



OGC Gateway™ Review 0: Strategic assessment

Programme Title:	Swansea Bay City Deal Skills and Talent Programme
IAH ID number:	AH 22/016

Version number:	Final v1.0
Senior Responsible Owner (SRO):	Barry Liles OBE
Date of issue to SRO:	3 February 2023
Department/Organisation of the Programme	Regional Learning & Skills Partnership (RLSP)
Review dates:	25 – 27 January 2023.
Review Team Leader:	David Evans
Review Team Members:	Lisa Pugh Claire Habberfield
Previous Review:	Gateway 0 Strategic Assessment 29 June 2021
Security Classification:	Official

This assurance review was arranged and managed by:

Welsh Government Integrated Assurance Hub (IAH)

Cathays Park 2

Cathays

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

1.0 Delivery Confidence Assessment (DCA)

Delivery Confidence Assessment:	GREEN
<p>The Review Team considers successful delivery of the programme to time, cost and quality appears highly likely and there are no major outstanding issues that at this stage appear to threaten delivery.</p> <p>The Programme has strong, stable and well experienced management and governance cadres.</p> <p>It is populated and served by passionate and invested individuals at all levels and its stakeholders are closely and regularly engaged.</p> <p>The RSLP is well-grounded in reality and demonstrates mature and strong direction.</p> <p>Whilst immediate uptake of the scheme by City Deal projects has been slower than anticipated and it is accepted that there may be some slippage in the planned spending profile: both issues are understood, discussed openly and are considered by the practitioners involved to be manageable.</p> <p>The Review Team considers that if the minor ‘nudges and course corrections’ indicated by the Recommendations made in this Report are implemented, the Programme is set fair to deliver against expectations.</p> <p>The evidence presented to the Review Team demonstrates that this is a well defined, well supported and well managed programme of work.</p>	

1.1 Delivery Confidence Assessment

The Delivery Confidence assessment RAG status should use the definitions below:

RAG	Criteria Description
Green	Successful delivery of the programme to time, cost and quality appears highly likely and there are no major outstanding issues that at this stage appear to threaten delivery.
Amber/Green	Successful delivery appears probable. However, constant attention will be needed to ensure risks do not materialise into major issues threatening delivery.
Amber	Successful delivery appears feasible but significant issues already exist requiring management attention. These appear resolvable at this stage and, if addressed promptly, should not present a cost/schedule overrun.
Amber/Red	Successful delivery of the programme is in doubt with major risks or issues apparent in a number of key areas. Urgent action is needed to ensure these are addressed, and establish whether resolution is feasible.
Red	Successful delivery of the programme appears to be unachievable. There are major issues which, at this stage, do not appear to be manageable or resolvable. The programme may need re-baselining and/or overall viability re-assessed.

2.0 Summary of Report Recommendations

The Review Team makes the following recommendations which are prioritised using the definitions below:

Ref. No.	Recommendation	Urgency (C/E/R)	Target date for completion	Classification
1.	The Programme Team should conclude and present to the other eight City Deal Programmes, its own analysis of the likely skills provision shortfalls as a 'straw man' and stand ready to deliver the solutions needed to address it.	E- Essential	End June 2023	Scope 8.2
2.	The Programme Team should ensure that the efforts made to maximise the benefits of joining-up between bids is captured and presented alongside the bids presented to the RLSP Board.	E- Essential	By the time of the next presentation of bids to the RLSP Board	Benefits Management & Realisation 6
3.	The Programme team should prepare and present a flow chart demonstrating the scrutiny and challenge applied to all new bid proposals, to increase the visibility and transparency of its processes.	E- Essential	By the time of the next presentation of bids to the RSLP Board	Benefits Management & Realisation 6

Critical (Do Now) – To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome it is of the greatest importance that the programme should take action immediately

Essential (Do By) – To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome the programme/ project should take action in the near future.

Recommended – The programme should benefit from the uptake of this recommendation.

3.0 Comments from the SRO

We are very supportive of the comments and recommendations mad in this report and will be expediting the recommendations as soon as possible.

We would like to thank the review team for their support and advice

4.0 Background

The aims of the programme:

To create new and sustainable opportunities for people to increase and improve their skills to generate and support prosperity for individuals and businesses in the Swansea Bay City Deal region.

This will be achieved through the development of a pathway of skills improvement for all and the pilot delivery of demand-driven, high-level skills and upskilling opportunities across the five key sectors of the Swansea Bay City Deal.

