Strategy 2026-28

New foundations for growth in West London

WEST LONDON BUSINESS

LEADERSHIP FOR THE WORLD'S MOST CONNECTED PLACE

Contents

Executive Summary

West London Business' Strategy 2026-28 sets our direction and ambitious impact targets for our members, supporters and partners. It is a challenging national and global political and economic context, yet as an organisation West London Business (WLB) starts from a position of strength with significant improvements in capability and capacity developed in the past few years. This is reflected in our achieving the NCVO Trusted Standard quality mark.

Against a backdrop of stagnated productivity growth and a need for more power supply our overarching theme is 'New foundations for growth in West London'. National political headwinds often ignore or deny the capital's vital economic role. These are expected to present a continued challenge during the period of this strategy. Alongside this AI is anticipated to increase its social and economic impact.

With a deeply committed leadership team, in the past three years we have continued to build on our track record of successful delivery and financial prudence. This Strategy will continue to be a living, breathing resource setting our direction, but remaining adaptable to ever changing circumstances. We will continue to be 'strategically opportunistic' in securing the resources necessary for success.

- **Our purpose, approach and behaviours** (below) are tightly intertwined. WLB is a signatory to the UN Global Compact and committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals – and our Strategy 2023-25 sets out our contribution to these local, national and international efforts. These are all integral to our ways of working and guide where WLB directs its thought leadership and delivery.
- **Our theory of change** provides a high-level framework that helps define what we do and how we do it.
- **Strategic objectives** cover six programmatic areas and criteria for success: Inclusive employment; Innovation; Education & skills; the Built Environment; Energy & infrastructure; and Resilience.
- **Beneficiaries and place-based approach** sets out the five key beneficiary groups we serve and our top priority in each of the seven north-west London boroughs that we operate, as well as the Old Oak & Park Royal Development Corporate (OPDC) area.
- **Service delivery priorities** sets out our six key operational objectives and improvement areas. This includes growing the Corporate Leaders' Action Group and maintaining the Trusted Standard quality mark we secured at the end of 2024.
- **Member services** will continue to be highly bespoke to the needs of individual member companies and organisations. The broad menu reflects the huge diversity of our members and the range of benefits they seek from being part of WLB.
- **Resourcing, organisation design and digital infrastructure** highlights the need over the next three years to: attract more private sector funding and ensure that we accurately price our member services and project delivery; develop our people and ensure that the organisation design is fit for purpose; and finally, maintain our productivity by continuing to invest in our advanced digital infrastructure, including accelerated adoption of AI.

***Andrew Dakers**, Chief Executive Officer*

Our purpose, approach and behaviours

WLB ensures West London is a successful, inclusive, environment for responsible business.

Our members work together through WLB to maintain our global economic competitiveness and catalyse action for people and planet.

We are the West London experts.

Business-led

- We put our members and business leaders at the heart of the organisation's decision-making
- We stay accountable and transparent through our Annual General Meeting, an open-door approach through the year and proactive engagement with our members/ partners

Trustworthy & evidence-led

- We do what we say we are going to do
- We role model high standards so that people can feel confident in our practice
- We are evidence and data led in our programme design, but also open about when it is difficult to evidence impact (longitudinally or due to cost of analysis)

Inspiring

- We approach each day with the energy, passion and persistence to exceed expectations
- We operate from a fun, energising workspace and all contribute to a team culture that is respectful & enjoyable; this also informs the format, location and tone of our events and activities for members/supporters
- We breakdown any barriers to inclusion/ participation by start-ups, micros and non-profits, or socially excluded individuals/groups

Action-oriented

- We are relentless in our pursuit of success for West London and adopt a systems thinking approach in the design and delivery of programmes
- We are strategically opportunistic, flexible and ready to learn/adapt quickly to changing circumstances
- We are laser focused in innovating solutions and ambitious to scale programmes

Lean

- We use resources and time in an efficient and sustainable way, including making smart use of technology and tightly controlling our cost base to remain competitive
- We benchmark what we do against other organisations

Collaborative

- We help initiate new opportunities and foster innovation by connecting stakeholders
- We know where to signpost members/ partners to for support and advice that we can't provide
- We avoid duplicating what others are already doing well

TRUSTED STANDARD LEVEL 1 NCVO

Track record: Impact

West London's first annex to the London Local Skills Improvement Plan was led on by West London Business working with the West London Alliance and BusinessLDN. It set the direction of travel for a new era of collaboration across HE, FE and the private sector and fostered a network of skills hubs. Public-private investment in the West London Retail Skills Hub is a tangible example of its impact.

