**Strategic Programme Management Group**

**22nd November 2021**

**Stoke on Trent & Staffordshire Growth Hub report**

1. **Introduction**

This is the first Stoke on Trent & Staffordshire Growth Hub SPMG Report. Information has been provided against the BEIS and DLUHC funding received by the Growth Hub and the targets which we have to meet. I have also included information relating to the Schedule 1 (S1) and Schedule 3 (S3) documents which are created on an annual basis and reported upon via six-monthly and annual reports. The final section provides an update on the status of the Peer to Peer Networks programme which is operational until March 2022.

1. **BEIS S1 Growth Hub 2021-2022 Grant Spend – 6 Months Position**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Activity as shown on Schedule 1 form**(e.g., marketing, advisor salaries etc) | **Q1 and Q2 Spend****£536,500 Total** |
| Salaries | £125,684 |
| Training |  |
| Travel |  |
| Business Intelligence – Business Growth Service | £20,686 |
| GROWTHMapper | £12,000 |
| WM Cluster work |  |
| EU Exit support |  |
| Legal costs | £78 |
| Specialist VAT Advice | £1,500 |
| Supply chain project | £20,000 |
| Project Research and Data Analysis |  |
| Evaluation – Call Handling |  |
| IT – CRM Licence/Enhancements | £7,338 |
| IT – Helpline Provision | £20,023 |
| IT - Website |  |
| MINT/FAME Database |  |
| Event Partnering/promotion | £4,000 |
| Promotional activities |  |
| High Growth digital marketing campaign |  |
| Events |  |
| Business support workshops/clinics/webinars | £600 |
| Advertising and PR | £615 |
| Printing/stationery |  |
| Mailchimp | £301 |
| Zoom subscription | £839 |
| Hootsuite | £468 |
| **Total Spend at end of Q2** | **£214,132** |

1. **BEIS Key Performance Indicators – 6 Months Position.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Local KPIs** **(where set by the LEP)** | **Six Month Total** **(1 April 2021 – 30 September 2021)** |
| Number of businesses that have received ‘light touch’ triage, information and/or signposting support (excluding website traffic) | 1,000 (unique businesses) | 1,716 |
| Number of individuals[[1]](#footnote-1) that have received ‘light touch’ triage, information and/or signposting support (excluding website traffic) | N/A | 225 |
| Total number of unique visitors to Growth Hub website | N/A | 7,640 |
| Number of businesses receiving ‘medium intensity’ information, diagnostic and brokerage support | 250 | 323 |
| Number of businesses receiving ‘high intensity’ support e.g., account management / intensive support directly provided by the Hub or partner organisation  | 50 | 25 |
| Number of businesses receiving ‘Medium’ and ‘High intensity’ support that, have the opportunity, ambition and greatest potential to grow (including Scale-Ups) | N/A | 31 |
| Total number of individuals who been helped to start a business | 200 | 225 |
| Number of businesses referred to a mentoring programme (combined figure for ‘Medium’ and ‘High’ intensity interventions only) | 200 | 121 |
| Number of businesses referred to a skills or training programme (combined figure for ‘Medium’ and ‘High’ intensity interventions only) | 200 | 117 |
| Number of businesses referred to a finance and/or funding programme (combined figure for ‘Medium’ and ‘High’ intensity interventions only) | 300 | 237 |
| Number of businesses referred to an innovation and/or R&D programme (combined figure for ‘Medium’ and ‘High’ intensity interventions only).  | N/A | 14 |
| Number of referrals to an export/import support programme (e.g., DIT) (combined figure for ‘Medium’ and ‘High’ intensity interventions only). | N/A | 7 |

1. **BEIS S3 Progress on the 32 Conditions of Core Funding 2021 2022**

Each year BEIS provides Growth Hubs with a number of conditions that have to be met in exchange for the core grant funding. These are listed in the Schedule 3 document and this year there are 32 sections. Progress is being made against all of them and below are some examples of progress being made:

**2. Which local stakeholders, partners and businesses will be involved in the governance of the Growth Hub in 2021-22 and how will any potential conflicts of interest be managed?**

The GH is directly accountable to the LEP Board, which comprises a range of private sector businesses alongside HE, Housing, Chamber of Commerce, unitary and district Council leaders.