The driving force for the programme:

The Skills and Talent programme is a cross-cutting programme within the suite of nine City Deal projects. It plans to deliver a skills training solution offering the best value, sustainable, skills infrastructure to develop the future workforce for the region.

The development of a comprehensive and forward-thinking skills programme that delivers the right skills and competencies across all the key themes of the City Deal programme is vital to the overall success of the City Deal Portfolio. The Skills and Training Programme will align the available skills provision and identified skills gaps with the needs of Industry across the region as well as the eight innovative projects that make up the City Deal. Addressing the gaps and shortfalls identified in skills development and training will support the growth of Gross Value Added (GVA), productivity and business investment in the region.

The creation and delivery of an innovative skills training programme will initially be through scoping and publication of a skills barometer. This will be followed by the development of pilot projects to offer training solutions that will, over the lifetime of the programme and beyond, deliver a skilled workforce to meet the requirements of the projects and the wider economy of the Swansea Bay region.

The Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (RLSP), a partnership of Industry Employers and public sector training and education providers, will be the lead body for the Skills and Talent programme. The partnership was established in 2010 to identify skills and training needs of the region and has a long-standing experience of working with industry and training providers and reporting to Welsh Government the regional training needs.

The delivery status:

The Programme has approved the first six Pilot Projects and there is a pipeline of further bids in various stages of preparation. The presentation, scrutiny and approval processes are now established. Delivery management support and evaluation processes are now being prepared and refined.

Current position regarding previous assurance reviews:

The Programme has been subject to one previous Gateway 0 Strategic Assessment Review in June 2021. The recommendations of that report were all accepted by the Programme.

A summary of recommendations, progress and status from the previous assurance review can be found in **Annex C**.

5.0 Purposes and conduct of the OGC Gateway Review

The primary purposes of a Gateway Review 0: Strategic assessment are to review the outcomes and objectives for the programme (and the way they fit together) and confirm that they make the necessary contribution to Ministers' or the Department's' overall strategy.

Annex A gives the full purposes statement for a Gateway Review 0.

Annex B lists the people who were interviewed during the review.

6.0 Acknowledgement

The Review Team thanks the Client, the Swansea Bay City Deal Skills and Talent Programme Team for its support and openness, which contributed to the Review Team's understanding of the Programme and the outcome of this review.

7.0 Scope of the Review

The scope of the Review was agreed as a mid-stage Gateway 0 Strategic Assessment with the SRO identifying a number of specific areas for examination. These specific areas were:

1. Lack of emerging projects being identified by the other 8 City Deal projects.
2. The length of time in getting the pilot projects into development as a result of poor quality submissions.
3. Burden of Bureaucracy
4. Lack of appreciation/flexibility within the 5 year spending window.
5. Emerging availability of Personal Learning Account (PLA) funding
6. Delay in appointment of project team
7. Regional skills needs identified that are not included in the 5 key themes.

8.0 Review Team findings and recommendations

8.1: Policy and business context

The Skills and Talent Programme is part of the Swansea Bay City Deal portfolio and is the key element of the Programme for the long-term benefit to the region of the delivery of capital investment driven programmes. The Programme is designed to increase the capability and capacity of local, skills improvement training provision to meet current and future needs considering local and global issues to benefit and support the other portfolios and economy.

The Programme is already demonstrating excellent co-operation and collaboration with employers and even Third Sector bodies to improve flexibility within the Swansea Bay City Deal Region. The objectives of the City Deal Programme are in line with UK and Welsh Government agendas.

Evidence was heard from all interviewees that the Programme is adding value by focusing on training opportunities not available in other parts of the UK and while current training is reacting to future demand for example 5G, there is still a strong investment in more traditional training.

The Programme team are aware of skills and training gaps and the increase in private sector training applications (due to confirm 31 Jan) demonstrates the wide range of opportunities and scrutiny to identify shortfalls both against the jobs of the future and jobs of today.

Interviewees from all areas of the Programme's reiterated the importance of employers' engagement with primary and secondary level education. Evidence was heard that reach out to secondary schools has been positive and even further back to primary school, but this was restricted due to the nature of schools' openness to visitors following Covid.

All interviewees spoke about pathway in education, skills training, and life-long learning opportunities. The importance of apprenticeships and the opportunities they provide were a recurrent theme was the significance and potential impact of apprenticeships on the workforce going forward.