West London needs several Gigawatts of additional power supply by the early 2030s. West London Business has become a leading convenor of stakeholders to address the constraints particularly facing Ealing, Hillingdon and Hounslow boroughs.   We actively review and respond to the sector's investment plans and are cited by the BBC and other media outlets on the issue.

Screen Capital West and, in London Borough of Hounslow, Creative Enterprise West CEZ has deepened our understanding and support for the screen sector with investment growing in recent years. The growth of Garden Studios, West London Film Studios and soon 180 Studios at the Gilette Building demonstrate the commitment of investors supported by the evidence base and networks we convene and cultivate.

Green Business Action has supported over 1,000 MSMEs across the capital with £1.3m of funding to end March 2025. Businesses on the programme made 569tCO2e reductions with the potential for 4,316tCO2e reductions.

Context

Political

- New-ish Government and Mayoral elections in 2028
- Reform rising and tightened immigration policy
- Support for action on environmental issues volatile, despite poor air quality and extreme weather
- Geopolitics from Ukraine to China/ USA and post-Brexit trade relations impacting supply chains and investment

However…

- Direction in London Growth Plan and UK Industrial Strategy
- Strong support for West London Orbital and Heathrow expansion

Economic

- Labour market tight for very specific skills, but risk of growing unemployment due to AI
- State debt high – spending austere. In London this increases reliance on private sector and a stretched voluntary sector.
- Trump administration policies driving greater protectionism
- GVA/ productivity flatlining

However…

- Inflation may be stabilising
- As UK's global gateway we remain highly dynamic and output driven location
- Sectoral strengths: transport & logistics, professional service, media, retail, hospitality/food and manufacturing
- Substantial investment programme at Heathrow pre-expansion
- HS2/Old Oak station creates opportunity for Birmingham and Oxford collaboration

Social

- Long COVID
- Growing and aging population
- 85,000 claimants – numbers have risen substantially post-pandemic and new waves of immigration
- Insufficient funding for ESOL training
- Continued challenges of community cohesion and integration (e.g. trust in Met police)
- Social mobility stagnating
- Inter-generational inequality / substantial cost of living pressures for many

However…

- One of the UK's most diverse communities with familial links across globe
- Cultural and education offer is internationally competitive
- More home-working may support daytime suburban town centre viability

Technical

- AI investment and adoption growing potentially creates structural socio-economic issues
- Energy supply constraints in three boroughs

