

**West of England Local Enterprise Partnership
Board meeting – 21st June 2021**

WEST OF ENGLAND GROWTH HUB – ANNUAL REPORT

Purpose of the report

1. To provide an overview of the annual Growth Hub report 2020/21 recently submitted to Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The annual report is designed for LEPs to show how core government funding has led to increased levels of take-up of business support and is helping to drive business growth.

Recommendation

For LEP Board members to note the contents of the update and progress made in building the regional Growth Hub offer.

Background

2. The West of England Growth Hub managed by the West of England Combined Authority, is an integral part of our regional support for businesses, drawing together a wide range of interventions into a single coherent offer, guided by our Local Industrial Strategy.
3. Over the last twelve months we have significantly enhanced our delivery in response to the impact of Covid-19 – since March 2020 the Growth Hub has delivered over 11,000 new business interventions, a record level for the region. We have built additional resource to signpost businesses to national support packages and developed a regional response through a £9.4m Regional Recovery Fund and a range of new measures designed to increase business resilience, including a Small Business Growth Grants programme and a Cultural and Creative Sector Recovery Fund
4. The Growth Hub is a key vehicle for delivering the ambitions set out in the Local Industrial Strategy. The West of England Productivity Challenge – a £5m investment blending core Growth Hub funding with WECA Investment funding – has been established to tackle low productivity (our “long tail”) by promoting the uptake of new technologies, innovation, improved management practices, cleaner business models, and export opportunities.

Key delivery programmes for 20/21 included:

- Universal Business Support – a new start-up and SME business support service, led by the Combined Authority and its unitary authority partners.
- Trading Better Online – a specialist technology adoption support programme, helping small businesses to build their digital footprint and online presence.

- Accountancy Expertise for SMEs in partnership with ICAEW (Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales) to build financial resilience.
- Thrive at Work West of England – a package of support including mental health training modules and online support for employers and employees.

Further information about these programmes can be found [here](#)

5. We have also placed the Growth Hub as the centre piece of our skills portfolio through the development of a multi-partner 'skills brokerage' service (Workforce for the Future) to help SMEs engage effectively with our regional provider base to retain and grow their skills capabilities. This includes Share to Support – a regional service designed to encourage levy paying businesses to support the creation of new apprenticeship opportunities across their supply chains.
6. The strength and depth of strategic partnerships underpinning our Growth Hub delivery, have been significantly enhanced in 2020/21. The Business Insights Panel, for example, established as part of the Regional Recovery Taskforce, brought together for the first time, regional leads from across the business support and banking sector to share business intelligence and insights to help support the design and delivery of new recovery measures.
7. Nationally, our partnership with Be the Business continues to develop, with the West of England a designated *Trailblazer* region for channelling national support and expertise through a regional delivery model. This included the development of the Advisory Boards programme which successfully recruited 30 board members (including some of our LEP members) and 12 businesses within two weeks of the launch.
8. Further, through the Combined Authority's £6.7m Innovation for Renewal and Opportunity programme, a West of England 'Made Smarter' model is being developed to help manufacturing supply chain businesses to adopt new digital technologies and practices to raise productivity, aligning to our strategic investment in Digital Engineering Technology and Innovation (DETI).
9. As part of our Annual report, we are required to report on customer satisfaction, outcomes based on government's monitoring and evaluation framework, and to include case studies to demonstrate the on-the-ground benefits of our Growth Hub. A short summary of these is set out below:

Customer Satisfaction

“How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of this service?”¹

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5	Total
		5	73	267	345

“How likely would you be to recommend this service to a friend/colleague,”

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5	Total
		8	65	258	331

2020-2021 ‘Metrics and Evaluation Framework’

Indicator	Annual Total (1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021)
Number of businesses that have received ‘light touch’ triage, information and/or signposting support (excluding website traffic)	3,313
Total number of unique visitors to Growth Hub website	45,611
Combined turnover (amount £) of businesses receiving ‘Medium intensity’ information, diagnostic, and brokerage support.	£395m
Combined turnover (amount £) of businesses receiving ‘High intensity’ support i.e. sustained support and using significant Growth Hub resource.	£192m
Combined employee numbers (FTE) of businesses receiving ‘High intensity’ support i.e. sustained support and using significant Growth Hub resource.	2,482
Total number of individuals who been helped to start a business.	383
Number of businesses referred to a skills or training programme	559
Number of businesses referred to a finance and/or funding programme	525
Number of businesses referred to an innovation and/or R&D programme	203
Number of referrals to an export/import support programme (e.g. DIT)	336

Case studies:

- Catering for new markets - Kinetic Kitchen
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB7spXtkBUM>
- Business support to connect and grow - Amanda Challans
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gn-pxg3ePpc>

¹ 1 Very Dissatisfied- very poor, 2 Somewhat Dissatisfied - poor, 3 Neither satisfied nor Dissatisfied- average, 4 Somewhat Satisfied - good, 5 Very Satisfied – excellent

- Investing in online and intellectual property - Turtle Tots
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= Df2VEK9xmM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Df2VEK9xmM)
- **Together West of England:** Business Support Guide [Covid-19 - Business Support - West of England Combined Authority \(westofengland-ca.gov.uk\)](#)

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