strategic partnership structures in the region as a major reason for this absence; in particular, the lack of a coherent delivery structure across the region and meetings focused mainly on short term considerations. Participants said that regional strategies like the plan for growth haven't really been able to nail this yet. Others mentioned that a requisite for setting a street direction was consistent and cross party

support from a political and policy officer level that was able to handle the difficult discussions implied in an effective strategy.

## **Lesson two: Build an authentic narrative on existing strengths and identity.**

To build the appetite to engage with the really tricky challenges we want to confront under a regional vision, excitement about how the region could deliver and belief that the vision could be achieved, a WM regional vision needs to build ambitious, authentic and unifying narrative about the region to galvanise people to action. This narrative should speak to a future which is plausible for the region, would represent a success, builds on the West Midlands' existing identities and strengths and is one that, if realised, we can be proud of. This does not mean that our ambition should be limited to driving change at the margins. We can imagine a different and better West Midlands; it just needs to speak to an existing reality and tell a plausible story about how the region can be different.

However, the vision should not be so tight that it is stifling. Any vision that is hoping to unite many people with diverse identities, conceptions of the region, and values is one that will have to leave sufficient room for differing interpretations. The key is enabling the space where these interpretations can be worked through and developed in different ways while also keeping clear long-term objectives that everyone is working towards in mind. Moreover, although the vision should be long-term and encompassing, it should also have space to adapt and evolve based on the changes to the region over time.

In the context of the West Midlands, interviewees said it will be key for the vision to clarify how we will work together with our partners across the region, demonstrate successes that are only achievable through regional collaboration, be based on objectives that are tailored to the West Midlands – rather than being applicable to any place in the country – and recognise the diversity of identities in the West Midlands. Interviewees also mentioned that the vision should help us communicate more effectively with people outside the region about who we are and where we're going. Lastly, interviewees mentioned that the bar for success for the vision should be action and tangible consequences. If the vision and its objectives are failing to deliver this, it should be revisited.

There was a widespread recognition within the LA workshop that it was important for the West Midlands to build an effective and mobilising narrative. Participants thought that this narrative should capture what we have in common and the strengths that we share while recognising the differences that exist in the region. Building this type of narrative would require working with multiple and diverse stakeholders, focusing on the future and understanding the realities and languages of different people. This means that it should speak to people's daily realities. Participants identified the Commonwealth Games, Ozzy the bull and TF WM as potential narrative symbols they could bring people together on a regional level. Some stakeholders felt that we were not effectively using our range of shared assets across the region at the moment to help build this narrative.

However, workshop participants thought that building this type of narrative was a long term project that could span decades. At the moment barriers to developing this narrative named in the workshop were the lack of connectivity across regional partners, the lack of a common narrative historically and a lack of clarity about what was meant by the West Midlands area.

## **Lesson three: Rally wide and deep political and public support to give the strategy momentum.**

As regional transformation is a long-term project, interventions to achieve the vision's target outcomes need to be able to last the duration too. Building political, policy and public support behind the vision is key to give the project the momentum needed to endure.

In the interviews, participants provided some insights that elaborate on how this principle can be applied in the context of the West Midlands. Interviewees said that whilst regional figureheads are important to boost the profile of a WM regional vision and crowd-in partners, it is important that the vision is greater than a single person or party to provide the long-term focus over a greater time period than typical political cycles. Therefore, focussing the long-term vision on overarching targets that can garner cross-party support is very important for the vision's robustness.

In addition, interviewees stressed that it was vital to secure widespread buy-in through partnership and community leadership under a WM regional vision. Interviewees said that this requires co-creating the vision alongside partners and communities, working with partners on the implementation of different policy, programmes and strategies under the vision and listening to feedback on the successes and failures when evaluating progress. Participants said that over the longer term, this engagement is worth the additional time it might take for regional government to co-create the vision up front.

The importance for these partnerships were fivefold. Firstly, making sure that the impact of policy was truly driving benefits in people's lives and addressing it where it wasn't. Secondly, the scale of the challenges that need to be addressed to transform a region cannot be done by regional government alone – who will lack the sufficient resources, expertise and knowledge to do so. Therefore, bringing in those resources from outside is vital. Thirdly, it encourages partners in the region to align their independent activities with the direction of travel. Fourthly, mobilising partners at multiple levels to address shared challenges (from residents, to communities, to businesses, to universities and anchor institutions, etc.) enables the region to have multiple bites at the cherry, which is a significant advantage when dealing with highly sticky and intractable problems. Lastly, shared ownership and buy-in enables some of the more difficult decisions that will be required to be made more easily. For example, if, through devolution, communities are properly involved and engaged in shaping policy decisions, they may be more likely to understand the trade-offs and sacrifices required in the short-term for long term gain, than if existing governance and decision-making structures of central government were merely replicated at the regional level.