However…

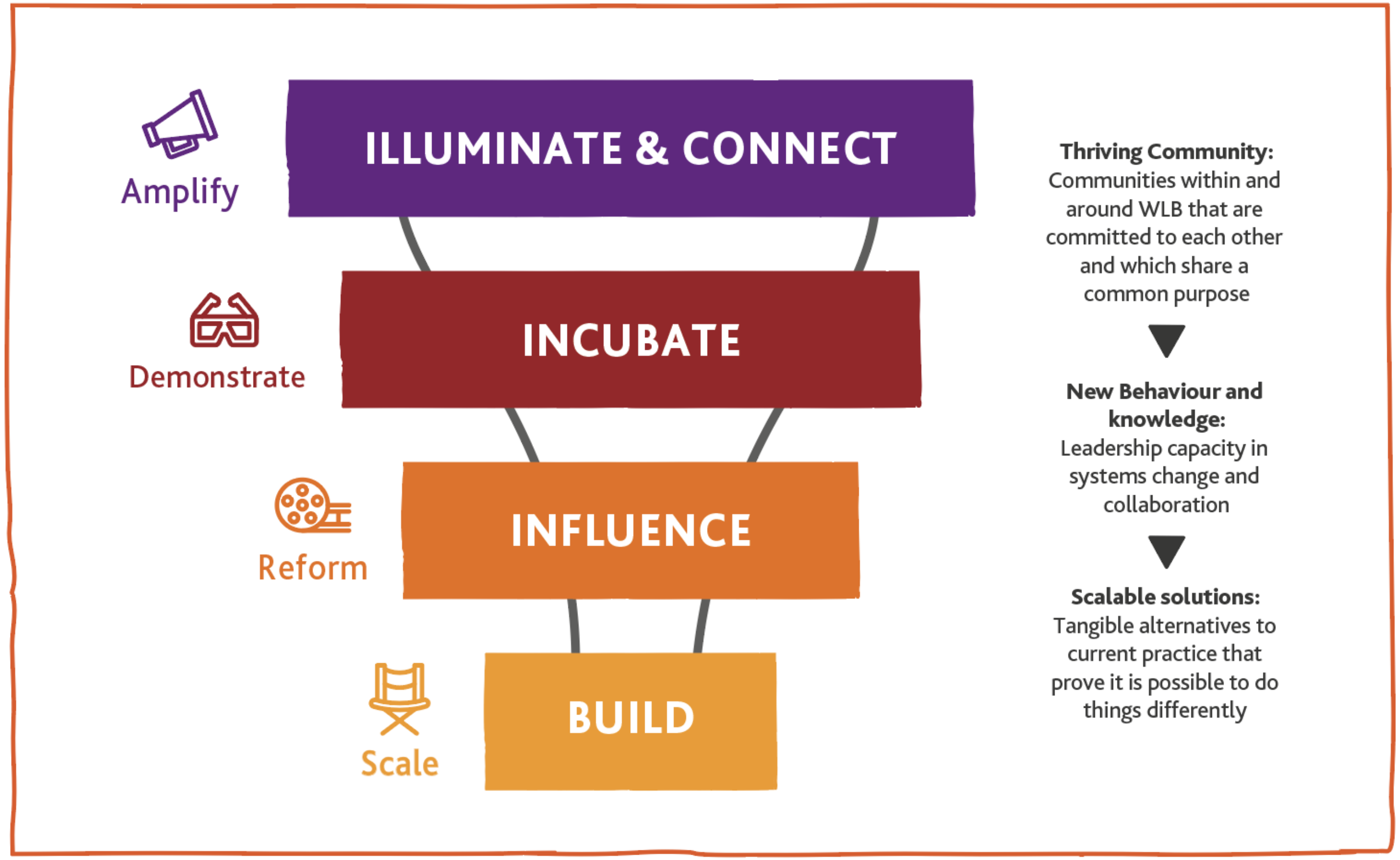
- 20% of UK data centre capacity in Park Royal to Slough corridor is a strength we must leverage more
- Opportunity to support and encourage MSMEs to accelerate digital transformation (Big data, IoT, Industry 4.0, AI and Automation)
- Emergent technology: Quantum computing, biotechnology and synthetic biology are key drivers behind high value start-ups

