

SWRDA Corporate Research Programme

Outline Delivery Plan

2008/09

The South West RDA's Corporate Research Programme (CRP) is the mechanism by which regionally significant, strategic research that the Agency wishes to commission is managed. The programme is managed by the Economics and Evidence Team. Additional research relating to specific geographical areas or sectors is commissioned by the relevant Area / Sector teams.

The RDA is very keen to make the most of opportunities for co-operation and collaboration in its research programme and would welcome expressions of interest in the proposed projects.

This document sets out the proposals put forward by teams across the Agency for research to be commissioned under the Corporate Research Programme in 2008/09. A distinction has been made between specific project proposals and more general research requirements. The specific projects are those where the research proposed is sufficiently clear to give an idea of scale / approach. These projects are outlined on pages 2 to 4. In addition, there a number of further areas where it is anticipated that there is likely be some research need but the need is currently not sufficiently defined to put forward a specific project. These areas are outlined on pages 5 and 6.

It must be stressed that this is a "long list" of research of which only the most important and urgent pieces will go on to be commissioned. The list is not closed and new research ideas will be added over the course of the year in response to the Agency's changing needs.

Donald Barr – 01392 229322 / 07712 678875 – Donald.Barr@southwestrda.org.uk

SPECIFIC PROJECT PROPOSALS

Productivity growth vs. carbon reduction

Identify the key potential conflicts and synergies between the twin goals of raising productivity and moving towards zero carbon. This would be a 'think piece' exploring the issues in general and looking at specific areas using the Regional Economy-Environment Input-Output model (REEIO).

Ecological footprint update

Update of the 2001 Steeping Forward foot-printing research using the Resource & Energy Analysis Programme (REAP). The latest development this model will be adding more current data as well as time series data going back to the early 1990s. The new data will allow an assessment of change against the agreed baseline period for greenhouse gas emissions. The objective would be to produce a comprehensive regional and sub-regional summary in a format that is easily accessible to policy makers.

NetMap refresh

Update on the survey and mapping of business networks carried out by GWE in 2004. As well as producing an up-to-date picture of business networks and networking activity this would be an opportunity to gain an understanding of how and why business networks are developing.

Making Alumni Networks Yield Economic and Business Benefit in the South West

How Can the South West best exploit the resource arising from the South West HEI alumni networks? The UK has traditionally under-utilised alumni networks, and the bulk of alumni interaction is social or fund-raising, rather than business focussed. We would like to undertake a piece of research, working with HERDA and HERDA member institutions, that looks at the potential for utilising the South West alumni network. The research will need to look at the potential to create business networks and increased business interaction with HE through the development of alumni networks.

Sub-regional framework for provision of employment land / premises

This work will focus on:

- Spatial implications of employment projections for each housing market area and district (using regional projections as baseline)
- Consistent approach to market facing, forward looking assessment of land supply in each housing market area and the retention of strategic employment sites.
- The needs of different sectors and businesses, large and small, including offices, retail, education, leisure and health (esp. given the 60% of regional employment that these are likely to provide.)

This will provide a good basis for the emerging Regional Employment Land Group to work from; will complement existing work undertaken for RSS purposes, which is now in need of further refinement; will fit well with research re Planning for Productivity and will help ensure a consistent approach to identification and delivery of

SWRDA Corporate Research Programme 2008 / 09

employment land / premises, to meet business needs, across the region.

Building and Developing Soft Infrastructure and Networks

Networks and other 'soft infrastructure' will have an increasingly important role to play in the delivery of Agency policy through partnership working. There is need to quantify and understand the existing soft infrastructure and networks in the third sectors and identify how these can best used in the Agency's sustainable communities remit.

Measuring Economic Inclusion

Pilot the use of nef's Measuring Social Return on Investment toolkit to translate social and environmental outcomes into monetary values. Using one or more Agency projects the aim would be to explore the feasibility of incorporating the method into the Agency's approaches to appraisal and evaluation. There will be a cost in collecting extra baseline and post investment information and the overall cost of the study will depend on the scale and complexity of the project(s) chosen.

Regional Market Analysis of the Print Industry

There is a need to understand the potential for investment in the SW print industry and the displacement effects of this investment.

Financial Services in the SW

The overall aim of the research would be to provide the Agency with an assessment of the financial services sector in the region including the scope for Agency intervention to improve the productivity of the sector. The specific objectives of the research would be to:

- Map the nature and extent of the financial services sector in the South West highlighting regional strengths (both by type of activity and sub-region). [We may want to use Market Clusters or a similar approach]
- Develop a SWOT analysis of the sector relative to UK and international competition.
- Determine the business support needs of the financial services sector in the South West and provide any evidence of market failure;
- Make recommendations as to whether, and how, the South West RDA and other public sector bodies could support the financial services sector.