Types of likely partners named were universities, businesses, investors, community groups, social enterprises, and residents. Interviewees reflected that currently, communities and partnerships are often undervalued and

not given sufficient ownership over interventions by regional government across the country. In terms of how to do this, interviewees said that regional government should make the combined authority visible and proactively reach out to potential partners in a way that makes engagement for people as easy as possible. I.e., sending out a survey on a government site is unlikely to establish much meaningful partnership or demonstrate sufficient commitment to potential partners to incentivise them to give their time. Also, interviewees mentioned that when establishing the relationships, it is important to focus on small wins which demonstrate the collaborative nature of the enterprise and lend credibility that the region is really committed to realising its goals over the longer term. This is important considering that partners may be sceptical about engaging with regional government due to a perceived lack of previous impact.

In terms of building public support, LA workshop participants said that we often fail to use plain language to communicate what we're trying to do and how we're trying to do it which shuts out people in the region. Participants also discussed how we might use shared cultural assets to crowd in residence in an accessible way and build expertise in our partners like the voluntary sector.

Across both political and public support, participants mentioned the need to set out shared goals that everyone can understand, co-create approaches where appropriate and encourage more public feedback. Participants also mentioned working more effectively with non-constituent members of the combined authority.

## **Lesson four: Don't just fix markets, shape and create them.**

To break out of economic system dynamics that are reproducing negative outcomes, it is not enough for the public sector to merely play the role of fixing existing market failures – doing so increases the chances of path-dependent lock-in. Instead, local and regional government should also be thinking about how they can support, shape, and create the frameworks for credible new markets and sectors to emerge that deliver more effective outcomes for the region.

In the interviews, this lesson manifested itself primarily under the theme of taking a systems approach to driving change in the West Midlands. Interviewees said that we need to view the region's economy as a system composed of numerous different factors beyond those which are typically considered to be parts of the economy. Within this system we need to think about how we could tilt the playing field to generate better outcomes for the region that are aligned with our vision.

To tilt this playing field, almost all participants were supportive of horizontal interventions to increase the supply of factors that might act as leverage points to drive better outcomes. Examples here included focusing on skills, more effective business support, agglomeration and potentially financing instruments like city bonds and community investment funds etc. However, some interviewees also thought there is a place for more vertical interventions and that without this targeted support the West Midlands would not be able to reach the required tipping points to change outcomes under a regional vision. Participants who made this argument said



that this is not akin to ‘picking winners’ but is more about developing specific economic linkages that had the potential to drive significant benefit across multiple dimensions.

Regardless of the policy tools used, the literature advocated for adopting a mindset which goes beyond market fixing and focuses on working backwards from the type of outcomes we want to drive and the types of markets that we would need to cultivate with partners to deliver those outcomes. This type of policymaking will require new capabilities for and capacities within the WMCA and its partners – see lesson 7.

Some LA workshop participants agreed with the full lesson and argued that we needed to identify a direction in which to shape markets where possible. Others withheld from fully endorsing this approach and instead looked at how do we better identify an act on market failures. Examples here were widening our focus from business support to just the frontier industries and / or adopting our winner takes all approach. However, others argued that this lesson goes beyond the responsibilities of government.

## **Lesson five: Take risks, experiment and learn from doing.**

Strategic transformation is fundamentally uncertain and not something that can be neatly mapped out ex ante. Policy interventions need to be flexible, learn from doing, be willing to take risks, place bets, agilely double down on wins and accept that there will be losses. Experiments are a good way to do this, bring in partners and build excitement behind the vision. However, they need to be rigorously designed, with clear metrics for success linked to the outcomes we are trying to deliver, mechanisms, and rapid feedback loops so that local and regional government can learn from doing. They also require stakeholder buy-in and ownership so that failures and risks can be tolerated. LA workshop participants said that risk taking needs to be paired with failing fast, innovation and building evaluation into everything we do. Participants said that we can look to learn from our private sector and voluntary sector partners on how we might do this better.

