

LEP Boost – Lancashire's Business Growth Hub – Lead Andy Walker

Boost is one of a network of 38 Growth Hubs across England, each operating with and across a specific Local Enterprise Partnership geography. A number of Growth Hubs emerged independently as a response to the loss of the preceding and more fully resourced regional business links. Eventually this cluster was recognised and endorsed by BEIS who created and programme and resource to establish a comprehensive provision across the English regions.

In Lancashire, Boost has been operational since 2013 and is set up as a project where local and BEIS funding is matched against European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) at a 40:60 ratio.

The service has four main business facing offers:-

1. A Business Relationship Management Service – triaging enquires
2. A Growth Support Programme – for new start and early stage businesses
3. A Mentoring Service – for business over three years old and
4. Boost Bespoke – a service for high growth businesses.

Typically the service works with around 1,000 businesses each year.

At present the total annual budget for Boost activity is around £2m per year, made up of match from LCC and BEIS which leverages approximately £1.2m of ERDF.

Boost Performance Report (Jan – Mar 2020)

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the impacts on businesses, Boost; Lancashire's Business Growth Hub, refocussed all its efforts from growth support to business resilience support. This resulted in the launch of our #AskForHelp campaign. *Our main message to those running businesses in these troubled times is that 'you are not alone'. Ask for help.*

Our Boost business relationship helpline is now a dedicated #AskForHelp helpline ready to assist businesses impacted by the coronavirus. Within our Boost website, we have created a dedicated hub for all the latest guidance from government and the business support community. This is found at www.boostbusinesslancashire.co.uk/askforhelp

Delivery partners Wining Pitch (Growth Support Programme and Boost Bespoke), Community and Business Partners (Growth Mentoring Programme), Growth Lancashire (Relationship Management Service) and Freshfield Limited (Central Marketing Services) have submitted PPRs for the period Jan –Mar 2020, highlighting key activities and achievements undertaken in the claim period aligned with the ERDF Application.

In terms of activity on the ground:

Out of 2,363 beneficiaries whose needs have been diagnosed by the Boost team (Diagnosis of Need –DON), 1, 960 (83.05%) are 'new to Boost'. This goes to prove that the programme is successfully reaching out to new eligible businesses in Lancashire.

Business Relationship Managers (Relationship Management Service) are at the forefront of the Growth Hubs #AskForHelp campaign and continue to support businesses by connecting them to the best support available from the private and public sector. In spite of current challenges and spike in the number of enquiries, the contract continues to perform exactly to target and is consistently responding to a high proportion of 'new to Boost' enquiries and referring to other business support organisations. For example, **553** beneficiaries have been referred to UCLan to date (31st March 2020).

The following table highlights the main destination of referrals in this quarter:

UCLan	87 (28.16%)
Growth Company Lancashire Access to Finance Service	68 (22.01%)
Community & Business Partners Growth Mentoring	36 (11.65%)
Winning Pitch Growth Support Programme	54 (17.48%)

The **Growth Support Programme**, is behind its revised output and financial profiles. GSP's performance is under ongoing scrutiny. Some of the shortfall is due to the current unprecedented market situation. The programme's performance is being monitored via contract review meetings and daily regular updates requested on a need to know basis.

The **Growth Mentoring Programme** is slightly behind outputs financial target in this quarter. In spite of the challenging market circumstances, the programme is ahead of C8 target (enterprises receiving support). CBP/Orvia are confident of achieving their targets and continue to develop an adequate pipeline of eligible businesses which should help to meet its core targets for the next quarter, in spite of the current market situation.

Boost Bespoke continues to engage with businesses with scale up potential. The project is reaping its benefits from its proactive business engagement strategy and excellent customer service. A joint working arrangement with the East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce in relation to International Trade Support is working according to plan. In terms of outputs, the programme is slightly behind its C1 (employment increase in supported enterprises) targets but way ahead again with its C8 targets.

Boost Central Marketing services have been very active throughout the claim period. **1224** unique visits to the Boost website have been secured during this quarter bringing the total to **6990** to 31st March 2020. The marketing effort on its own have generated **507** 'new to Boost' clients to date. In addition, Boost twitter community has grown by **1120** and #AskForHelp campaign was launched and promoted in March 2020.

Hatch Regeneris have been commissioned to carry out interim and final evaluation of the growth hubs service and its impact on the business community in Lancashire. Interim Evaluation work will commence in April 2020.

RISK

Delivery partners have largely been effective in moving services online, but this needs to be monitored in terms of the effectiveness of that style of delivery.

Boost has also been dealing with a full spectrum of businesses types in terms of the COVID, it is not clear at this stage if MHCLG will cover these cost, so we are making provision to cover these costs through the additional BEIS grant we have received.