

LCR High Growth Innovation Fund

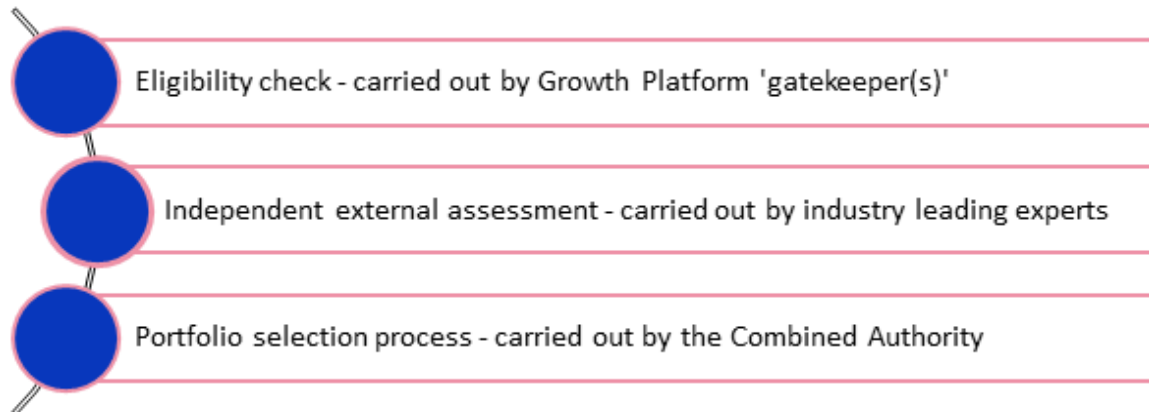
Assessor Mark Scheme

The **main changes** we have made since delivering round 1 & 2 Future Innovation Fund are outlined here:

- **The Fund has been doubled in value as we are able to draw down European Regional Development Funding.** This has then added a few more eligibility criteria and added a few more questions to the application form.
- **The application form has been broken down to have a greater number of shorter, sharper questions & answers.** This reduces the amount of unstructured text to make it easier and quicker for applicants to present their projects concisely and accurately. It also allows assessors to effectively understand and assess each application.
- **The new scheme includes a “gatekeeper” eligibility EOI form.** An applicant will not be able to complete the application form until they have had their EOI confirmed as eligible.
- **Publication of the assessor mark scheme.** This assessor mark scheme is being made an open document alongside the application guidance. This underlines our full commitment to an open, transparent and fair assessment process.

A reminder of our assessment process

The High Growth Innovation Fund process will continue to be run in three stages.



1) Eligibility check / Expression of Interest

Growth Platform will carry out an initial eligibility check for all incoming applications. This will ensure that all applications which progress through to full application and assessment stage are considered eligible. No scoring is provided at this stage.

2) Full Application

All expressions of interest deemed eligible will progress through to full application. Businesses have 4 weeks to complete this stage and can work with relevant Sector Leads but NOT High Growth Account Managers due to the need for an “ethical wall”.

3) Independent external assessment

All completed, eligible, full application forms will be sent for assessment by independent external assessors who will score applications based on the mark scheme included below.

Assessors have been recruited specifically for this activity through an open recruitment process run for the Future Investment Fund by the Combined Authority. We have strived to represent a diverse selection of knowledgeable industry professionals with a mix of technical and commercial expertise.

As can be seen from the mark scheme, applications will be scored based upon a range of factors including commercial potential, market fit, social impact, deliverability and value for money. To minimise subjectivity, each application will be assessed by three independent external assessors with the median score carried through to the next stage of the process.

4) Portfolio selection process

The independent assessment scoring will then be used to shortlist potential projects which are most suitable for grant funding through the High Growth Innovation Fund.

Assessor feedback is considered alongside other pertinent information by an internal investment panel at the Combined Authority.

A strategic prioritisation approach will then be used by the panel to select a range of projects for funding which represent a balanced portfolio of projects spread across a range of the city region's strategic priorities and programme KPIs.

A representative from the City Region's [Fairness and Social Justice Advisory Board \(FASJAB\)](#) sits on the internal investment panel to ensure that the process is aligned with the Combined Authority's equality, diversity and inclusive growth agenda.