Many of the barriers to risk taking that LA workshop participants identified were cultural. Participants pointed out a general public sector aversion to risk that is informed by the consequences and intolerance of failure, accountability structures of government and focus on spending decisions. Participants also mentioned the relative lack of tools that we have to innovatively shape markets as a barrier to risk taking. Other participants talked about how risk taking needs to sit within a wider cultural focus on finding solutions to define problems and measuring success by our impact in resolving them. Some people also talked about how it's not just taking risks but also managing risk collectively that is important.

For the CA to take more risks call one LA workshop participant said that we would need a new approach to evaluating the benefits and potential downsides of risks and designing structures that could tolerate specific failures if the entire portfolio had an aggregate success. Others mentioned that there will need to be clearly defined spaces for risk taking and that it was right to be more risk averse when it came to core budgets or delivering vital services that couldn't afford to fail. Lastly, all the participants mentioned that it was important to recognise though we should be ambitious we can't change the world single handedly.

## **Lesson six: Collaborate with and crowd-in partners.**

Stakeholder and regional partner ownership of the strategic vision is critical for success. Not only do they bring the resources and backing that is needed for the vision to be able to survive over the long term, but they also make it much more likely that the aims and objectives of the strategic vision will actually improve lives for residents, businesses and those who have a stake in the region. To crowd-in these diverse partners, the WMCA should align incentives, build structures that allow stakeholders to exercise their own agency, permit the space for disagreements and the constructive ambiguity which allows shared positions to emerge over time, continuously demonstrate the benefits of engaging, and be genuinely open to leadership in a WM regional vision from outside the public sector. Stakeholders that are representative of our diverse communities, businesses, investors, universities and public sector arms-length bodies should be the groups, at a minimum, that co-own the strategic vision.

There was widespread agreement in the LA workshop that crowding in partners from the business sector, academia and communities was vitally important. Participants said that the West Midlands track record on doing this was mixed and that there needed to be a clearer sense of shared goals to enable deeper collaboration. On community collaboration in particular, participants said that it massively helps generate buying when communities are involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of interventions. Furthermore, it helps to address structural inequalities from the current economic system. A particular example that was highlighted was access to finance in the region being disproportionately difficult for global majority led organisations. Enabling collaboration requires getting the right groups of people together in the West Midlands and this can be hard when there are so many diverse stakeholders around particular issues. Participants said that this should be easier once we have a clearer sense of our regional priorities that we're trying to address over the long term.

## **Lesson seven: Invest in internal capabilities and capacities.**

As discussed, strategic transformation is hard, so not only is regional leadership, widespread support and investment needed over the long term, but investment in local capabilities is also essential to ensure that policymakers and partners can engage with the hard challenges of driving change. We should look to build up the capabilities and capacities of regional actors in the West Midlands to meet this challenge, rather than bringing in ad hoc support to meet momentary challenges.

In particular, the literature argued that this would require the WMCA and its partners to have a better and more readily available understanding of the impact its policy was driving. This could be expressed through experimentation, more dynamic and systems-based forecasting, testing our assumptions and mental models, and a portfolio approach to policy making to realise a regional vision's objectives where risks are hedged, successes are doubled down on, and failures are quickly discontinued. Without these capabilities, given the stickiness, uncertainty, and long-term nature of the Grand Challenges we want to address, it is highly unlikely that we will be able to realise our regional goals.

In the interviews, participants specifically mentioned the need to build capabilities around forecasting, designing different types of policy holistically to realise shared goals, and improving our institutional memory. Moreover, interviewees also mentioned that the issues impacting a place are likely to be expressions of wider structural dynamics in the region that are deeply embedded by prevailing feedback loops. In this context, it is vital that regional government can quickly learn from doing, to identify where things are working, where they are not working, and why. Lastly, regional government should constantly be looking elsewhere to regions that are currently addressing or have previously addressed similar challenges to understand what lessons can be extracted and applied to their context.

As a consequence of this, quite a few interviewees stressed the importance of experimentation in policy design. Crucially, these interviewees added that experiments are only useful if there are clear criteria to assess them against and where, if they are successful, regional government has the ability to help them scale.

