



## **BUSINESS ANCHORS PROGRESSION FRAMEWORK**

*A practical tool to assess your position and prioritise action*

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## What is an anchor institution?

Anchor institutions are big and locally rooted organisations that employ many people, spend substantial amounts of money, own and manage land and assets and often deliver crucial activities such as healthcare, education or public services. These organisations have a long history in their places, are unlikely to move and are intrinsically connected and pivotal to the success and wellbeing of local people, economies and communities.

Typically, this has been framed as a public sector arena, bringing in bodies such as local authorities, universities and hospitals. Yet, **private sector businesses can also act as anchor organisations**, particularly larger businesses with local headquarters or a strong presence and embedded relationship with a place, and which can bring about a substantial positive impact through their scale and/or influence.

## Why do they matter?

The decisions anchors take about how they operate can amplify the contribution they make to places, supporting growth, inclusion and environmental goals at the same time. This can add significantly to local employment, business growth, skills, incomes, and health and wellbeing. It can help communities to thrive and become places where people want to live and businesses want to invest and help set people on a path to long term success and shared prosperity.

## How can anchor institutions make a difference?

There are lots of ways in which anchors institutions can act and make a difference:

- As an **employer** – policies on recruitment, pay and conditions, progression and health can support inclusion goals and lower paid workers, and at the same time help businesses to recruit and retain staff and fully tap the talents of their workforce
- Through **procurement** of goods and services – which can be designed to support opportunities for other local businesses, recirculate wealth and bring community benefits – while still getting buyers the right price and quality, and often improved supplier responsiveness and relationships
- Through **assets and care for the environment** – anchors can enhance local places, help to protect the planet and support local communities through the way in which their buildings, land, processes, and other assets are designed, procured and managed, and by adopting environmental best practice
- Through **corporate and community behaviours** – businesses can embed ‘anchor thinking’ across their own ethos, planning and actions, engage with local schools and communities, and work with others to share good practice, help each other succeed, and deliver positive impacts for people and places

**We have developed a ‘progression framework’ to help businesses capitalise upon their power as anchors, to understand what they can do on each of the above dimensions and to self-assess where they are now, decide where they want to get to, and to plan the actions need to make the transition.**

## ABOUT THIS FRAMEWORK

This *Business Anchors Progression Framework* was developed by Les Newby and Nicky Denison to support work on anchor institutions and inclusive growth. It builds on a fuller Progression Framework developed by the same authors, which has been used by many large public sector anchors such as councils, universities, colleges and hospitals, as well as large businesses such as utilities. It is specifically designed for businesses with a large or influential local presence who want to play a full anchor role locally and is a wide-ranging tool that considers the breadth of a company's activities. It is aimed at larger businesses but will also be relevant to smaller businesses who want to contribute to their locality and to draw benefits from it.

The focus of the framework is on inclusive growth – which is about building a better local economy in ways which maximise both the contribution of, and benefits for, disadvantaged people and communities. But is also about how business anchors can be active in their place and its economy in the round, including other issues where they can make a difference such as on education, environment and climate goals and civic collaboration.

## HOW TO USE THE FRAMEWORK

This framework is designed to help businesses assess where they are now, where they want to be and how to get there by setting out what being an inclusive anchor means in practice. It works both for businesses with a local HQ and others with a large local presence but a HQ elsewhere. Simply take a common sense view about the *application of policy and practice* in your local operation regardless of where that is led from.

To complete a review, look at each question and score yourself between 1 and 4 in terms of where you are *now* compared to the 'great practice' features described, and give a 1 to 4 score of *where you would like to be* in time. This will often best be led by somebody taking an overall corporate coordinating role, backed by inputs from specialist leads for the four dimensions of the framework covering HR, Procurement, Sustainability and Estate, and Corporate responsibilities.

For each question, the **scoring** is based on assessing which of four levels of practice best describes your position:

- 1 – Minimal:** you have made little progress in this area (beyond meeting legal requirements)
- 2 – Modest:** you partially apply some but not the majority of the features described, often in an ad hoc way
- 3 – Good:** you apply many of the features described - or get a long way towards them - most of the time
- 4 – Great:** you apply virtually all of the features and apply them systematically

**As you go through the framework**, use the summary and scoring sheets (available as a separate document) to record where you are now and what your ambition for the future is (or might be). Make brief notes on the key factors that have informed your scoring and crucially, identify what the main emerging actions are that will take you on your journey to where you aspire to be.