Globalisation - its impact for on leadership and management development provision.

The SW Leadership and Management Development (LMD) Strategy was approved January 2008 and the RDA leads on the action to future-proof leadership and management development offer. LMD is an RDA skills priority; we have mapped LMD provision but need to assess its relevance to leading and managing in a global economy to raise performance in the SW.

The research would aim to establish if and how a globalised economy changes the skills need for leaders and managers and if it does whether this has been taken account of in leadership and management provision and where is the best practice either in colleges, HE or companies

SWRDA Corporate Research Programme 2008 / 09

High Level Vocational Skills Models

Demographic changes require more adult vocational solutions to meet business skills needs and vocational HE is a government priority. The SW lags behind other regions and there is a need to provide the evidence to encourage regional HEIs to grow the SW vocational skills offer.

This research will look at best practice models in the UK and elsewhere and how they might be applied to the SW. This will help to unlock HEFCE funding available to develop such provision.

Investigate approaches to skills development in SWRDA Growth Point areas

There are several growth point areas, including the Eastern Corridor of A38, East of Exeter and North Devon whose local strategic partnerships want physical regeneration to address their challenges, such as worklessness, more directly through relevant skills development to local employment. This research would:

- use Devon as a pilot to anticipate general skills needs in areas of major physical regeneration
- Review the methods for gathering the skills information at a local level
- Investigate learning to work pathways for young people, workless groups and those in areas of economic sector restructuring
- Review existing approaches, including the CPR Works and West at Work examples
- Explore the ways of working with several local employment and skills groupings on one area.
- Recommend process for constant review of skills needs

This work will support the Single Skills Strategy process by encouraging all organisations and the private sector to be involved skills planning process.

Maximising the impact of ICT – case studies of businesses transformed through ICT

Identify/correlate Businesses which have undergone a fundamental transformation as a result of ICT or those new high-growth start-ups which have been launched off the back of new technology. Examine and define the cultural and organisational changes (lessons learnt) which have enabled certain businesses at the top of the e-adoption ladder to maximise their productivity and return on ICT investment.

Virtual Presences

Explore the growing use of Virtual Presences (Second Life etc) as a tool for networking and business growth. Identify opportunities for SW economic development in this area

- How could SWRDA (or other economic development agencies) could exploit this medium in their delivery of, for example, the inward investment or innovation agendas
- How SW businesses might benefit from such virtual environments (e.g. a regional 'Shop Window' or virtual business incubation)
- How the use of Virtual Environments might address environmental issues (e.g. Hosting virtual conferences, seminars or learning events)

OTHER AREAS FOR RESEARCH

Getting to Zero Carbon

This Corporate Plan core strategy will have a significant effect on how the Agency appraises and evaluates all of its work. Whilst some carbon accounting tools have been developed, these are limited to capital, largely construction, work and will not fully meet the Agency's needs. (The Business Investment team had identified a need to measure the carbon impact of SFI projects and proposed a research project on this.)

Baselining Priority Places

Provide baseline evidence for the priority places identified in the corporate plan. This will involve identifying and addressing gaps and weaknesses in the official statistics for the areas. The cost will be determined by the assessment of the need, cost and benefit of primary data gathering in creating the local evidence bases.

Single Regional Strategy Evidence Base

It is expected that an evidence base for the SRS will need to be produced in 2009/10. Given the long lead-in time required for collecting primary data it is anticipated that a substantial amount of the work will need to be commissioned in 2008/09.

Demography, migration and diversity in the South West

There is a need to understand how demographic change, migration and diversity impact on our economy and society will affect the economy of the SW. The nature of the project will depend on the degree to which existing research and resources on demographics / skills can be used to look specifically at barriers, opportunities and skills relating to equality / diversity.

Creative Industries Contribution

LDA and the Work Foundation have initiated research on how creative industries contribute to the wider UK economy and to local economies. After the initial phase of the research all RDAs will be invited to participate.

Annual Small Business Survey 2008/09

The Enterprise Directorate have indicated that the ASBS will be substantially overhauled for 2008/09, in effect starting a new series. Depending on the degree of discontinuity there may be a case for boosting the survey in the SW in order to provide a baseline for the new series. Involvement would also give the Agency the opportunity to influence the development of the survey.

SWRDA Corporate Research Programme 2008 / 09

ICT Benchmarking study – follow-up research

To investigate in greater detail, key topics highlighted by the 2008 ICT SME Benchmarking Study and the parallel consultation on ICT in larger enterprises. This provision is needed to ensure that evidence generated by the studies is used to inform RDA policy and practice relating to ICT.