Theory of Change

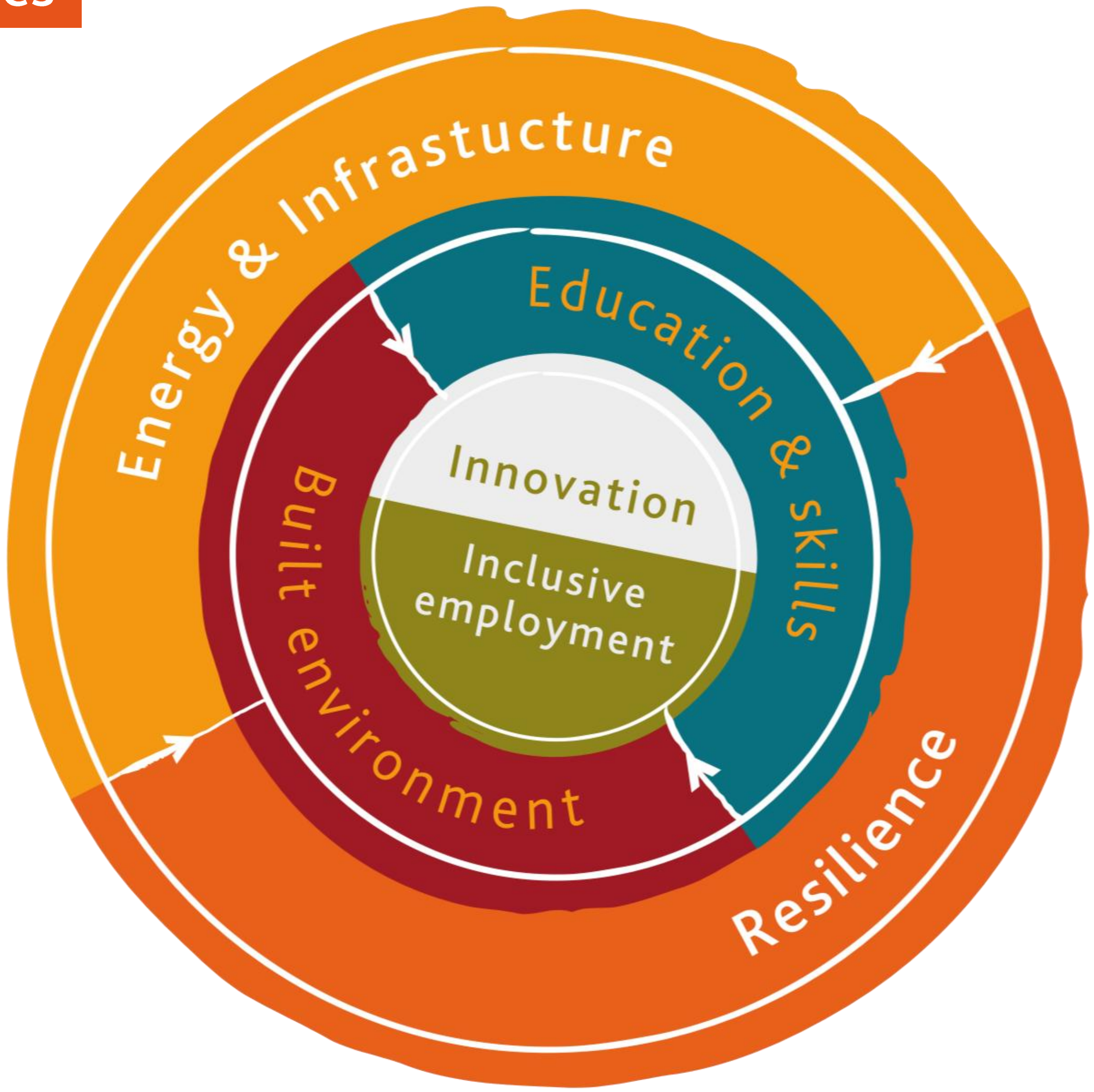
Our Theory of Change is a high-level impact framework defining who we are, what we do, why we do it and criteria for success. It has broad application across WLB.

It should inform our strategic goals and guide how we measure and evidence our impact.

Individual programmes and projects will apply more more bespoke, granular Theories of Change.



Strategic Objectives



KEY IMPACTS

- Investment accelerated in clean energy infrastructure
- Collaborative working ensures talent supply in priority sectors
- Wider adoption of inclusive employment good practice
- Investment up in high growth, high innovation firms
- West London's economic hubs globally recognised, attracting sustained investment & high quality employment
- Businesses reporting increased energy & cybersecurity resilience

Delivery programme (1/3)

Inclusive Employment

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

- How could/ should business community respond to 85,000 claimants; how can we better understand their capabilities (Y1/2)

ACTION

- Forge new collaboration with WLA/ Shaw Trust to raise awareness of WorkWell (Y1)
- Engage with DWP/ JCP to improve data on claimants training needs (Y1/2)

Innovation

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

- Scope West London's future relationships with Birmingham ('HS2 Growth Corridor'), Oxford (GWR) and Slough (Y2)
- Work with partners to shape WestTech London; clarify link with London West Innovation Network (LWIN) – Y1
- High growth companies report – July 2025 (Y0)
- Collaborative platform for local procurement (Y1)
- Support CreaTech growth with launch of 'West London Screens' report (Y1)

