

Plans for an LWEC Network

Background

In July 2014, LWEC partners decided that LWEC should evolve into an enabling Network, to carry its partnership benefits forward in a more agile way. A subgroup of LWEC partners developed a plan for the Network and which was approved in January 2015.

The evolution of LWEC from a partnership to a network reflects the fact that partnership working has become more 'business as usual', requiring less top-down direction but often still benefitting from external facilitation in the early stages of collaboration. The LWEC Network will help partners deliver their own strategic goals, where they require a cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approach. It will do this by facilitating multi-lateral collaboration in partner-led activities to co-design and co-deliver research and evidence gathering and to promote the application of its results.

Network Members agreed that this transition would happen during FY15/16, with a review in late 2015 to examine what value the Network is adding in helping partners deliver their priorities for collaborative activities, and to see what level of central resources are required to support it.

Goal

- The LWEC Network aims to enhance the impact of the UK's publicly funded research, evidence and innovation on informing responses to environmental change. It will do this by enabling funders to coordinate, leverage their resources and avoid duplication, resulting in more efficient use of public funds across the Network.

LWEC's unique contribution to this challenge lies in its breadth. It brings together the complementary resources of the many different disciplines and publically-funded sectors (funders, producers and users of research, evidence and innovation) needed to increase understanding of environmental change and the application of that knowledge in policy and practice. It takes a UK-wide perspective, and considers this in its international context. It also works in close partnership with business sectors, the third sector and civil society. By taking this overview, it is able to add value to other, more discipline-, sector- or geographically-focused networks, drawing together their expertise in novel coalitions where needed.

LWEC is evolving from a partnership to a network to reflect the fact that partnership working has become more 'business as usual', requiring less top-down direction, but often still benefitting from external facilitation in the early stages of collaboration. The LWEC Network will help partners deliver their own strategic goals, where they require a cross-

disciplinary and cross-sectoral approach. It will do this through facilitating multi-lateral collaboration in partner-led activities to co-design and co-deliver research and evidence gathering and to promote application of its results.

Aims

1. *Champion environmental change research and evidence and its application* – provide a focal point for raising awareness of the collective work being undertaken.
2. *Enhance information exchange* – share information between funders and research users to help members identify common interests and priorities, build a strategic view across the landscape and foster partnership opportunities (especially multi-disciplinary).
3. *Facilitate co-design of research and activities to enhance use of research outputs and evidence* – build communities of interest between funders, policymakers, businesses and researchers, providing a focus to explore opportunities for collaboration where ideas and partnerships can develop, to establish projects of scale that help members leverage their own resources.
4. *Promote application of research outputs and evidence into policy and practice by government and business* – ensure that those who need knowledge arising from new research and evidence can easily find it in an accessible form appropriate for their needs.
5. *Help Members access people and capability that a single organisation can't do alone* – deliver products on behalf of members that add value for multiple partners, but which no one partner would otherwise lead. Such central delivery of network products will be time-limited, restricted to start-up activities that, for example, trial new approaches, push boundaries and allow learning. Any long-term delivery would be expected to be taken up by partners. These products could include reports, events and training.

Success factors

Success factors for each of the aims are set out in Table 1, below.

Boundaries of the Network

1. Focus on the interdisciplinary challenge areas established in 2012 for LWEC (Climate Adaptation; Climate Mitigation; Ecosystems; Health and Wellbeing) with capacity to revise these as needed.

2. Focus on facilitating early-stage development of collaborations, handing over to partners to lead the design and delivery once communities of interest have been established and priorities to take forward have been agreed.
3. Focus on research with impact, addressing benefits to society and with a sense of urgency.
4. Span pure to applied research.
5. Engagement with industry in co-design and co-delivery of research and in promoting use of research outputs will be important – and it will need to be targeted on topics of interest.
6. Whatever the boundary, the network should be able to flex to deliver against Members' needs.