All those interviewed presented a coherent and compelling narrative of what the Programme is achieving and there is a shared commitment to deliver a successful legacy in the Region from this investment in skills

8.2: Business Case and stakeholders

The Review Team met with interviewees who were passionate, engaged, and supportive of the programme. The interviewees included new projects awaiting the approval process and existing employers who were all able to articulate what success looked like from their own perspective but also what the wider benefits of the Programme.

Many interviewees had been involved in the provision and delivery of skills training for years and their passion, expertise and knowledge were evident. All of those interviewed supported the Skills and Talent Programme and there was evidence that the Project Team and governance arrangements have been streamlined and working

effectively since the previous Gateway Review. It should be noted that the support available for the application process should be commended.

The governance processes at a Welsh and UK Government level appear to be easier. The Review Team were provided with clear evidence about what the Programme intends to do considering local issues and employment trends, and how it will achieve it is clear. The Review Team's judgement is that the Programme should be given the flexibility to progress. Given progress on the other elements of the Portfolio and the opportunities and risks presented as the economy reacts to global issues and recovery from the impacts of COVID-19, there are opportunities to be seized and acting promptly ensures the risks of dis-engagement of partners and potentially the loss of key staff is mitigated.

Evidence was heard from all parties that the use and role of the RLSP within the Programme was the right choice and of fundamental importance.

8.3: Management of intended outcomes

The Skills and Talent Programme for South West Wales mirrors those elsewhere in the country, but uniquely carries with it the advantage of the City Deal association. This provides the Programme with greater financial autonomy and the opportunity, to an extent, of 'first-mover advantage in comparison with its peers.

As the sole Revenue driven Programme within the City Deal Portfolio, its management and financial control mechanisms potentially give it a greater level of flexibility, if required. These are advantages the Programme is aware of and uses to its benefit in planning and scheduling disbursements. The Programme is governed and managed in a robust manner with a tight grip on the quality control levers that it has. To be accepted and funded a project must be presented 'right' and not just qualify for funding 'right now'. The ability of the Programme to push back proposal for further development was evident and demonstrated to the Review Team. Governance of the Programme was recognised by the Review Team as strong.

Evidence presented showed that the Programme has demonstrated the tight levels of control needed to generate confidence in the behaviour of its scrutiny and approvals processes.

With six projects approved so far and eight in the pipeline, take-up of the Programme was reported by many to be slower than expected. Nevertheless, those closest to the Programme and most experienced in the Skills Training world, expressed confidence that progress would pick-up pace and that any temporary slippage in spend run-rate would be recovered with no diminution of quality.

Whilst there are, as yet, no approved projects arising from the eight other City Deal Programmes, the Review Team heard evidence that a cross-cutting gap in the availability and provision of accredited training for User Experience (UX) work had been identified and a bid was close to delivery. Whilst often identified most closely with digital development and delivery, the Review team was pleased to see this recognised as a wider and equally valuable skill set in other environments. If the evidence presented is correct, Swansea Bay has a national 'first-mover' advantage and with DVLA located within its area a ready market for trained and skilled individuals to accomplish nation-wide reach as either apprentices or fully qualified members of the workforce.

Nevertheless, the Programme should maintain the pressure it is putting on the other City Deal Programmes to identify the likely skills provisions that their deliveries will require.

The Review Team heard evidence that the Programme was ready to take the initiative on this matter and was preparing its own understanding of what the skills and shortfalls were likely to be. The Review Team supports this approach.

Recommendation 1: The Programme Team should conclude and present to the other eight City Deal Programmes, its own analysis of the likely skills provision shortfalls as a ‘straw man’ and stand ready to deliver the solutions needed to address it. Essential by end June 2023.

The Programme was able to demonstrate that the establishment of its structures, themes and processes had already delivered advantage and opportunity by promoting collaboration and facilitating engagement between sectors (industry, academia, learners and training delivery providers). With a healthy flow of interest reported (multiple potential bids presenting themselves as first-contact candidates each month), the ability to manage effectively a flow of applications already exists.

Interviewees all reported that the Programme’s structures and processes added value to the development of ideas and solutions, with some describing it as essential to the progress that they have made.

Of particular note was the benefit of focusing on pathways which reach back through secondary schools and back to primary schools. These were recognised as offering the opportunity to inspire learners and avoid disengagement. The increased focus of the Programme on pathways was welcomed by many and recognised by the Review team as good practice.