Some **principles** to bear in mind when you use the tool are:

- It is a self-assessment not an audit. The purpose is to prompt discussion, ideas and action not to cast judgement or create lots of work.
- The scoring is there so you can benchmark and measure progress. But the process and actions are more important than the numbers.
- Nobody is expected to score 4 on everything – lower scores can sometimes be appropriate on certain questions.
- Do not try to improve everything at once. Identifying a manageable number of priorities that get acted upon and make a difference is the key.

**To calculate an overall score**, simply work out your average score for each dimension (total score divided by number of questions) and then calculate the average of these four scores to provide your overall score. Do this separately for ‘current position’ and ‘ambition’ and round all scores to one decimal place to keep things simple. Add these scores onto the summary front sheet together with notes on your priority actions to provide a high level summary.

**We recommend that the most senior organisational leaders in the business locally take overall responsibility for using the Framework**, as it is inherently about an organisation’s vision, priorities and behaviours. In organisational terms, the steps for using this Framework are:

- i) Hold initial discussion about the ‘anchor’ idea, what it involves, commitment to putting it into practice and using this Framework to support progress
- ii) Carry out a review of your organisation locally using the Framework, either as a self-assessment or through an externally facilitated session
- iii) Informed by this baseline, set annual (and possibly some longer term) goals for progress and how to move these forward. In doing this, the ambition scores and priority actions will benefit from senior input/leadership team discussion to ensure they are owned and realistic.
- iv) Review progress and report it at leadership level each year to assess progress, refine targets and plan future actions.

### **Further Information and assistance**

Businesses can use the framework internally through a self-assessment process. However, should you require further information, a facilitated review session, or assistance with running the process, benchmarking or input of ideas and expertise on anchors practice, please contact the Framework’s authors: **Les Newby (Les Newby Associates Ltd) - [les@lesnewby.com](mailto:les@lesnewby.com) and Nicky Denison (Wordfern Ltd) – [nicky@nickydenison.com](mailto:nicky@nickydenison.com)**

## Business Anchors Progression Framework: Employment

Employment	1 None or minimal	2 Modest	3 Good	4 Great	1 – 4 Ambition	What Great Looks Like
1) Do you use <b>methods of recruitment</b> that minimise discrimination, provide equality of opportunity and enable local people to secure good jobs?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear job descriptions welcoming all applicants</li> <li>• Advertise roles widely and in accessible formats</li> <li>• Removal of information that leads to application bias</li> <li>• Targeted local outreach including with local partners</li> <li>• Innovative interview and selection techniques</li> <li>• Diversity targets at all levels and Equality Impact Assessments</li> </ul>
2) What is the nature of your <b>apprenticeship, work experience and internship</b> offer?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good number and range of quality apprenticeships, including at higher levels and part time options to extend access, backed by mentoring</li> <li>• Pay Real Living Wage for apprentices and offer terms and conditions comparable to other employees</li> <li>• Diverse routes for engaging and selecting apprentices</li> <li>• Positive progression routes on completion</li> <li>• Positive use of work experience, placements and paid internships, often targeted at disadvantaged cohorts</li> </ul>
3) Do you pay the <b>real Living Wage</b> ?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay the 'Real' Living Wage or above to all employees, or on course to do so. Ideally accredited by the Living Wage Foundation where possible.</li> </ul>
4) Do your <b>terms and conditions and pension offer</b> support people on the lowest wages?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act on pension take-up including by low take-up groups, communicate total reward packages, provide pension options</li> <li>• Non-pay benefits package designed to be relevant to lower paid staff and to reduce the costs of living</li> <li>• Avoid sole use of digital technology to communicate</li> <li>• Even accessibility to part-time, temporary, casual staff</li> <li>• Payment for all hours worked, including additional time</li> <li>• Sick and holiday pay included</li> </ul>
5) Do you use <b>flexible working</b> to attract and retain talent and to create a fair workplace?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible working policy in place, applied evenly and at all levels</li> <li>• Flexibility advertised at point of hire</li> <li>• Policy used to tackle specific issues, e.g. gender pay gaps and diversity</li> </ul>