Assessment Mark Scheme

The application format has been altered to fit in with ERDF requirements. The answers to these questions should inform an **overall** mark for that section, based on the criteria set out in our assessment matrix.

Section 1 – Eligibility

This **section is not scored** but assessors should read this section to provide wider context to the application. Eligibility will have already been checked by Growth Platform so all applications that assessors receive should be eligible. If an assessor strongly believes that the project is not eligible then they should highlight this and Growth Platform will refer to the Combined Authority team.

Section 2 – Business Information

This **section is not scored**. It is used to provide administrative information on the applicant organisation, incorporation date, location and the best contact details to get in touch with a representative from the applicant.

Section 3 – Project, opportunity and idea

In addition to the answers provided in this section assessors will review:

- **Any screenshots, diagrams or drawings** which have been provided as attachments by applicants. This is a strictly optional supplementary step – those applicants who opted to not provide attachments will not be penalised.
In the interest of fairness only the first 2 x A4 PDF will be read if more than this amount has been attached for this section.
Attachments should include no more than 500 characters (c.100 words) of text per page. If an attachment includes significantly more only the first 100 words will be considered.
- The strategy behind the fund alongside the City Regions strategic priorities which can be found in the Application Guidance.

Marking scheme criteria	Score
<p>Answer is excellent.</p> <p>The application sets out a highly innovative product, service or process and a clear unique selling proposition (USP). There is well evidenced need and demand for the innovation opportunity proposed. The applicant demonstrates a strong understanding of the area they are operating in. There is a clear strategic alignment with the priorities of the High Growth Innovation Fund. Evidence is put forward that highlights strong routes to market which could enable the innovation to reach market rapidly.</p>	9-10
<p>Answer is good</p> <p>Evidence is presented which highlights a strong USP which is defensible and holds potential to be transformative. Applicant provides a good answer which, whilst showing room for improvement, clearly shows the direction of travel for the project and demonstrates why there is significant merit in the applicant pursuing</p>	7-8

the stated opportunity. There is clear awareness of the demand and clear links to how the innovation project addresses the stated need. There is a logical link between the project and the priorities of the High Growth Innovation Fund. There are some promising routes to market which provide confidence that the innovation's potential will be realised quickly.

Answer is adequate

Applicant provides a fair answer which gives the assessor confidence that the project represents significant innovation potential, albeit in an area which may not entirely be unique. There is evidence of demand for such an innovation, although some clear questions remain as to whether the demand is significant enough for the solution to be commercially sustainable over the long term. There is at least some strategic alignment between the project and the High Growth Innovation Fund priorities, but more could be done to strengthen this link. Routes to market have been considered but there is little to demonstrate that actions have been taken to develop these links beyond initial stages.

5-6

Answer is poor

Applicant provides limited or partial answers to the questions within this section and either poorly defines why the proposed solution is innovative or why the market opportunity stated is significant. Assessor is left with significant doubts as to whether the innovation proposed, if successful, has potential to have the transformative impact that the Fund is looking to support. Limited evidence of viable route to market.

3-4

Answer is unacceptable

Applicant provides an incomplete answer or does not address a number of the questions. There are significant areas of the provided answer which show little understanding of the market opportunity or give any gravity to the case that a market opportunity exists.

1-2

Section 4 - Delivering your vision

In addition to the answers provided in this section, assessors will review:

- **A Gantt chart**, if one has been provided by the applicant (this a strictly optional supplementary step – those applicants who opted to not provide attachments will not be penalised if their response instils enough confidence in their delivery plan and ability to deliver).