The ability of the programme to deliver solutions for both the Seren (star) pupils / learners and simultaneously lower level (L1) qualifications in the Cyfle Project was also seen as an example of best practice. The passion for successful delivery at all levels was obvious to the Review Team.

Concerns about the weight, cost and timescale of governance mechanisms required by the Portfolio, Cardiff and Westminster authorities was heard repeatedly. The opportunity arose to test against the Portfolio Offices behaviours and intentions and a robust case made for the processes in place. In this Review, there was not time to pursue the matter further, but the Review team invites the Programme to bring matters of concern to the Portfolio’s attention as they occur going forward, to allow prompt focus and resolution. It is clearly in the Portfolio Office team’s interest that this Programme moves forward as quickly and effectively as possible and that the limited external reporting and intervention that might be needed add more value than it costs the Programme.

8.4: Risk management

Evidence presented suggested that both the Portfolio processes and the project management compliance structures have delivered effective risk management practises. Risks will, however, continue to develop since the project is still in its early delivery stages, thus they must be controlled.

Early findings included the rigorous compliance checks connected to the degree of support and scrutiny before applications were authorised. Through the multiple levels of authorisation, this guarantees a more effective support system.

The general themes that emerged from a variety of interviews related to the potential risk of project engagement from employers, stakeholders, and participants waning due to other competing priorities developing. The Programme should maintain a close eye on this. There is a definite, visible desire to guarantee the project's success and the establishment of systems for its promotion.

According to the information supplied, **it would be beneficial if processes be set up to ensure best practises and successes are celebrated in a timely manner**, and consideration should be given to the timelines for the frequent review and promotion of success via the Portfolio board at its regular meetings.

8.5: Review of current outcomes

It was acknowledged that the Project Team's assistance to bidders was first-rate. The quantity of bids that have been received and are currently in process, along with indications that the pipeline of applications is strengthening, represent positive advancements.

The creation and completion of the initial initiatives that have been approved show that everyone engaged is clearly committed and enthusiastic. There is compelling evidence that important industry stakeholders are actively participating and that employers are driving the creation of crucial activities. It was evident that the approval procedure was honest and impartial.

The formal governance mechanisms of permission and delivery appear to have been balanced well with everyone participating in the project's inventiveness and excitement. To make sure results are achieved, specific goals and objectives are defined and tracked on a regular basis.

The Review Team heard evidence of how the development and refinement of Project proposals included an examination of how they might link to and build upon other Projects within the Portfolio. Notwithstanding this, as this is such a clear objective of the Portfolio, the Review Team considers it worth giving greater visibility to.

Recommendation 2: The Programme Team should ensure that the efforts made to maximise the benefits of joining-up between bids is captured and presented alongside the bids presented to the RLSP Board.

Essential: by the time of the next presentation of bids to the RLSP Board

8.6: Readiness for the next phase – Delivery of outcomes.

Whilst at an early stage, the Programme has achieved 'lift-off' and appears well structured and, at least for the moment, adequately resourced.

Concern was heard that early scrutiny of bid proposals could be tightened to reduce the risk of duplication of funding of initiatives with extant schemes. When pursued and examined, it was explained that three levels of early scrutiny were applied to ensure this was not the case and that money would not be wasted on exploring repetitive and duplicative proposals. The Review Team did consider that these safeguards did need to be made visible more readily.

Recommendation 3: The Programme team should prepare and present a flow chart demonstrating the scrutiny and challenge applied to all new bid proposals, to increase the visibility and transparency of its processes.

Essential, by the time of the next presentation of bids to the RSLP Board

As it had been included in the SRO's Terms of Reference, the Review Team tested with a number of interviewees the interaction between this Programme's schemes and the Personal Learning Account. All interviewees took the view that there were more likely to be synergies than conflicts. This was a positive outcome.

The Programme reported no critical resource shortfalls at present and expressed confidence in its ability to scale-up scrutiny and flow as required.

Interviewees reported that there was still much value to be gained from pursuing the initial five themes of the Programme. Given the short space of time since the first Projects were initiated, the Review Team concurs. There will come a time to review the scope, but the consensus is that it is too early to consider doing so yet.