The GH Steering Group led by a LEP board member ensures connectivity and transparency amongst local partners. A wider group of partners are also closely involved in operation of the Growth Hub. Partners such as the DIT, EGS, Universities, FSB and Skills Hub attend a Partnership group which meets to discuss current issues and future plans which are then passed to the Steering Group.

A larger group of all private and public-sector partners who work with businesses in Staffordshire are invited to a bi-monthly meeting called the Enterprise Round Table where open discussions take place about business support. There are 60 members and approximately 45 representatives of schemes and programmes which work in Staffordshire regularly attend the meetings and discuss the business support opportunities in the area.

Businesses are engaged with the Growth Hub via the weekly newsletter, marketing campaigns which include social media, case studies and blogs which are published on the website. All communications provide information on how businesses can connect with the Hub. Regular invitations are made for businesses to provide feedback on Growth Hub services and they provide us with very useful information. A large annual evaluation project provides additional information on the benefits of Growth Hub services to the local economy including satisfaction rates.

Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce is represented at LEP Board and GH Steering Group as well as being the primary provider delivering GH services, thus presenting a Conflict of Interest. All interests are recorded and persons involved in any COI are not party to decision-making, as per the LEP’s assurance framework which is used to govern the Growth Hub.

**9. Please also confirm the LEPs agreement to ensure that the Growth Hub delivery model will have the flexibility to evolve and to adjust to priorities during FY 2021 - 2022, ready to align with and transition to any revised delivery model which may potentially come into being from FY 2022 - 2023, and that the delivery model will have the capability to adapt to any further changes that might occur in business support national policy and delivery landscape.**

The LEP fully supports further evolution of GHs and ensures that our local model has the capacity and agility to respond to any changes required. They recognise the need to reform business support to ensure that it is easy to understand and access and provides high quality, targeted support that contributes to local/national growth strategies.

The LEP Chair, CEO and GH Manager remain activity involved in discussions with BEIS, our local Cluster and the GH Network ensuring that we respond efficiently to change.

GH managers have attended the sessions provided by BEIS about the evaluation of the network and the proposals for core activities and services. Our GH is flexible, and keen to develop and grow.

Our mapping exercise will enable us to assess the implications of change and respond rapidly, ensuring business continuity at this critical time. A revised delivery model would be implemented as requested and we will work to the timescales provided.

**19. What steps are being taken to collaborate flexibly with other LEPs, Growth Hubs, Cluster leads, BEIS, other government departments and agencies, national and regional services and sector lead bodies to ensure that business and enterprise support interventions activities are optimised across wider geographies and to deliver increased value for money, outputs and impacts**

The LEP works closely with neighbouring LEPs in both East and West Midlands where economic corridors provide opportunities for joint projects (e.g Drakelow). We are an active member of Midlands Engine and consider ourselves part of a strong England-wide network, where we can draw upon the kills and experiences of others wherever they may be. For example, we have forged good working relationships with Cheshire & Warrington LEP through the cross-boundary constellation partnership.

Our GH has a good relationship with neighbouring GHs who share borders and has set up cross referral systems to ensure that all out-of-LEP area contacts are provided with the information they need to contact the correct GH. We are an active member of the West Midlands Cluster and have shared procurement, marketing and human resources across the patch.

The GH collaborates with other government departments wherever possible and ensures that newsletters and bulletins are shared with businesses and partners (eg HMRC newsletter).

We are a member of the Midlands Engine and promote the MEIF widely whilst working with the Fund Managers to ensure businesses understand the benefits of the new Midlands Engine Fund. The Investment Readiness Scheme was developed by the Hub following meetings with the MEIF Fund Managers who expressed concerns about businesses not being able to apply due to a lack of documentation such as business plans and financial forecasts. This scheme is now operational and helping businesses develop professional financial forecasts and business plan.

