West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Wellington House
40-50 Wellington Street
Leeds
LS1 2DE

17 December 2025

Re: **Local Innovation Partnerships Fund readiness check submission**

Dear Ben and colleagues,

Thank you again for all the hard work you and your team put into West Yorkshire's readiness check submission for the Local Innovation Partnerships Fund (LIPF). I appreciate your positive engagement with my team in the run up to this, and I know they look forward to continuing this process of co-creation in the coming weeks and months.

As part of this collaborative, co-creation process, please find below the constructive feedback from the independent, expert panel that reviewed your submission. They recognised the ambition that exists locally and are very keen to help you realise high quality outcomes and long-lasting impacts. That is why, in addition to noting the strengths of the submission, they have also offered advice on areas they think you can enhance – noting that they can only comment on what was presented, and that you may already have much of this information already.

The panel are happy to provide additional support where it is helpful in clarifying their comments. I am already liaising with them to understand their availability and preferences for doing this in the next few weeks. My team also remains at your disposal to draw in expertise from across UKRI to continue refining your plans.

With this support, the panel and I would like to ask you to resubmit an updated readiness check *"APP96908: LIPF West Yorkshire"* to the second readiness check wave (deadline 3 February).

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UK Research and Innovation

APP96908: LIPF West Yorkshire Application Feedback

General

The panel members noted the clear articulation of clusters in relation to geography. However, the application should clearly define growth priorities, avoiding dilution across too many areas to sharpen the strategic focus.

The approach to prioritisation should be strengthened, to provide further clarity on which clusters/sectors will be selected. The application could also benefit from additional evidence and more detailed, place-focused explanations to support the provided statements.

Areas for Focus and Strengthening

Governance and Leadership

Governance structures should be strengthened. The application narrative provides limited evidence of how decisions will be made or conflicts managed. The current approach appears advisory rather than decision making. The role of the board in decision-making should be clarified and strengthened, ensuring full backing from institutional and political leaders.

The application should also provide clarity on board membership and explain how the proposed governance structure is distinctive for this fund.

Strategic Vision and Priority Clusters

While the current landscape is well articulated, the application should be strengthened by explaining the additionality that LIPF funding would bring.
The panel would like to see clear articulation of what makes sectors distinctive and why investors should choose this region. The proposal should include articulation of a compelling, valuable proposition for investors focusing on the key questions around specialism (for example: where is the national/international significance? What is the unique selling point of the region?). The proposal should demonstrate unique regional strengths (for example, talent, infrastructure, sector expertise innovation assets) and provide evidence that these clusters offer a competitive advantage compared to other regions.

Innovation Strength and Opportunity

Evidence of market failures should be strengthened, along with clearer articulation of the local context and the additionality that LIPF funding will bring. The panel *suggested that the focus could be sharpened into one strategic area. While collaboration appears more mature in FinTech, articulation of FinTech specialisms should be strengthened. If barriers in FinTech are regulatory, clarity on how these will be addressed via LIPF would be important and what impact can be delivered when the regulation issue may require national policy interventions.*

In Advanced Materials, while Catapults can be valuable assets, the panel expressed concerns about whether the level of funding available would be sufficient and felt that the application could focus more on strengthening links to existing institutions.

The creative industry focus could be further evidenced to demonstrate tangible benefits.

Operational Capability
The panel would like to see more evidence of delivery record, beyond the Shared Prosperity Fund, to provide confidence in delivery capability.

The role and contribution of universities should be more clearly articulated, given their critical role in supporting high potential clusters by acting as research and innovation anchors, driving knowledge exchange, supporting skills development / talent pipeline and their convening role across industry, community and public sector.

I hope you will find the panel's feedback a helpful contribution to this process and an opportunity to continue refining your plans to build a focused, impactful portfolio of LIPF projects. If you would like to discuss any of this further, please do not hesitate to contact me or any of the colleagues in cc.

Yours sincerely

S40(2) Personal data

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Executive Chair, Research England
Senior Responsible Officer, Local Innovation Partnerships Fund