Research and evidence led decision making capabilities - underscored by data - were commonly identified in the LA workshop by participants are skills that West Midlands local government needed more of. Other participants mentioned that the capabilities and capacities that we aim to bring in to the policy making ecosystem should be those that enable us to more effectively shape markets and focused on lived experience. Furthermore, other participants said that we should not think that local government needs to possess all the skills needed to address Grand Challenges over the long term themselves, but can instead aim to utilise the diverse skill sets of other partner organisations in the region. This means us taking more of a systems view of the policy making, implementation and evaluation in the region and collaborating more closely with non-government partners. participants also commented that the question of building capacities and capabilities would need to be resolved in the context of the wider financial pressures facing local government. Moreover, we will need to be alive to the risk of empire building and thinking that we should do it all.

Many LA workshop participants said that we should be looking to utilise the capabilities and capacities of our partner institutions more effectively. In particular this included the anchor networks that exist in multiple cities in the region, working with businesses, working with communities and voluntary groups.

## **Lesson eight: Focus economic and innovation strategy on raising the productivity ceiling and floor.**

Focussing only on boosting the productivity of high-productivity industries through providing inputs to these sectors and not opening up the black box of the economic system in the West Midlands is likely to limit the scale of the change that can be accomplished in the region, miss out on the gains that could be realised in the industries which most people work in, leave many people behind and undermine the support that is needed to successfully transition to a higher productivity economy. Consequently, economic and innovations strategic interventions under a regional vision should consider both how we can raise the productive ceiling and floor of the region.

This lesson was strongly reflected in the interviews. One of the key things that interviewees said they would like to see a regional vision achieve is a strong economy, contributing to national prosperity, that generates

benefits for all residents in the region and that is supported by a successful, long-term regional strategy. Interviewees stressed that they would like to see the median household disposable income level in the region rising rapidly to catch up with, and then exceed, national averages, and the West Midlands' economy becoming diverse and offering opportunities to all. Interviewees thought that this was a prerequisite to making the West Midlands a great place to live with residents who are enjoying good lives.

Interviewees also provided several different principles that they felt should underpin a vision. The most common of these was inclusive growth. Many interviewees felt that economic growth for growth's sake is an insufficient goal. Instead, we need to also consider the outcomes for people that any additional prosperity was generating to ensure it was improving people's lives across the region, and each of the region's diverse communities – as well as addressing the climate crisis. Some people went further and suggested that focussing on the marginal, short-term gains from the status quo without thinking through the distributional consequences and direction of economic growth, would introduce vulnerability into the West Midlands' economy that would create a fundamental cap on increases to prosperity, in addition to worsening inequality and climate challenges.

There was a recognition in the LA workshop that the region's current growth was not generating benefits for everyone and that our ambition should be to help support an economic model that craters inclusion for everyone by default. Participants said that this means looking at what we mean when we think about good growth so that we have a clear idea of how we should try to generate these outcomes. There was also a strong sense that we need to focus more on the foundational and everyday economy in the region. As most people's livelihoods depended on this type of work it was seen to be of critical importance.

A significant tool that local government was seen to have in the West Midlands was policy making around education and skills - in particular early years. Policy making in this area needed to be joined up with a clear logic model illustrating how interventions would help people benefit more widely from prosperity in the region.

However, there were some other considerations that participants shared. Firstly, some participants questioned whether a disproportionate focus on the foundational economy will be able to generate the productivity increases needed in order to build prosperity in the region. There was also a concern about local government over stretch and assuming an optimism bias in our policy ambitions. Lastly, there were comments around recognising that our economic and innovation strategy could not be treated in isolation but had to be designed in context of what was happening elsewhere in the country and internationally.

## **Lesson nine: Use policy tools to pre-distribute and redistribute the benefits of economic prosperity so all benefit.**

As well as focussing support on both the floor and ceiling of the economy in the region, local and regional government should consciously think about how it can use its policy tools to pre-distribute and re-distribute the gains of economic prosperity to ensure that everyone sees the benefits. Pre-distribution can be addressed

by seeking to support, shape and create markets that deliver good jobs to people across the region, skills programmes to make residents eligible for these jobs, affordable housing and transport options so people can access these opportunities. The scope for redistribution, without taxation powers, is more limited. However local spending, particularly if the West Midlands can achieve some fiscal devolution to see the benefits of growth, can be targeted at less well-off communities to redistribute the benefits of economic prosperity too.

In terms of what this might look like in the West Midlands, interviewees said that focusing on attracting higher quality work and developing skills programmes so that people could access these jobs could be a promising policy lever that we could use to help redistribute the benefits of prosperity.

