



**LEP – Sub Committee**

**LEP - Business Support Management Board**

**Private and Confidential: No**

**Date:** Thursday, 14 March 2019

**Boost 2016-2018 External Evaluation Report**  
(Appendix A refers)

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**Executive Summary**

As a condition of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant, Boost – Lancashire's Business Growth Hub, is required to conduct an interim and final (summative) evaluation of each phase of the Growth Hub Programme.

This report presents the final evaluation of Boost 2 (2016-2018).

**Recommendation**

The Business Support Management Board are recommended to:-

1. Note the Summative Assessment attached at Appendix A and presented at the meeting.
2. Note the remedial actions suggested in terms of areas of concern
3. Suggest any key changes required on Boost 3 in response to this evaluation of the project.

**1. Background and Advice**

- 1.1 An interim and final (summative) assessment is generally included as a funding condition in all ERDF projects, but also provides an opportunity to reflect on those aspects of the project that worked well and those that could be improved.
- 1.2 Lancashire County Council appointed Hatch Regeneris as the external evaluator for Boost 2 and they have recently concluded their summative assessment of that three year programme (copy attached at Appendix A).



1.3 The evaluation is underpinned by five key requirements, as set out in national programme guidance. These are:

**1) Relevance and consistency:** exploring the continued relevance and consistency of Boost in light of contextual changes, such as shifts in policy, economic circumstances and technological advancements.

**2) Progress against contractual targets:** setting out project progress when measured against contractual targets, over/under performance and projected lifetime results at project closure.

**3) Experience of delivering and managing the project:** outlining the practical experience of implementing and managing the project, lessons learned and evidence of best practice which can be applied to the delivery of other projects.

**4) Economic impact attributable to the project:** demonstrating the economic impacts attributable to the project, capturing those that were intended, actual and also wider outcomes which have provided added value to the local economy.

**5) Cost effectiveness and value for money:** a robust assessment of cost-effectiveness and value for money based on the balance of quantified costs and benefits, in light of intended and unintended impacts.

1.4 The evaluation draws from a variety of relevant information, data and qualitative insights:

- **A review of background documentation and the approved project logic model**, submitted as part of the ESIF bid, to understand this in detail and assess its continued relevance.
- **Detailed analysis of project monitoring data**, captured by the team and via beneficiaries, to assess performance against financial, output and result targets.
- **An interrogation of delivery context** encompassing desk-based analysis of programme documents and in-depth consultations with delivery partners and programme stakeholders, capturing perspectives on project design, delivery, the mitigation of challenges, governance, and impacts.
- **Beneficiary consultations** including a web-based SME survey and in-depth interviews with a sample of beneficiaries. This approach was designed to explore business sentiments, satisfaction levels, impacts achieved and how the project could evolve to better meet their needs and support growth aspirations.
- **Case studies** of Growth Hubs elsewhere, drawing on good practice and lessons learnt.
- **Quantitative impact analysis** to obtain a more granular view of the economic impacts experienced by beneficiaries, by grossing up impacts of



the surveyed businesses, making gross-to-net impact calculations, and assessing value for money of the net impacts achieved.

## 2 Key Findings

**2.1 The main themes of the evaluation will be presented to the Business Support Management Board by Hatch Regeneris Consulting at the meeting, but the tables below summarise both the strengths and ongoing challenges faced by the Boost project.**

**2.2 Many of the issues identified have already been addressed through the commissioning of Boost 3, but we will continue to monitor the commitments to improvement and remediation moving forward.**

Positive	Page	Comment
	Pg. 29	Strong performance in meeting targets set
	Pg.29	The success of the Boost Programme Manager as a visible and personable “ambassador” for Boost
	Pg. 31	The commitment of advisors providing above and beyond the 12 hours of support is also testament to the success of Boost in supporting new enterprises
	Pg. 33	Boost has a strong brand and profile
	Pg. 34	Strong performance by the Central Marketing Service
	Pg. 39	The majority (74%) of respondents reported that without Boost the changes would not have taken place and barriers to growth would have persisted
	Pg. 41	Boost 2 has had a greater economic impact than Boost 1 which suggests that Boost 2’s more targeted approach to targeting high growth businesses has been effective
	Pg. 48	Strength and Longevity of the Boost partnership
	Pg. 48	Robust and compliant systems
	Pg. 52	Gearing payment to results
	Pg. 58	69% of businesses reported that they had made some progress in developing products and services, while 56% reported progress in entering new markets