<p>6) Do your <b>contract types</b> as far as possible provide stability, security and structure, especially for lower paid workers?</p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift to more secure contract types wherever possible</li> <li>• No use of zero hours contacts unless mutually favoured</li> <li>• Considerate shift patterns, advance notification of changes</li> <li>• Staff involvement in shift patterns and job design, and focus on enabling autonomy and variety in job roles</li> </ul>
<p>7) Are you committed to the <b>training, development and progression</b> of all staff – especially the lower paid?</p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development opportunities and progression pathways for all, including targeting and communication at lower pay bands</li> <li>• Equal access by lower paid, part time, flexible, shift staff</li> <li>• Commitment to softer/transferable skills</li> <li>• Use of tools to assist development and progression, e.g. functional flexibility, skills matrix, job rotation, mentors</li> </ul>
<p>8) Is your <b>leadership, management and culture</b> supportive of providing ‘good work’<sup>1</sup> for all staff, especially the lower paid</p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Even, visible leadership that champions good work</li> <li>• Policy and action to support ‘good work’ (including lower paid roles)</li> <li>• Appraisals assess progress and identify development opportunities</li> <li>• Clear, effective ways to connect staff voice to leadership, including dialogue with those in lower paid roles</li> <li>• Supportive management treats staff with dignity, nurtures confidence, talent, performance and teamwork, and values job quality and wellbeing</li> </ul>
<p>9) To what extent do you encourage the <b>mental and physical health and wellbeing</b> of staff through facilities, policy, culture and support?</p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate priority with positive policy in place</li> <li>• Wellbeing messages and culture embodied by leaders</li> <li>• Health and wellbeing offer that is widely communicated</li> <li>• Related campaigns and workplace activities</li> <li>• Aligned to induction and training processes</li> <li>• Facilities that encourage healthy behaviours, e.g. showers, cycle racks</li> <li>• Access to mental health support</li> <li>• Signposting and support on financial wellbeing</li> <li>• Manage workload associated stress/mental health risks</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> ‘Good work’ is safe and stable, affords people autonomy and discretion where possible, and the opportunity to be heard and to participate in and influence decisions that affect them. It recognises and rewards effort; provides training and chance for progressions; is fair; and based on trust, good relationships, and respect of differences.

## Business Anchors Progression Framework: Procurement

Procurement	1 None or minimal	2 Modest	3 Good	4 Great	1 – 4 Ambition	What Great Looks Like
1) Do you monitor, analyse and seek to increase <b>local procurement</b> ?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor % of company or branch spend that is local</li> <li>• Track this annually in a comparable way and share data</li> <li>• Set goals or targets to increase local spend</li> <li>• Identify opportunities to increase use of local suppliers</li> </ul>
2) Do your procurement systems help <b>SMEs</b> ?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break large contracts into smaller lots</li> <li>• Pay contractors promptly (30 days max)</li> <li>• Pass on prompt payment clauses to subcontractors</li> <li>• Make procurement processes/forms straightforward</li> <li>• Avoid disproportionate requirements (e.g. insurance)</li> <li>• SME input into design of core application processes</li> </ul>
3) Do you <b>engage with local businesses</b> and communicate opportunities to them?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routinely communicate contract opportunities to potential local suppliers (working with local partners to widen reach where helpful)</li> <li>• Use local engagement and events to communicate contract opportunities and how to apply for them, e.g. via Meet the Buyer events</li> <li>• Explain social value (SV) goals and how to meet them</li> </ul>
4) Do you have <b>flexibility to use local</b> suppliers, and do you promote local suppliers in this area corporately?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use local suppliers for smaller/locally serviceable needs. e.g. catering, cleaning, maintenance, security</li> <li>• Engage with HQ (where not local) to allow greater use of local suppliers and to open up opportunities to them</li> <li>• Encourage your main contractors to use local subcontractors</li> <li>• Promote good existing local suppliers corporately</li> </ul>

