

## **Centre for Regional Inclusive Growth – Business Case**

This document sets out the case for developing a website to host the recently announced Centre for Regional Inclusive Growth.

### **1. Background**

Inclusive growth is central to Scotland's Economic Strategy. Within Scotland, economic and social outcomes vary considerably between regions, local authorities and places. Ensuring that all areas and people can prosper is fundamentally important for Scotland's overall performance and to build the country and society we wish to see.

Driving inclusive growth across Scotland's cities, regions and rural areas requires an understanding of the unique opportunities and challenges in Scotland's places and communities. To support this work the Centre for Regional Inclusive Growth was announced by the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work on 14 November 2017.

The centre will be formed through a consortium of partners to provide a platform for local areas, regional partners and other stakeholders to deepen the evidence base, and progress on development of policy actions and priorities for driving inclusive growth.

### **2. Need for site**

#### **Improved knowledge transfer:**

While there is significant policy development, analysis and research across Local Authorities, the academic sector, national and regional bodies, there is currently no mechanism for bringing this work together, and consequently, it is often not coordinated resulting in gaps, particularly in region-level intelligence related to economic development. In addition, inclusive growth is an agenda that is rapidly developing in Scotland, and an area where Scotland is recognised as forward-thinking in this approach. Building Scotland's expertise and success in this area depends on a gaining a greater level of understanding on how to effectively deliver inclusive growth policies, particularly at a regional level. Further work is required for example, to understand how to effectively monitor and evaluate inclusive growth and how to improve sub-Scotland level data and intelligence.

#### **Access to Data and Toolkits:**

Currently, the resource and capacity required to take forward this type of work exists in larger local authorities and partners, however this can vary, and is not consistent across all areas. Materials and outputs, including toolkits and frameworks produced by Scottish Government and other partners, will be published on the site will cover the breadth of Scotland, be available to all, and will offer flexibility to tailor to local and regional requirements. The centre is a resource that will build analytical and policy development capacity across all of Scotland.

## **Promote Best Practice for Policy Making:**

The Centre for Regional Inclusive Growth will bring together expertise on regional economics and policy interventions to drive inclusive growth. The centre will focus on regional analysis for Scotland, but will learn from best practice across the UK and internationally. This will align interests in regional economic development and is ultimately intended to deliver demonstrable improvements in inclusive growth outcomes that benefit local communities.

A site operated in partnership with a range of stakeholders will enable published work to be academically rigorous and objective, while still supporting Scottish Government policy initiatives including City Region and Growth deals and Regional Partnerships.

## **3. Why existing communication channels are insufficient**

### **3.1. Functionality**

A key function of the centre's website will be to enable local, regional and other parties to access and use the information and tools available on the website to develop, appraise, monitor and evaluate inclusive growth policies. As part of this, it is necessary that individual users are able to tailor the available evidence and data to suit local circumstances. This will be enabled by website functionality, such as the publication of an inclusive growth monitoring framework which will allow regions and local areas to select a particular geographic area of interest and see the inclusive growth performance and underlying data. This will help bring together the evidence base and analytical in a user-friendly and accessible manner.

### **3.2. Potential for collaboration and co-creation, while ensuring quality control over content**

A key purpose of the centre is to bring together expertise on regional economics and policy interventions. This will involve working directly with academic institutions and other key stakeholders across to take identify and establish a work plan to address current evidence gaps, as well as commissioning specific pieces of research that aims to support longer term thinking on regional economic development. The centre will provide a safe space to develop and inform policy developments based on evidence.

Appropriate governance arrangements will be put in place to manage the consortium and ensure quality control over content.

The website would not be branded as a Scottish Government product – however, it is intended that the Scottish Government is a contributor and lead partner to the work of the centre and that this platform would offer a space for co-creation and allow the dissemination of work from a number of parties. However, this approach would enable Scottish Government staff to maintain control over website content and quality assure materials provided by external parties.

#### **4. Aims and Objectives**

The main objectives of the website are as follows:

1. Support local areas, regional partners and other stakeholders to use the evidence base to drive improvements in inclusive growth outcomes
2. Support regional partnerships developing plans and content statements
3. Disseminate inclusive growth analytical and policy development tools
4. Coordinate thinking and resources currently being invested in understanding regional inclusive growth and work with partners and other stakeholders to address evidence gaps
5. Ease of use – a key requirement in achieving the above objectives
6. Accessibility

#### **5. Target Audience**

There are who we expect to be the main users of the website. All new content must be designed with consideration of these users.

1. Public sector (particularly Local Authorities, enterprise and skills agencies, and Regional Partnerships)
2. Academics
3. National and international organisations (e.g. think tanks, third sector)
4. Private sector and trade bodies
5. Other interested parties (e.g. Parliament, media)

#### **6. Estimated budget**

It is estimated that initial set up costs for the website will be circa £20,000+VAT. An initial budget of £30,000 has been identified.

Additional budget has been identified for on-going maintenance and running costs (approximately £1500 per annum).

It is expected that the Centre will be able to procure and commission work through the availability of additional funding. This includes the development of additional functionalities for the website as and when necessary, as well as research commissioning.

#### **7. Sustainability and resilience**

The running of the Centre will be managed by the Office of the Chief Economic Adviser [REDACTED] and the Regional Economics branch [REDACTED] will be responsible for producing, managing and updating the website and work plan on an on-going basis working closely with colleagues in DG Economy.

It is anticipated that the website will be open source and managed by the Office of the Chief Economic Adviser. The post holder in the Regional Economics branch will receive training in the relevant platform if required to enable them to update the website on an on-going basis.

#### **8. Maintenance and security**

It is anticipated that the website will be hosted through the Scottish Government's contract with loMart. On-going costs for this will be met through identified budget.