

# West Midlands Regional Assembly

## WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

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### Final Progress Report against *Delivering Advantage*

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1. **Purpose**

- 1.1 To present the final Progress Report against Delivering Advantage, including the results of a third party verification of progress reported since 2004.

2. **Recommendation**

- 2.1 To note the 2007-08 Progress Report against *Delivering Advantage* and the associated verification report covering progress since 2004.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 A progress report has been produced each year since the previous version of the West Midlands Economic Strategy, *Delivering Advantage*, was launched in 2004. The reports have comprised two main elements – a self-assessment of progress made against each of the 45 identified actions and an assessment of progress against the vision, based on regional performance against the headline socio-economic outcome indicators identified in the Strategy. For this fourth and final year of reporting against the old strategy, a third party verification exercise was also undertaken to test the accuracy of the progress that has been reported over the four years.

4. **The 2007-08 Progress Report and the verification exercise**

- 4.1 Ecotec Research and Consulting were commissioned by Advantage West Midlands to verify the self-assessments of progress against actions for the final year of delivery against the Strategy, 2007/08, and to check the validity of the progress described in the previous three reports, covering 2004/05, 2005/06 and 2006/07. In addition, the research aimed to identify any lessons that could be learned to inform the approach to future progress monitoring against the new West Midlands Economic Strategy, *Connecting to Success*.
- 4.2 The verification/validation exercise comprised three main elements. First, for 2007/08, partners were asked to complete a self-assessment of progress

against the actions for which they were responsible – that is, the same process that has happened in each of the three preceding years. Second, structured interviews were undertaken with a number of the partners and Agency staff involved in the reporting process. Finally, for a selection of actions, a review was undertaken of the documentary evidence available to support the reported progress.

## 5. **Progress against *Delivering Advantage***

5.1 Ecotec state that, '*Reported progress against the 45 actions set out in Delivering Advantage has been good and shows a generally positive trend. In each of the four years, progress against the majority of actions has been reported to be either "progressing smoothly" or "on track with manageable issues to be resolved". For the minority of actions that initially encountered difficulties in delivery, those difficulties had subsequently been overcome by the fourth reporting year (2007/08). The verification/validation exercise undertaken by Ecotec supports the self-assessments of progress and gradings given to each action over the period since 2004. The four annual progress reports can be regarded as broadly accurate summaries of the progress made in delivering the 45 actions set out in Delivering Advantage.*'

5.2 The improving trend over time is illustrated in the four charts shown overleaf in Figure 1, which have been taken from the four annual progress reports. The way in which actions were categorised changed slightly between 2005/2006 and 2007/2008 – but the overall trend for an increasing number of actions to be classified as either 'progressing smoothly' or 'on track with manageable issues to be resolved', is clear.

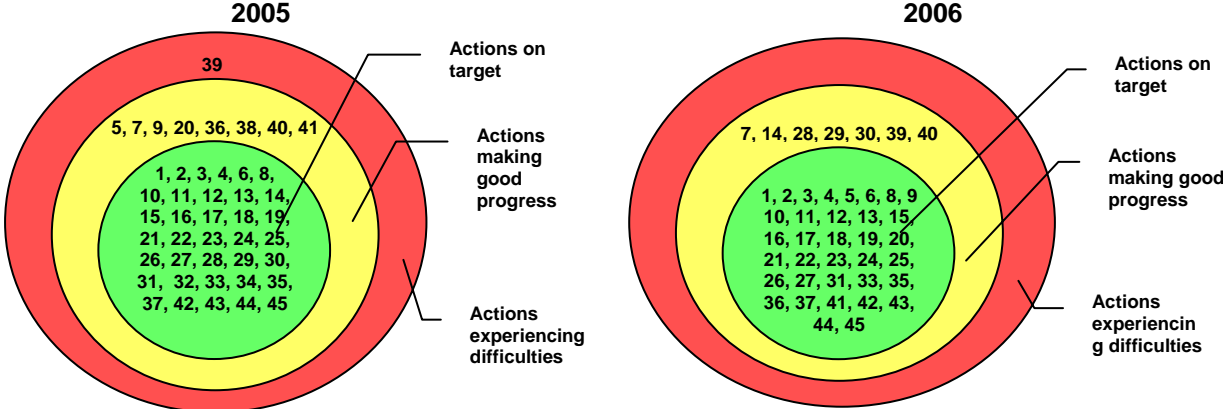
5.3 *Delivering Advantage* was superseded, in December 2007, by *Connecting to Success*. The new Strategy, and its associated Delivery Framework, takes forward relevant areas of ongoing activity from the previous version of the Strategy. In other words, activity that was initiated under *Delivering Advantage* did not cease with the publication of the new Strategy.