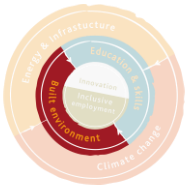
ACTION

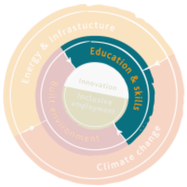
- Nurture relationships with Slough, Birmingham and Oxford (Y2/3)
- Support North Acton BID (Y1)
- Continue to host and develop Park Royal Business Group (Y1)
- Influence/ signpost to London and national business support activity – particularly in the absence of UK SPF or equivalent (Y1)
- Better leverage LWIN to reach high growth potential companies with opportunities and understand their needs. Collaborate with boroughs to fill gaps left by L&P. (Y2)
- Support new innovation clusters: Old Oak, Golden Mile (Y1) and (tbc) Stockley (Y2)
- Launch procurement pilot with HEIs (Y1)
- Advocate for 'Unscripted Tax Relief' (Y1)

Top priorities

Y1/2/3 = Strategy Year 1, 2 and/or 3

Delivery programme (2/3)





Built Environment

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

- Housing supply inspiration, including ‘Employment Related Accommodation’ (Y1)
- Advocacy for West London Regional Park – Ealing and Hounslow boroughs, including Osterley (Y1)
- Commercial office space needs including Grade A, working with boroughs and OPDC (Y1)
- Benchmarking cleanliness of public realm in key business hubs (Y3)

ACTION

- Engage with borough, OPDC and London local plan reviews (Y2)
- Raise awareness amongst key brokers (e.g. banks/ accountants) of major office hubs and innovative/affordable spaces through West London place-brand campaign. Link to WestTech London. (Y2)
- Help ensure GP superhubs have land allocated across geography (Y3)

Education & Skills

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

- Local Skills Improvement Plan 2 (Y1)
- Modular life-long learning pilot (FE/ HE) – ‘West London Region of Learning’ (Y1)

ACTION

- Sustain/evolve sector skills hubs (Y1)
- Support affordable AI training programme for micros and small businesses. Explore Growth & Skills Levy funding, free online offer and role of hyperscalers. (Y1)
- Secure at least one Technical Education College (TEC) in West London (Y2-3)

Delivery programme (3/3)

Energy & Infrastructure

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

- Continue to unpick energy infrastructure investment needs with WLA, GLA, NESO, NGET and SSE. (Y1)
- Input to: HSPG Heathrow Outcomes Framework for expansion; Heathrow Aviation Economic Zone concept with business rates relief framework to incentivise FDI; and how to maximise local economic benefit from current airport operations. (Y1)
- Articulate local economic benefit/ enabling role of data centres WL hosts (Y1)

ACTION

- Continue to engage & lobby energy stakeholders on WL needs, plus support detailed energy planning/ network change in Park Royal (Y1)
- Continue to lobby for accelerated investment in West London Orbital (WLO) ....GWR link to Oxford and other rail links in/out of Old Oak (Y1)
- Convene hyperscalers on how they strategically engage with WL leaders (Y1)

Resilience

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

- Develop WL Social needs dashboard (Y1)
- Workforce participation in democratic process (Y1)
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation advocacy (Y1)
- Benchmark Green pensions for SMEs (Y1/2)
- Spotlight Cybersecurity and new AI threats (Y1)

ACTION

- Explore more collaborative volunteering and community investment, including community cohesion (Y1/2)
- Provide businesses with tools tool to support workforce participation in democracy
- Redesign Green Business Action delivery model through partnership approach: a) connect Energy audits with green finance/ retrofit supply chain; and b) Integrate water efficiency advice into delivery (Y1/2)
- 'Under ransom' simulations (Y1)

Target beneficiaries and place-based approach

Smaller businesses 1,500

- 115,000 VAT and/or PAYE registered organisations with <250 staff across 7 boroughs
  (Source: ONS)
- Our focus is the 1,500 fast growth potential, high innovation companies
  (Source: Beauhurst)

Larger businesses 350

- VAT and/or PAYE registered organisations with 250+ staff, thus includes public sector/ education
  (Source: ONS)