Membership and governance of the Network

Members

1. Members will be public-sector funders of environmental change research, evidence and innovation who wish to collaborate to enhance the impact of this public-sector investment. Their role in different activities may not always be as a funder, but could be as a provider or user of research and evidence.
2. 'Subscribing Members' will contribute to central funding to support a secretariat through either cash-subscriptions or equivalent in-kind resource contributions. Other interested stakeholders can engage through specific activities or services.
3. It is expected of members that they join the network in order to engage, share and collaborate with the network's internal and external communities.
4. Members will proactively seek out and engage with the network's external stakeholders, including with the business, third sector and policy communities, in order to maximise the impact of their activities. Given the focus of the network on early-phase start up, engagement with external communities will usually be targeted and strategic. However, broad engagement with stakeholder communities may be appropriate in instances where the network is responsible for later-stage design and/or delivery of products.

Governance

1. The decision-making body for the Network will be the Members' Forum, comprised of Subscribing Members.
2. The Members' Forum will be responsible for:
 - a. bringing issues to the table to propose for collective action
 - b. prioritising actions to be taken forward by the Network, and allocation of Secretariat resource to support them
 - c. establishing subgroups to drive forwards actions, as needed
 - d. reviewing progress of actions

- e. ensuring deliberations receive appropriate input from stakeholders including business and third sector
 - f. annually approving the central budget and Members' subscription rates
 - g. overseeing programme management by the Secretariat.
3. Member organisations should put forward senior staff for the Members' Forum, with the delegated authority to respond on behalf of their organisation, catalyse decisions and get things delivered. The representatives will be responsible for proposing issues for collective action on behalf of their organisations, and for authorising their organisation's leadership of, or participation in, actions.
 4. Representatives on the Members' Forum will use their organisations' own internal structures to ensure appropriate championing, advice and approvals. A separate body to achieve this (such as the former EMC) is not consistent with an agile network.
 5. Subgroups (ie Task Forces) appointed by the Members' Forum to deliver specific projects will typically be made up of officers from the member organisations. There are likely to be several subgroups operating at any one time.
 6. Figure 1 illustrates the roles of Member organisations, the Members' Forum and the Secretariat in proposing, approving and delivering LWEC Network actions.

Stakeholder advice

1. It will be important for members to have clear sight of the major issues identified by business which cross-disciplinary research can play a positive role in addressing. Strategic cross-sectoral engagement with stakeholders, including business, will continue to be a priority. Business advice will be strengthened and deepened through:
 - a. Welcoming one or two business representatives onto the Members' Forum. Before it is dissolved the Business Advisory Board will be asked to advise what types of representatives might best be able to address broad business interests.
 - b. Seeking to involve relevant businesses in Task Forces and other activities delivering specific projects.
 - c. Looking for other opportunities to engage high-level business representatives on specific issues, such as through round-table stakeholder fora.
2. Routes for third-sector engagement will be further considered and implemented during the transition to the Network.

Fig. 1: The role of Member organisations, the Members Forum, and the Secretariat in proposing, approving and delivering an LWEC Network action