Marking scheme criteria	Score
<p>Answer is excellent.</p> <p>Applicant provides a detailed delivery plan which clearly highlights how the applicant will realise the opportunity that they have outlined in the previous section 3 (Your project, opportunity and idea). The information presented shows a realistic and well considered response that provides the assessor with a great deal of confidence that the award of funding will result in a fully delivered project as described in the application. The applicant clearly evidences a full awareness of the critical steps needed for the project to start and, if needed, explains measures to mitigate any potential roadblocks. Milestones and deliverables are well thought through, as are timings and potential risks / dependencies. Answer also provides</p>	9-10

evidence of an experienced project team who give confidence in their ability to deliver the project or related expertise.	
<p>Answer is good</p> <p>The answer provided in this section demonstrates that the project team is capable of delivering upon their vision; however more information could have been provided in areas to further evidence the proposed approach to the delivery plan. The applicant demonstrates a general awareness of critical steps needed for the project to begin and highlights realistic milestones, deliverables and potential risks / dependencies. There is evidence of a promising project team. Some skills gaps may be present, but these are not mission critical to delivery of project.</p>	7-8
<p>Answer is adequate</p> <p>A delivery plan is provided but there are some gaps which do not give the assessor full confidence the project can be delivered. The proposed plan seems reasonable but is too general and/or does not take into account the required 6-month delivery timeline. The applicant demonstrates some awareness of critical steps needed for the project to begin and highlights some promising knowledge of relevant milestones, deliverables and potential risk / dependencies. There are some significant potential skills gaps within the project team which may present difficulties in realising the project plan.</p>	5-6
<p>Answer is poor</p> <p>Applicant provides a limited answer, leaving significant gaps in the proposed delivery plan. The proposed plan fails to appreciate the full demands of delivering a project of this nature and leaves the assessor feeling that there is little chance of the project team delivering their project within 6 months. The applicant's answer shows little evidence of awareness of risk, critical steps and does not point to definable milestones and deliverables. Considerable work is needed to firm up the deliverability of the project. There are very significant, likely mission critical, skills gaps within the project team.</p>	3-4
<p>Answer is unacceptable</p> <p>Applicant provides an answer with serious gaps in the proposed delivery plan. Little evidence has been submitted to show that there is any hope that the applicant is able to realise their proposal under their current plan. Few, if any, suggested projected milestones, deliverables and potential risk/dependencies are mentioned. The answer provides little / no evidence that the project team has any applicable capability or added value to the delivery plan.</p>	1-2

Section 5 – Project costs & organisation financials

This **section is not scored** however information provided through answers in this section should be used by assessors to help score the next section 6 which focuses on value for taxpayer money and additionality. Any information provided here may also be used by the Combined Authority's internal investment panel as part of the strategic allocation process.

Please note in addition to the answers provided in this section assessors will need to review:

- The **Financial Breakdown Form** which has been provided by the applicant as part of the submission to show project cost / expenditure breakdown

Section 6 – Value for money & additionality

Alongside answers provided in this section, assessors will need to review applicant answers put forward in section 5 (Your project costs & organisation financials). This section is crucial to understand how an applicant's proposal represents value for taxpayer money and additionality, in other words, why is public grant funding necessary or justified for the project in question.

Marking scheme criteria	Score
<p>Answer is excellent.</p> <p>Applicant provides clear and compelling reasoning as to why public innovation funding is critical to supporting the project, which cannot go ahead without public support. There is evidence of substantial and authentic cash-based match funding which demonstrates a significant and sustained commitment to co-investment within the project. All costs put forward are critical to the delivery of the project. Due to the ongoing significant oversubscription of the fund, assessors must also be convinced that this project should be funded as a critical priority and that, without timely intervention from the High Growth Innovation Fund, a valuable market opportunity would be missed for the organisation. Projections outlining future expected impact on revenue, profit and headcount are realistic and indicate transformative impact.</p>	9-10
<p>Answer is good</p> <p>The case for grant funding is strong and well justified; however more information is needed to demonstrate that the applicant's project could not go ahead without the funding request put forward. There is evidence of match contribution which de-risks the contribution from the High Growth Innovation Fund. Costs put forward within the project budget are reasonable and sensible given the project's aims and outputs. Evidence is provided which highlights detailed consideration of other potential funding mechanisms and why they have been investigated but not found suitable or successful (either partially or in full). Assessors must be confident that the provision of funding will deliver a project which reflects the pilot's key strategic priorities. Projects outlining future expected impact on revenue, profit and headcount are sensible and indicate significant additionality.</p>	7-8
<p>Answer is adequate</p> <p>Applicant provides reasonable justification for funding, however, falls short of making a compelling case that the project should be funded through public sources. There is evidence of some limited match contribution, but more could have been provided to highlight how the applicants are contributing to project resources. Costs are adequate, with attention needed to optimise the budget to include only project critical costs. Details are outlined which show that other funding sources have been investigated, however more information is needed to establish why grant funding is specifically needed in this case. The answer provided shows, in some way, that grant funding will add value to the project, but it is not fully apparent to what extent that funding will progress the project and why the HGIF should fund this as a priority project. Projected future impact on revenue, profit and headcount may reflect only incremental impact or may show signs of not being fully grounded in reality.</p>	5-6