9.0 Next Assurance Review

The Programme and Welsh Government should agree, nearer the time whether a further Gateway 0 Strategic Assessment Review or a Gateway 5 Operations Review and Benefits realisation study should be carried out in 2025 to follow completion and analysis of the Pilot Projects. The Review Team considers that no further Gateway Assurance Reviews are necessary until then, unless sought by the SRO.

ANNEX A

Purposes of the OGC Gateway Review 0: Strategic assessment:

- Review the outcomes and objectives for the programme (and the way they fit together) and confirm that they make the necessary contribution to overall strategy of the organisation and its senior management.
- Ensure that the programme is supported by key stakeholders.
- Confirm that the programme's potential to succeed has been considered in the wider context of Government policy and procurement objectives, the organisation's delivery plans and change programmes, and any interdependencies with other programmes or projects in the organisation's portfolio and, where relevant, those of other organisations.
- Review the arrangements for leading, managing and monitoring the programme as a whole and the links to individual parts of it (e.g. to any existing projects in the programme's portfolio).
- Review the arrangements for identifying and managing the main programme risks (and the individual project risks), including external risks such as changing business priorities.
- Check that provision for financial and other resources has been made for the programme (initially identified at programme initiation and committed later) and that plans for the work to be done through to the next stage are realistic, properly resourced with sufficient people of appropriate experience, and authorised.
- After the initial Review, check progress against plans and the expected achievement of outcomes.
- Check that there is engagement with the market as appropriate on the feasibility of achieving the required outcome.
- Where relevant, check that the programme takes account of joining up with other programmes, internal and external.
- Evaluation of actions to implement recommendations made in any earlier assessment of deliverability.

ANNEX B

List of Interviewees

The following stakeholders were interviewed during the review:

Name	Organisation and role
Barry Liles OBE	SRO Skills and Talent Programme Pro Vice Chancellor Skills and Life- long Learning, University of Wales Trinity Saint David University
Sam Cutlan	Skills and Talent Programme Lead.
Rob Hillier	14 – 19 Coordinator, Pembrokeshire County Council
Mark Jones	Principal Gower College, Chair of the Provider Group
Ffion Wright	Stakeholder and Communications Manager DP Energy Private sector partner for the Pembrokeshire Project
Arwyn Williams	Head of Faculty Engineering, Computing, Construction and Higher Education - Pembrokeshire College Lead body for the Pembrokeshire Project
Edward Morgan	Training Manager Castell Howell Foods Chair of the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership and Programme Board of the Skills and Talent Programme
Simon Pridham	Aspire to Be Lead person of an application to be considered by the Skills and Talent programme on the 31 st January
Nick Longar	Head of IT Swansea Building Society Chair of the Digital Cluster Group, representative on the Skills and Talent Group and RLSP Board member
Anthony Rees	Cyfle Building Skills
Geraint Flowers/	Executive Head of Capital Projects, University of Wales Trinity St David
James Cale	Director of Digital Services, University of Wales Trinity St David
Anthony Parnell	Treasury and Pensions Investment Manager, Carmarthenshire County Council and Finance officer for the Skills and Talent Programme and Swansea Bay City Deal Programme
Eleri Lewis	Head of Adult Programme Delivery Welsh Government RLSP Board member
Jonathan Burnes	City Deal Programme Lead

Meirion Owen	Head of Science and Technology, Milford Haven Comprehensive school
Jane Lewis	Regional Partnership Manager – Managing the RLSP and the Skills and Talent Programme

ANNEX C

Progress against previous assurance review (23 – 25 June 2021) recommendations:

Recommendation	Progress/Status
<p>The SRO should approve a 'super-executive summary' as a preface to the Business Case and submit it for approval with vigorous support.</p> <p>C- Critical</p> <p>Do now</p>	Completed, closed
<p>The Programme Manager must prepare and submit to governance a proposal for how revision of the key themes should be triggered and settled.</p> <p>R - Recommended</p> <p>By end September 2021</p>	Completed, closed.
<p>The Programme Manager must ensure the Risk Register and other Programme artefacts are updated and maintained as living, management tools to help control the Programme.</p> <p>E- Essential</p> <p>By end August 2021.</p>	Completed and maintained.
<p>The SRO should agree with the Portfolio, how the extant Programme Governance arrangements can be streamlined and optimized, reflecting the transition to the delivery phase of the Programme.</p> <p>E- Essential</p> <p>By end August 2021.</p>	Completed. Relationship management and Governance Review remains ongoing.