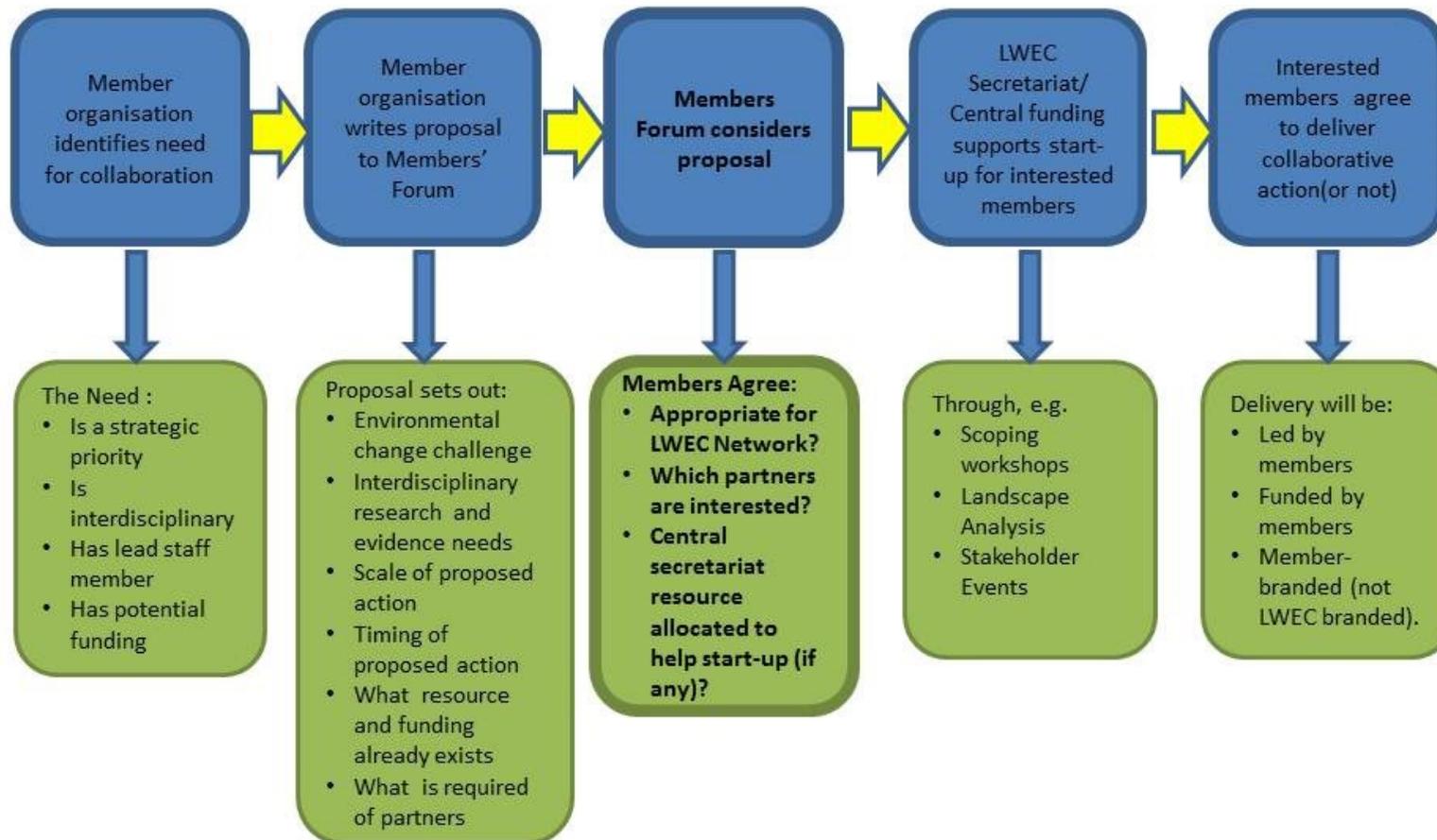
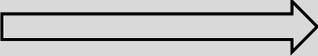


Table 1 – Success factors for Network aims

<p>AIMS </p> <p>SUCCESS FACTORS </p>	Champion environmental research and evidence, and its application	Enhance information exchange across the network	Facilitate co-design of research and translation activities at scale, that leverage members' own resources	Promote use of research outputs by policy and practice	Access people and capability that a single organisation can't alone.	Deliver 'Network' products
Opinion-formers in government, business and media, and opinion-leaders in civil society, understand and cite the benefits of work undertaken through the network.	✓			✓	✓	✓
Member organisations' advisory bodies and senior leadership use the network as key information source to develop a strategic view across landscape.		✓	✓		✓	
Members' new investments are well-informed by awareness of who is doing what, common emerging priorities, opportunities for partnership and collaboration.		✓	✓		✓	
Members' able to build communities of interest to explore opportunities for collaboration at early stages, to allow ideas and partners to crystallise.		✓	✓		✓	✓
Business representatives feel engaged in the priorities of the network.	✓					
Members achieve greater impact from investments through enhanced co-design and co-funding, reducing duplication, sharing resources and addressing user needs.			✓	✓	✓	✓
Policy-makers and business have enhanced knowledge and evidence for decisions in an accessible form appropriate for their needs.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Researchers have enhanced opportunities for interdisciplinary working, networking and information sharing, promoting advances in knowledge.		✓	✓		✓	✓
Tax payer gets better vfm through increased efficiency and impact.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