Answer is poor

The case for funding is weak with signs that taxpayer resources could be much better deployed elsewhere given the economic climate and current demand for innovation funding. Little evidence is provided which shows contribution of resources. Costs outlined may include one or a number of items which raise potential questions as to whether they are necessary for the project to proceed. Project future impact on revenue, profit and headcount are unrealistic. Assessors are of the opinion that projects awarded this score should not be put forward to receive funding support through the pilot.

3-4

Answer is unacceptable

Answer provided is poor and there are noticeable gaps in information which indicates publicly funded support for this project would be wasteful and inappropriate. There is no clear evidence of match funding. Answer gives little thought to alternative funding routes and may include evidence that the project forms part of 'business at usual spending. There is no case presented which highlights any merit for intervention by the grant scheme. Projected future impact on revenue, profit and headcount may be partially completed or missing.

1-2

Section 7– Social Value

Liverpool City Region aims to be the most progressive, values and ethics-led economy in Europe– a truly inclusive economy. The funding we provide will play an important role in delivering this through maximising social value of every pound we spend. By social value, we mean the difference an organisation or project can make to the communities in the City Region. In Liverpool City Region, our focus is on disrupting the inequalities that hold our residents and our economy back.

Typically, there are three categories of Social Value activity:

- **Economic:** providing employment, training and work experience opportunities for young people and those from under-represented groups.
- **Environmental:** taking active measures to reduce your carbon footprint.
- **Social:** having a positive impact in local communities and supporting local initiatives.

The social value section of the application will be scored as follows:

Marking scheme criteria	Score
<p>Answer is excellent.</p> <p>The applicant can demonstrate how social value is <i>already</i> being delivered in relation to commitment to their staff, paying real living wages, workforce diversity, the environment and their local community. There is evidence that social value is being delivered across all three domains of economic, environmental and social value and that the project will also deliver further social value. For new organisations, some degree of social value is already being delivered, and there is a strong commitment to deliver further social value in future. The assessor is convinced that the applicant and the project will have an extremely positive social impact in the Liverpool City Region.</p>	<p>9-10</p>

<p>Answer is good</p> <p>If the applicant has been trading for several years, they are able to demonstrate how social value is being delivered in relation to several areas and a strong commitment to take further action to increase the amount of social value the organisation delivers with clear examples of what actions they will take to do so. For new organisations, there is a strong commitment from the organisation to deliver social value. The assessor believes that the applicant and the project will have a high social impact in the Liverpool City Region.</p>	7-8
<p>Answer is adequate</p> <p>The applicant can provide at least one example of how they are already delivering social value in the Liverpool City Region and a strong commitment to take further action to increase the amount of social value the organisation delivers with, clear examples of what actions they will take to do so. The assessor believes that the applicant, and the project, has the potential to deliver high social impact in the Liverpool City Region.</p>	5-6
<p>Answer is poor</p> <p>The applicant provides a limited answer with very loose commitment to deliver social value within the City Region or wider community. There is likely no real evidence put forward to demonstrate that social value forms part of their wider vision either for the individual project in question or for the long-term future of their organisation.</p>	3-4
<p>Answer is unacceptable</p> <p>Applicant cannot identify any way in which the organisation currently, or plans to, provide social value, nor how this project can contribute to changing the status quo for their organisation. Assessor may believe that supporting such a proposal would be of likely reputational damage to the fund and partner organisations.</p>	1-2

If you have any additional questions that are not clarified by this document then please contact the programme support team at highgrowth@growthplatform.org at least 72 hours before application deadline. Please note that while the team will endeavour to respond asap the volume of applications may make this difficult in practice.