LEP and GH managers attend sector groups such as the Ceramic Sector Group, the Rural Forum and J2/I54 Development group which aims to maximise this important area in Staffordshire in conjunction with Wolverhampton GH. This has been difficult during Covid but will return to normal hopefully soon.

**21.What type of Growth Hub delivery model will be used by the LEP in 2021-2022 to deliver a proactive local triage and diagnostic service to all businesses in the LEP area, prioritising those with the opportunity, ambition and greatest potential to grow? Are any changes planned to the current Growth Hub delivery model?**

The LEP is undertaking a review of the business support landscape and services which may result in changes to improve and simplify the service, co-designed with private sector users. Generally, our GH uses an IDB model (Information, Diagnostic and Brokerage) which enables us to listen to the customer’s circumstances and use diagnostic tools to identify and signpost to solutions.

All business support is free at point of contact and we are planning to create a digital ‘self-help’ platform which will offer a free universal service (downloadable tools and tips, good practice, access to finance etc) as an enhancement to our Advisor led services.. Priority sectors will be identified and routed to more intensive support.

The GH operates the Staffordshire Business Helpline which is currently operated by the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce who won the new contract in 2016 for a period of 3 years with an option to extend for a further 3 years and the contract is now into its final year. A future provider will be commissioned in 2021 post the local landscape review and in consideration of the preferred channel choices of our customers.

The GH has diversified in order to assist more companies who want to grow and now has specialist Advisors including Finance and High Growth Advisor, Marketing Advisor and Human Resources Advisor. To assist the specialist advisors, the GROWTHMapper tools are now being used with companies who have expressed an ambition to grow. The feedback on these is excellent from businesses and there will be an evaluation of the tool in 2021 to ascertain if further developments would be beneficial.

We continue to enhance our bank of providers. Providers are currently invited to GH Knowledge sessions where they ‘pitch’ their service and if criteria is met, are invited to join the Enterprise Round Table and appropriate referrals are then sent to them

1. **Growth Hub ERDF Grant Funding 2019 to 2023**

**Small Business Grant Scheme**



**Investment Readiness Programme (IRP) Grant Scheme**



1. **Growth Hub ERDF Targets 2019 2023**

**Programme Update**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Programme TargetApril 19 to June 23 | Achieved to Date30th Sept 2021 | Remaining |
| C1 No. of Enterprise Receiving Support |  | 283 | 141 | 142 |
| C2 No. of Enterprise receiving grants |  | 250 | 124 | 126 |
| C4 No. of Enterprise Receiving Non-Financial Support – 12 hours |  | 33 | 17 | 16 |
| C6 Private Investment Matching Public Support to Enterprises (Grants) |  | 867,334 | 467,334 | 400,000 |
| P13 No. of Enterprise receiving Information, Diagnostics and Brokerage Support – 3 hours |  | 760 | 386 | 374 |

1. **Peer to Peer Networks**

Year 1 of the Peer top Peer Networks Programme which started in 2020 saw 12 cohorts delivered in HR, Strategy, Operations, Sales & Marketing, Personal Resilience, Finance, and Leadership. Year 2 is progressing with 3 cohorts under way or completed, a further 2 are due to start this week and 9 are in the planning stages. The second year is more challenging to recruit to as the criteria for participating has meant many of our businesses are ineligible and the launch of the government’s Help to Grow scheme has attracted some of the potential applicants instead. A recent marketing campaign has provided another 10 applicants to the scheme this week and this practice will continue to assist with recruitment. Attendance at the cohorts has been good with only 1 drop out so far and all participants have rated the sessions as Very Satisfied or Somewhat Satisfied to date.

The Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce who are delivering this programme for the Growth Hub have engaged a Telemarketing Agency to start in early December and they are going to use direct message marketing on LinkedIn, plus push video endorsements from previous Peer Networks participants in social media marketing to help grow more interest in the scheme.

**Report prepared by:** Nicola Kent
**Job Title:** Head of Funding, Business & Enterprise SCC

1. Number of businesses and individuals are both required as (for example) several individuals from the same business may attend an event. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)