## 6. **Lessons learned and next steps on progress reporting**

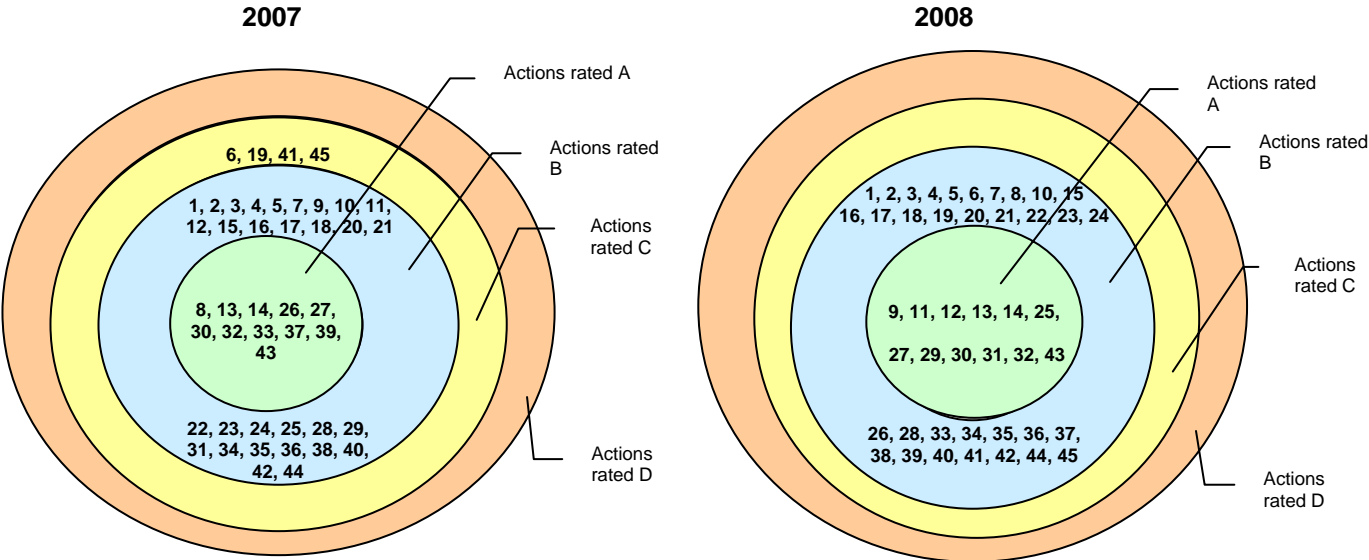
6.1 Going forward, a number of lessons can be learned:

- Undertaking at least an annual self-assessment of progress against the actions set out in the Strategy is seen to be a worthwhile and valuable process. This approach should therefore continue.
- Those involved in progress reporting would welcome greater clarity about the process and how it relates to other, related, monitoring and reporting activity. The feedback loop in terms of feeding back the overall progress report to all those involved in the process could also be strengthened.

**Figure 1 - Summary of progress against actions set out in Delivering Advantage, 2005-08**



Above (2005 and 2006) - Summary of progress made in delivering the 45 Actions of the West Midlands Economic Strategy and shows the average ratings of the Actions. **Green** - for Actions hitting the mark; **Yellow** for Actions making progress; **Red** for Actions not hitting the mark and experiencing serious difficulties.



Above (2007 and 2008) - Summary of progress made in delivering the 45 Actions of the West Midlands Economic Strategy and shows the actual ratings of the Actions.

- Actions rated A** - for Actions progressing smoothly;
- Actions rated B** - for Actions on track but manageable issues to be resolved;
- Actions rated C** - for Actions experiencing difficulties but progress is being made moving forward;
- Actions rated D** - for Actions with extreme difficulties and unresolved issues.

(The difference between the first two diagrams compared to the last two is the result of a decision taken from 2007 to make the diagrams an exact representation of the ratings shown in the progress report; A, B, C or D.)

- Related to the previous point, there is scope to rationalise and ensure greater consistency between a number of related monitoring and reporting process, of which WMES progress reporting is one. Partners would welcome involvement in work to rationalise/clarify reporting mechanisms.
- There is potential for the information collected through the monitoring process to be more effectively used. As mentioned previously, it could be better fed-back to improve activity on an ongoing basis. It could also be used more effectively as a way of identifying and collecting information about successes that help to boost the profile of the region.
- Finally, an inclusive approach that nurtures and engages partners has underpinned progress against the economic strategy. This will remain important in the future, and will ensure partners are responsive to the region's agenda.

6.2 The lessons learned in detail from the past four years reporting and the findings from the ECOTEC verification work is being used to inform the development of the approach to monitoring and updating the new Delivery Framework for *Connecting to Success*. The new approach will include increased use and analysis of progress against socio-economic outcome indicators and evidence from impact evaluation of projects and programmes.

6.3 The 2007-08 WMES Progress Report against *Delivering Advantage* and the associated verification report will be made publicly available via the Advantage West Midlands web site.

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