

Boost – Lancashire Business Growth Hub – Lead Andrew Leeming

BACKGROUND

Boost (Lancashire's Business Growth Hub) is a multi-tier, multi-agency programme, established in 2013. The programme is funded by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) grant to the LEP and Lancashire County Council. By 2018 Boost had engaged with over 5,800 businesses, created 2,200 new jobs and generated over £60m GVA for the Lancashire economy. The main focus of Boost 1 (2013-15) and Boost 2 (2016-18) was improving the competitiveness of high growth Lancashire businesses, job creation and helping to establish sustainable new enterprises within Lancashire.

Boost 3 has a total project value of **£6.083m** (£3.650m ESIF (60%) & £2.433m public match) to be defrayed from 1st January 2019 to 30th December 2021.

In addition, c. **£328k** of BEIS funding per annum is used to provide sector specific support and assist beneficiaries who do not fit ERDF eligibility criteria.

Our #BoostYourRecovery campaign was launched in June 2020 to help Lancashire enterprises reset and plan their return from lockdown. Our #AskForHelp campaign, launched on day one of the lockdown has already assisted more than 5000 Lancashire businesses.

Boost has started delivering **Peer Networks programme** for Lancashire. Peer Networks is a national peer-to-peer networking programme for SME leaders that want to grow and develop their organisation for future success. Delivered locally by Boost, we are creating diverse - cohort groups of individuals to collaboratively work through common business issues.

Peer Networks is funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in response to a commitment made in the 2019 Business Productivity Review. The programme includes interactive action learning, trained facilitators, small groups, flexible topic selection and one to one coaching.

By completing Peer Networks, an enterprise will overcome business challenges and recognise and act on new opportunities, build a trusted network of connections for immediate support as well as for the future, and improve their long-term personal and business performance.

The new **Boost your recovery Covid grant** funds has received in excess of 1000 expressions of interest, totally over £3M of grant ask. The team have been assessing the returns, its looks like around 70% of theses will be eligible to apply for a grant.

PERFORMANCE – As at Qtr. 4 2020/21

The project directly supports **Priority Axis 3** – ‘Enhancing the Competitiveness of small and medium sized enterprises’. Boost specifically addresses the following Investment Priorities:

3a Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms.

The Growth Support Programme strand of Boost 3 is specifically designed to identify entrepreneurs who have business ideas with growth potential and to help them bring these to fruition. It provides customised support to equip new businesses with the skills, techniques and tools to understand the barriers to growth and help them to overcome these.

3c Supporting the creation and the extension of advanced capacities for products, services and development.

The newly introduced **Business Resilience Programme** together with the **Growth Mentoring Programme** encourages businesses to bring forward growth projects, products and services through ongoing support to develop commercial capabilities and growth strategies.

3d Supporting the capacity of small and medium sized enterprises to grow in regional, national and international markets and to engage in innovation processes.

The Business Resilience Programme assists existing businesses to examine and develop existing and potential markets at home and abroad. Working alongside the Department for International Trade and local Chambers of Commerce, the initiative helps them to evaluate the threats and opportunities posed by changes in international trade patterns and tariffs and to take action to grow their businesses.

In addition to delivering the specific ERDF related outputs identified, Boost 3 will result in:

- Increased business formation rates
- Improved business survival rates
- An increase in the number of scale up businesses in Lancashire
- Improved productivity and GVA
- Higher levels of innovation and growth
- Business diversification, new products and services
- Higher levels of international trade

Programme Milestones

Milestone	Start Date	Completion Date
LCC Cabinet Approval for match funding	July 2018	September 2018
Boost 3 Procurement	July – December 2018	January 2019
Boost 3 Core Delivery Commences	January 2019	December 2021
Project Delivery (Business Support)	January 2019	September 2021
Mid Term Evaluation*	March 2020	July 2020
Final Evaluation	October 2021	December 2021

* The mid programme review has been shared with key stake holders and delivery organisations.

Key Performance Indicators - as of 31st March 2021

Boost 1 and 2 programmes are fully complete and closed having achieved the targets.

In terms of performance for the combined Boost 1, 2 and 3 programmes which contribute to the core LEP KPIs, these are as follows:

- Combined C8 (Jobs Created) via direct interventions = **Actual 3,004 / Target 2966**
- Combined C1 (number of enterprises assisted) = **Actual 3,698 / Target 3,995**

The table below contains core Boost 3 outputs and outcomes as specified in the contracts with service providers and GFAs signed with Managing Authorities (MHCLG & BEIS).

BOOST 3 JAN 2019 – March 2021

KPI	Target	Achieved	Comments	RAG
-----	--------	----------	----------	-----

New to Boost (NTB) businesses.	1250	4,249	340% of overall programme profile target ¹ has been achieved. 87.30% of Diagnosis of Need enquiries were 'New to Boost'.	
(P13) Number of enterprises receiving information, diagnostic and brokerage support.	1110	1108	The project has superseded its overall ERDF profile target ² by 221.6% .	
(C5) Number of new enterprises supported.	185	187	101.08% of overall programme profile target has been achieved.	
Boost referrals to wider business support agencies.	750	2,692		
(P11) Number of potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready.	330	292	88.48% of overall programme profile target has been achieved.	
(C1) Number of enterprises receiving support (12 Hours or more).	1075	777 72.27%	There has been an improvement in business engagement and project completion rates from 69% to 77%. Challenges and opportunities faced by delivery organisations are being discussed at contract review meetings, operational group meetings as well as at stand-up meetings. All service providers have a demonstrated that they have a strong pipeline for Q2 (Apr-Jun 2021).	
(C8) Employment increase in supported enterprises.	750	768.65	102.48% of overall programme profile target has been achieved	
(C28) Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products.	30	06 20%	There are a number of C28 current under review for and will be claimed Qtr. 2. MHCLG to consider if C28 shortfall can be replaced by a combination of surplus C5, C8, P13 and P11 outputs.	
(C29) Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products.	40	12 30%	There are a number of C28 current under review for and will be claimed Qtr. 2. MA to consider if C29 shortfall can be replaced by a combination of surplus C5, C8, P13 and P11 outputs. Collaborations with other business support agencies on-going.	
Unique website visits	11,250	11,821	105% of overall programme profile target has been achieved.	
Grow Twitter community	1,874	1926	102.77% of overall programme profile target has been achieved.	
4 Subject / Thematic campaigns per annum.	6	6	100% of overall programme profile target has been achieved.	

Financial Performance

This section covers project performance in terms of actual expenditure against the profiled values contained in the Funding Agreement as at 31st March 21.

- Eligible Expenditure Defrayed within the claim period was **£402,508.20**
- Financial profile for this period was **£582,654.50**
- Cumulative expenditure **£4,240,457** compared to approved profile **£4,569,525.21**

Note - Boost is working to pre Covid-19 targets with regards to job and wealth creation amid an unprecedented economic crisis.

RISKS

A Single Portfolio Risk Register for the combined programmes is attached to the main report.