Participants in the LA workshop pointed at the single settlement, developing long term investment funds and better integrating business support programmes to the opportunities of the region as tools that we have all currently have to do this better. These type of activities would be most effective if they grappled with the trade-offs associated with funding different priorities rather than others. However, other participants said that we needed to move beyond the framework of economic prosperity to think more about human flourishing. They argued that economic prosperity undervalues some sectors which are very important to people's day-to-day lives like care and the grey economy. Moving into this wider conception of “what the good life looks like” will require the combined authority to move beyond metrics solely using metrics like GVA – e.g., into a wider consideration of wellbeing economics and inclusive growth.

## **Lesson ten: Consider economic and urban development together.**

To address the economy as a system, economic interventions should be considered in conjunction with other urban policy planning to maximise impact and ensure the benefits are fairly shared. For example, the health of the economy in the West Midlands is intimately linked to the housing market, skills landscape, transport options and its resilience to the challenges of climate change. Moreover, attracting and retaining people in the region requires thinking beyond job opportunities and making the region a great place for people to live and work. Lastly, investment appetite is linked to factors like the number of people with the requisite skills in the region, planning regulations and a clear spatial plan.

In the interviews, participants highlighted examples of this lesson around improving transport infrastructure to increase the size of the labour market and give people better access to good jobs, densifying the cities in the region for the same purpose and aligning economic cluster strategies to these wider transport, housing, community regeneration and skills plans, agglomeration and aligning economic cluster strategies alongside other development plans. Interviewees reflected that this means a move away from the siloed ways of working that are currently in place and strategic collaboration across the WMCA and its partners.

The single settlement and place based strategies were seen in the LA workshop as good opportunities for the West Midlands to action this lesson. Beyond the flexible funding provided through these levers, participants also highlighted the ability to tackle policy problems holistically examples given were health, the economy,

transport connectivity and community pride. Other tools mentioned were mapping our data of policy challenges on a high resolution spatial level (LSOA).

However, there was general agreement that we needed to better integrate strategy across the region to act on this lesson. Furthermore, some participants argued that we need to widen our understanding of economic value to include things like the female economy, the caring economy and the grey economy. This might also mean building a shared minimum standards baseline that we seek to recreate across the region.

Participants also said that we should consider looking at other city regions around the world to understand more what good looks like in this space instead of relying solely on national comparators or GVA.

## Annex: The literature we read and interviews we spoke to.

Desktop review	
Publishing institution	Article title
Bennet Institute	Devolving English Government
Birmingham Chamber of Commerce	Policy Manifesto
BT Group	Race to the Top
Centre for Cities	Does 'trickle out' work? How cities help their surrounding towns
Centre for Cities	Do City Centres really benefit their wider areas?
Centre for Cities	Centralisation nation
Centre for Cities	All cylinders: The role of the Midlands Engine in the British economy
Centre for Cities	At the frontier: The geography of the UK's new frontier
Centre for Cities	Making places: The role of regeneration in levelling up
Centre for Cities	Measuring up: Comparing public transport in the UK and Europe's biggest cities
Centre for Cities	Net Zero: decarbonising the city
Centre for Progressive Policy	Fair Growth – Opportunities for economic renewal
Centre for Progressive Policy	Could a UK manufacturing revival be a path to inclusive growth?
Centre for Progressive Policy	How the government's new university-led industrial clusters can support inclusive growth
Centre for Progressive Policy	How to create good jobs in England's towns
Centre for Progressive Policy	Levelling up our productivity requires a new focus on technology diffusion
Centre for Progressive Policy	Chapter 10 People, place, space and city-regions: towards an integrated or systemic approach to reading city-region

	regeneration economies in: A Research Agenda for Regeneration Economies (elgaronline.com)
CBI	Government must make big choices or the UK will lag behind
CIPD	An Industrial Strategy for the Everyday Economy
CIPFA	Investing in regional equality: lessons from four cities
CIPFA	Addressing regional inequalities in the UK: levelling to where?
DLUHC	Levelling Up the United Kingdom
Economic statistics centre for excellence	A bottom up industrial taxonomy of the UK
Envision Utah	Envision Utah
European Group for Organizational Studies journal	Tackling Grand Challenges Pragmatically
Gov.UK	West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy
IFG	How can devolution deliver regional growth in England?
Industry and Innovation journal	From market fixing to market creating: a new framework for innovation policy
IPPR	Making Markets in Practice
LA strategies	Walsall 2040 vision
LA strategies	2030 Group Strategy - Coventry
LA strategies	Council Plan 2022 – 2025 - Dudley
LA strategies	Relighting our City - Wolverhampton
LA strategies	Big City Plan - Birmingham
LA strategies	Solihull Economic Strategy 2023 - 32
LA strategies	Vision 2030 - Sandwell
Local Trust and the Young Foundation	Levelling up our communities: US – UK Fact finding mission
Midlands Engine	Megatrends in the Midlands
NEF	Skills for a new economy