<p>5) Do you promote, communicate and enforce <b>social value (SV) goals</b> through procurement?</p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear SV policy/statement included prominently in all tendered contracts</li> <li>• Set and communicate contract-specific SV expectations/requirements</li> <li>• Set broad SV criteria that cover workforce issues (e.g. training, fair pay and conditions, health), community benefits and environmental goals</li> <li>• Monitor and enforce delivery of SV commitments made by suppliers</li> </ul>
<p>6) How strongly do you <b>require or score social value criteria</b> in tendering?</p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply SV criteria in all high value contracts (e.g. £100k+); most significant value ones (e.g. £50k+); and in lower value contracts (e.g. £20k+) where there are good opportunities for impact</li> <li>• Build ‘must do’ SV requirements into the specification where clear cut and related to the subject matter</li> <li>• Place a score on SV criteria in tendering, and make this a significant % of the total score (e.g. 10%-20%)</li> </ul>
<p>7) Do you use procurement to create jobs, skills and inclusion benefits from the construction of <b>new buildings and infrastructure</b>?</p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specify requirements to create jobs and apprenticeship opportunities in large construction projects (e.g. £500k+ in value, 1 year+ in duration)</li> <li>• Promote social inclusion by ensuring that a proportion of those recruited to work on big construction projects should be previously unemployed or straight out of education (e.g. one recruit per £1million spent)</li> <li>• Encourage use of local companies and SMEs for local construction work or through subcontracting</li> </ul>
<p>8) Do you <b>work with existing suppliers</b> to promote SV and local procurement?</p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and share good practice where your existing suppliers are already delivering SV</li> <li>• Share your SV goals with existing suppliers and encourage them to take action to support them</li> <li>• Encourage existing suppliers to use subcontractors in your local area</li> </ul>

## Business Anchors Progression Framework: Environment and Assets

Environment and Assets	1 None or minimal	2 Modest	3 Good	4 Great	1 – 4 Ambition	What Great Looks Like
1) Do you <b>design your buildings/spaces</b> to help enhance the local area and create attractive and inspiring places?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great design of buildings/spaces that makes the city/place more attractive and enhances its profile</li> <li>• Great working environments that contribute to health, wellbeing and productivity for employees</li> <li>• Highly active in 'place making' collaborations that plan and enhance the city/place and its environment</li> </ul>
2) Do you <b>contribute to local regeneration</b> , especially of deprived or run-down areas?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help deprived areas by being based in/near them and creating investment and opportunities there</li> <li>• Contribute to regeneration programmes in deprived areas, through investment, activity or other connections</li> <li>• Location choices and schemes that enable people from deprived areas to access work with you without a needing a car</li> </ul>
3) Are you a <b>good neighbour</b> for local communities and organisations?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable use of /access to facilities and spaces by local people (e.g. for sports, recreation, meeting spaces)</li> <li>• Good communication and interaction with neighbouring communities and organisations</li> <li>• Minimise any negative impacts from your business on neighbouring communities (e.g. traffic, noise, pollution)</li> </ul>
4) Do you have <b>environmental policies and systems</b> and low/zero carbon targets that are implemented and making a difference in your local premises and operations?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong, rounded and ambitious environmental policy</li> <li>• Ambitious carbon targets in place – e.g. net zero carbon by 2035 – and acted upon in local operations</li> <li>• Recognised environmental management system in place, with tangible positive change from its operation</li> <li>• Training and awareness programmes for all or most colleagues</li> </ul>