Education Institutions 237

- Eight Universities
- Nine college campuses
- 220 secondary schools – state and independent (56 Barnet, 31 Brent, 33 Ealing, 13 Hammersmith & Fulham, 26 Harrow, 32 Hillingdon and 29 Hounslow)

Investor categories 7

- Institutions
- Real estate investors
- Angels
- Venture Capital
- Banks
- Family and friends
- Companies – established/ inbound

Policy makers 16

- Seven boroughs
- Old Oak & Park Royal Development Corp (OPDC)
- West London Alliance
- City Hall
- Three priority Central Government Departments: Business, Net Zero & Education
- Cross Party Group for West London
- Think tanks & Trade bodies

Our core geography and local borough ambitions

Harrow

Support development of a strong fast growth, high innovation company network with LWIN.

Hillingdon

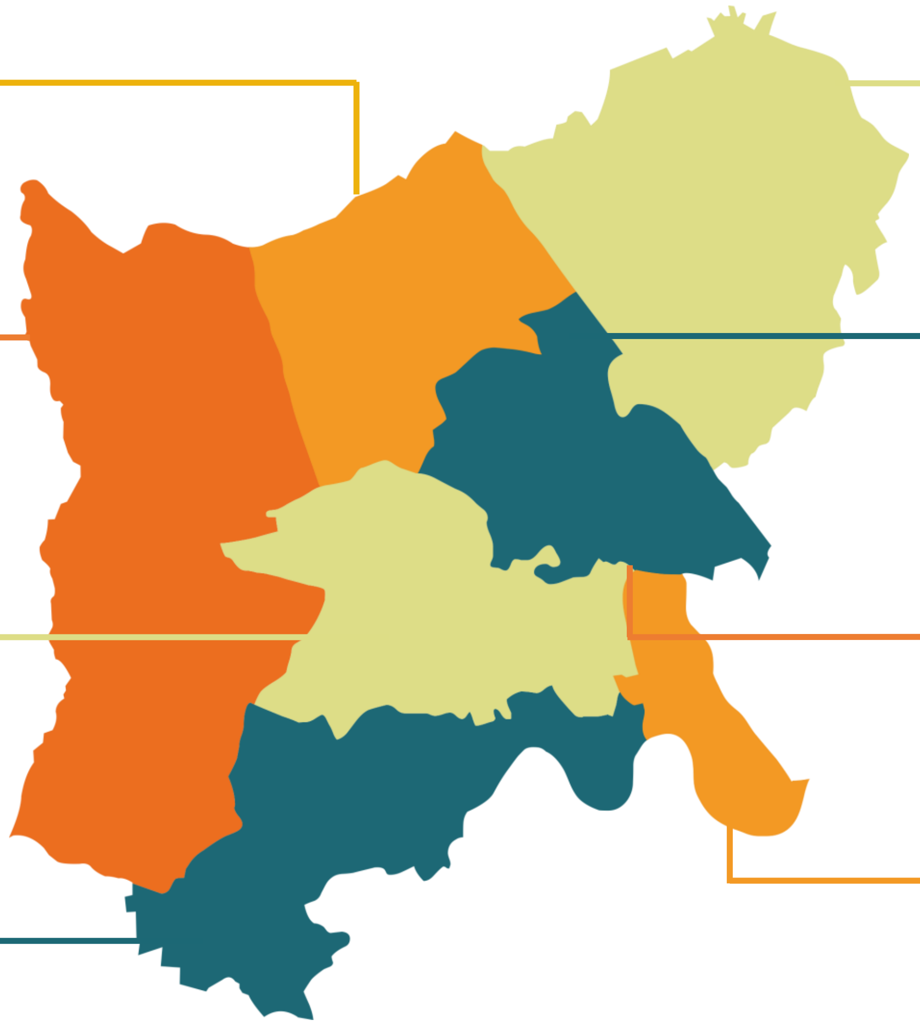
Support local chamber capacity building; the convening of a new creative cluster around Hayes; and, where appropriate, supply chain links with Heathrow.

Ealing

Support fast growth, high innovation firms through LWIN; advocacy of Living Wage Place initiative; and promote promotion of new spatial strategy for Ealing town centre.