OECD	Experimental governance: Conceptual approaches and practical cases
OECD	Regions in Industrial Transition: A new approach to persistent problems
OECD	OECD Regional Outlook 2023
ONS	Regional gross disposable household income, UK: 1997 to 2021
Onward	Levelling Up Locally
Onward	Giving back control: Realising the potential of England's mayors
Onward	Double Devo: Extending Town and Parish Councils
Onward	Turnaround: Learning from 60 years of Regeneration Policy
Parliament	Poverty in the UK: Statistics
Resolution Foundation	Institutional reform for Inclusive Growth
Resolution Foundation	Lessons from successful 'turnaround' cities for the UK
Resolution Foundation	A tale of two cities – A plausible strategy for productivity growth in Birmingham and beyond
Resolution Foundation	Ready for Change: How and why to make the UK economy more dynamic
Resolution Foundation	Creating a Good-Jobs Economy in the UK
Resolution Foundation	Sharing the benefits: Can Britain secure broadly shared prosperity
Resolution Foundation	Minding the (productivity and income) gaps
Santa Fe Institute	Complexity economics
Structural Change and Economic Dynamics	In order to stand up you must keep cycling
The Productivity Institute	Capital shocks and UK regional divergence
The Productivity Institute	Tackling the UK's regional economic inequality: binding constraints and avenues for policy intervention
The Productivity Institute	Why Hasn't Regional Policy Worked

The Productivity Institute	New insights on regional capital investment in the UK – 1997 to 2019
The Regional Studies Association	Regional Innovation Governance: Introducing the Concept of the Entrepreneurial Region
The Royal Society of Arts	Unleashing the potential of the UK’s cities
UCL Institute for Sustainable Resources	Policy, innovation and cost reduction in UK offshore wind
Welsh Government	Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: the essentials [HTML]   GOV.WALES
WM REDI	Productivity in the West Midlands
WM REDI	Investing in regional equality: Lessons from four cities
WM REDI	State of the Region 2021
WM REDI	Connecting Communities
WM REDI	Graduate pathways: Identifying patterns of regional retention and attraction
WMCA	Reimagining transport in the West Midlands   Transport for West Midlands (tfwm.org.uk)
WMCA	WMCA Objectives
WMCA	Race Forward
WMCA	Equity and Inclusion Scheme 2022-24
WMCA	Health of the region
WMCA	Inclusive Growth Framework Fundamentals
WMCA	State of the Region 2021
WMCA	State of the Region 2023-2024
WMCA	Regional Skills Plan
WMCA	Inclusive Growth Fundamentals
WMCA	LTP learnings for WM2035
WMCA	WM Digital Roadmap
WMCA	Plan for growth

WMCA	Growing the Social Economy in the WMCA area
WMCA	WM 2041
WMCA	Five Year Energy Plan
WMCA	West Midlands International Strategy Framework

We also interviewed people from the following organisations:

- Aston University
- Birmingham City University
- Bennet Institute
- Black Country Chambers of Commerce
- Blavatnik School of Governance
- British Business Bank
- Business partner organisations and forums
- Centre for Cities
- Centre for Progressive Policy
- Centre for a New Midlands
- City of Wolverhampton College
- Civil Servants across 6 departments
- Coventry University
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Institute for Government
- Local Authority colleagues
- March 2024 workshop with LA colleagues considering an early draft of this report.
- Metro Dynamics
- Midlands Connect
- Midlands Engine
- Minerva Business Angels
- Network Resilience
- October 2023 Economic Symposium with policy partners, academics and think tanks.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
- Onward
- Productivity Institute
- Resolution Foundation
- Social Economy partners
- Solihull College
- Trade Union Congress
- University of Birmingham

- Warwick University
- West Midlands 5G
- WM Growth Company colleagues
- WMCA colleagues