<p><b>5) Are you taking action to reduce carbon emissions from energy and transport?</b></p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate significant renewable energy locally or off site</li> <li>• Subscribe to green energy tariffs for all energy use</li> <li>• Very high energy efficiency in operations and processes</li> <li>• Very energy efficient heating, lighting and insulation</li> <li>• Minimise transport impacts (avoid unnecessary travel, support walking, cycling and public transport, use electric or ultra-low emissions vehicles)</li> </ul>
<p><b>6) Do you minimise waste, pollution and use of natural resources</b></p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid and minimise waste through design of processes, systems or procurement specifications</li> <li>• Turn ‘waste’ streams into resources through circular economy approaches, or otherwise re-use waste</li> <li>• Adopt processes and procurement choices that minimise use of resources/water and avoid pollution</li> <li>• Recycle any remaining waste, and buy recycled products</li> </ul>
<p><b>7) Do you support nature and green space</b> (‘green and blue infrastructure’) at your premises/land and enable access to it?</p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include and look after green spaces and habitats for wildlife in/around your premises and land</li> <li>• Access to green space from/at your premises for staff and communities to promote health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Sustainable land management (e.g. support biodiversity, woodland/ trees, organic food growing) if your estate includes significant land</li> <li>• Contribute to flood prevention through sustainable drainage systems and natural flood management</li> </ul>
<p><b>8) Do you set ambitious standards for new buildings and improvement of existing ones?</b></p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set exemplary environmental standards in the spec for new buildings (e.g. BREEAM outstanding)</li> <li>• Retrofit/redevelopment of existing buildings includes very high energy and environmental standards</li> <li>• Choose locations with excellent public transport access</li> </ul>

## Business Anchors Progression Framework: Corporate and Community

Corporate and Community	1 None or minimal	2 Modest	3 Good	4 Great	1 – 4 Ambition	What Great Looks Like
1) Is your commitment to being an inclusive anchor set out in your <b>corporate strategy, policy, values and behaviours, and communications</b> ?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully understood and supported at Board and Exec level</li> <li>• Explicitly articulated in corporate strategy and policy</li> <li>• Clear support through values and behaviours statements</li> <li>• Highly supportive, inclusive, open and respectful culture</li> <li>• Pronounced learning and sharing culture</li> <li>• Communication style that seeks input from all</li> <li>• Senior lead responsibility allocated and wider organisational support</li> <li>• Regularly discussed, reviewed, monitored and reported</li> </ul>
2) Do you manage your <b>resources and financial assets</b> to create positive impacts?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources made available to fully play your role as a local anchor (via decision-making, investment in local projects and enterprises, etc.)</li> <li>• Management of funds and assets includes criteria to avoid negative impacts and create positive societal impact</li> </ul>
3) Do you <b>engage and / or collaborate with other local anchor institutions</b> for mutual benefit and to improve your place?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent relationships with a wide spread of local anchor institutions (e.g. public bodies, large businesses)</li> <li>• Frequent collaboration to respond to issues, spot opportunities and plan ahead</li> <li>• Participation in local agendas, e.g. on skills, investment, business/sector issues, inclusion or city campaigns</li> </ul>
4) Do you share <b>knowledge, data and expertise</b> to help the local area and organisations?						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute innovation, ideas and expertise to support local ambitions, businesses and the economy</li> <li>• Collaborate with local expertise (e.g. in universities)</li> <li>• Effective use of digital and technology that supports the place (e.g. 'Smart Cities' activity, health and inclusion) and showcases what is possible to others</li> <li>• Open sharing of data and information</li> </ul>

<p>5) Do you have <b>links with local schools and education</b> bodies?</p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement in educational advisory committees/boards and enable staff to support schools (e.g. as governors)</li> <li>• Work with local partners to identify skills needs in your sector and champion the sector within education</li> <li>• Donate resources to schools/educational bodies (e.g. materials, facilities, equipment or expertise)</li> <li>• Participation in careers sessions or skills projects, e.g. talks, career carousels, mock interviews, problem solving</li> <li>• Participation in enterprise activities or challenges</li> <li>• Work with schools/education to raise awareness of the job roles, opportunities and skills needed in your sector</li> </ul>
<p>6) Do you have policies that support your <b>staff to participate in and contribute to local communities?</b></p>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action to raise funds for local groups and charities</li> <li>• Donate resources to local groups and charities (e.g. materials, facilities, equipment or expertise)</li> <li>• Local volunteering encouraged, including in a professional capacity</li> <li>• Strong connections to community groups</li> <li>• Dialogue with local residents/groups to support projects targeted at disadvantaged communities and people</li> <li>• Initiate and undertake activities to improve local area</li> </ul>