Hounslow

Support the Creative Enterprise West CEZ/ promoting Golden Mile vision; and, where appropriate, supply chain links with Heathrow.



Barnet

Support economic development at Brent Cross Town, Screen London Barnet and 'borough of fun' positioning.

Brent

Support the development of Wembley and Park Royal; promote affordable housing and childcare solutions as part of inclusive employment.

OPDC

Sustain impact of PRBG; help foster Old Oak innovation cluster; and support North Acton BID, subject to ballot success.

Hammersmith & Fulham

Support drive for a more inclusive White City Innovation District; and champion Olympia hub and Earls Court regeneration.

Service delivery priorities

1 Clear service offer/ opportunities for all

- Relationship Managers, 1:1 meetings and Events provide members and supporters with easy access to all our programmes
- External communications have an overarching narrative that balances all strands of work
- West London Business Awards continue to celebrate excellence

2 Expand the West London Corporate Leaders Action Group

- Ensure the Corporate Leaders Action Group (CLAG) is the preeminent route for locally-based corporates to shape WLB's strategy, contribute to community action in their backyard and build their profile with senior local stakeholders
- Build CLAG participation in national conversation through Anthropy

3 Maintain core areas of expertise

- Continue to embed WLB Competency Framework
- West London location, sustainability and private sector mobilisation
- Electricity network investment in West London
- Centre of Excellence for MSME net zero transition, climate change adaptation and water efficiency
- Build and promote 'associates' network for agility

4 Strong network of delivery partners

- Sustain ability to bring together best-in-class consortia to deliver complex, high impact programmes
- Design partnership delivery models that are financially viable for WLB – and say "no" to opportunities that are not a good strategic fit or are not financially viable

5 Financially sustainable

- Surplus target of 4% turnover continues to sustain reserves/ working capital
- Income growth allows WLB to invest in our people and build capacity to increase future impact

6 High quality, resilient governance and delivery

- Maintain Cyber Essentials and NCVO's 'Trusted Standard' accreditations
- Ensure we understand carbon footprint and reduction plans of all our members and they are accessing any mitigation/ adaptation support required

Member services

Our members will be able to select annually a bespoke mix of opportunities and benefits around these five focus areas.

This process will be supported by their Relationship Manager and continues to evolve through the year as their needs change.

We will equip SME members with the resources to support a new West London 'place brand' campaign as part of member value proposition.

Build your network & grow your business

Marketing & Brand building

Leadership

Have your say

Knowledge & insight

Resourcing, organisation design and digital infrastructure

Refocusing on private sector funding

Given funding pressures on all tiers of government are more acute than ever we will prioritise developing private sector funding to sustain our work over the next three years.

Actions:

- Work with the Corporate Leaders' Action Group to grow this part of our membership base.
- Grow the membership and participation of tech/ Data centres operators/ energy companies.

Pricing

Some WLB members draw more support from WLB than they are investing into WLB. They are then subsidised by staff working unpaid overtime and/or other members that are underutilising their membership.

We must consistently recovery the delivery and overhead costs from projects.

Actions:

- Transparently communicate what % of membership subscription income is contributing to collaborative initiatives, versus direct support to the member organisation.
- Develop our understanding of the cost of delivering different levels and types of member and partner support activity. Ensure we charge 10-25% on all projects to cover overheads.

People

WLB has recruited and retained experienced staff, flexing the organisation structure with project-based contractor roles. However with cost-of-living pressures salaries risk not being competitive and reducing the talent pool from which we recruit.

Actions:

- Re-benchmark WLB against the pay-scales of similar organisations, build in likely inflationary pay rises into project design/ growth targets, conduct annual staff surveys.
- Budget for paid internships where viable – E.g. Critical Awards delivery months.

Digital infrastructure

WLB makes extensive and relatively advanced use of IT.

Actions:

- Embed Microsoft Planner and board level reporting through PowerBI.
- Improve data acquisition and cleansing on our Salesforce CRM.
- Revisit business process automation/ AI adoption opportunities.
- Maintain documentation for business-critical tools such as Arlo.
- Sustain cyber security improvements aligned to Cyber Essentials standard, including a standard Windows Desktop.
- Remove tools we no longer use from our IT ecosystem.

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