Requires Improvement	Page	Comment	Suggested remediation / improvement
<b>Programme Management</b>	Pg. 35	The Marketing Sub-Group needs to be more focused	There will be three bigger marketing meetings (working title, Lancashire Business Growth Forum) for the extended partnership to meet and understand Boost, the first of these will be in April and will also include Boost&Co partners. All other marketing meeting will be for CORE delivery staff only
	Pg. 50	There is a sense amongst contracted partners that they could be engaged more proactively on 'what works' reflection to facilitate a more proactive stance to responding to business need	It is suggested that this could be captured in the Operations sub-group, we currently run "spotlight" sessions share and celebrate good activity, we will also include as agenda item "what's working well in Lancashire"
	Pg. 35	Boost & Co has yet to fully realise its potential – opportunities especially through what Growth Support Programme want to do	This was picked up in the procurement, and partners are looking to utilise this resource more meaningfully and proactively, for example Winning Pitch are only using private sector partners that are Boost&co!
	Pg.26	Competition between contractors has created tension in the partnership	Currently Winning Pitch, Community Business Patners, Orvia and Enterprise for All have all agreed to work collaboratively, this includes recognising that decisions to work with businesses are made on Business need/requirement. It is also part of revised monitoring requirements that we scrutinise more fully the referrals to "other partners" to further

Requires Improvement	Page	Comment	Suggested remediation / improvement
			emphasis the need to work on business need NOT programme targets.
<b>Activity Delivery</b>	Pg. 30	It is considered that the associate model (sub-contracted) used by partners such as Growth Lancashire has not been conducive to developing long term relationships beyond the hours of support for which the associates are paid to deliver	We will continue to monitor and challenge this where examples of this relationship development are not being pursued. The new contract makes it very clear that "RELATIONSHIP" is a critical factor in the delivery of the Business Relationship Management service.
	Pg. 31	Referral systems require improvement..... There needs to be a 'warm' handover is the referral opportunity is to be realised..... The lack of accountability surrounding referrals is a barrier to effectiveness	Again we continue to monitor and challenge where this is not happening. However we are clear that referrals need to be warm and personal, there is no ambiguity – where examples of poor practice are given to the Programme Management Team, we will act and remedy!
	Pg. 32	The beneficiary feedback highlighted various issues associated with a lack of follow up from Boost..... The limitations of a 12-hour assist within a set time period acts as a barrier to developing long term relationships with business	The New BRM service was explicitly designed to champion and correct this poor practice. Businesses can expect to be "kept in touch with" at least every 6 months (minimum)
	Pg. 33	Beneficiary case studies highlighted some negative experiences which questions whether the advisor/mentor was sufficiently equipped with the skills they needed to provide the technical advice sought	Simple should not happen, any examples of this will be challenged and corrected!

<b>Requires Improvement</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Suggested remediation / improvement</b>
	Pg,33	A consistent message from beneficiaries include a lack of access of finance support	We have an Access 2 Finance service to curate these important conversations, again this simply should not happen!
Systems	Pg. 31	There have been inconsistencies in how partners have used Evolutive	We have now brought the Customer Relationship Management system into Core Boost programme management team
	Pg. 52	Ensuring progress reports and the CRM system are fully aligned facilitates a better understanding of performance and progress	We have now brought the CRM into Core Boost PMT
Commissioning Of Services	Pg. 51	A delivery approach that rewards long term account management of businesses is required	We can only working within the finance timeframes available to us, however as a statement of intent, this is our ambition
	Pg. 52	Appointment of independent consultants at the start of the next programme, to support the establishment of the monitoring and evaluation framework and embed evaluation tools	We will look to procure an evaluation framework within the next 6 months, and money has been set aside for this activity.