





GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership

Board Paper – Tuesday 28th September, 2021

Agenda Item 5	Growth Hub Strategic Development Plan Update
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Supporting Papers	 Growth Hub strategic developme  Network Partner Strategic Developme
Confidentiality	Confidential
Purpose	To provide the Board with a progress update around the Strategic Planning for the Growth Hub Network.
Summary	<p>From April 2021 the GFirst LEP Board took strategic oversight of the Growth Hub, replacing the role of the previous Growth Hub Management Board. This decision was taken to ensure that long-term strategy of the Growth Hub and its business support activities remain aligned to LEP priorities and supportive of local economic growth.</p> <p>With the changes to current funding models, the business support reform work and the review of LEPs; it was considered timely to develop a new strategic plan for the Growth Hub Network. One that focused on local and national priorities, recognised the strengths and diversity of the partners; and provided delivery framework that can maximise local and national funding opportunities.</p> <p>Over the summer period the LEP and Network teams have been developing this activity and this paper sets out, in brief, the progress and some of the findings to date.</p>
Project delivery and impact	<p>Following the April board meeting an outline strategic development plan was created by the GFirst LEP team and presented to all Network partners. A final plan was agreed in June and 'leads' for work stream areas divided across the Network Managers.</p> <p>Alongside the workstream activity all Hub Managers were asked to create a plan for their individual Growth Hubs. These individual plans are seen as an opportunity to-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> reflect the priorities, strengths and needs of each partner identify opportunities where partners can take lead in delivery or bidding for funding build understanding, collaboration and ongoing commitment within the Network

Jenny Raymond LEP Board Champion for Growth Hubs has been working with the internal LEP team and Growth Hub Managers and set out her ambitions for this activity at a meeting with Network partners on 20th July, 2021.

1. Operational delivery models – lead Katie Power, Tewkesbury Growth Hub

- The group felt that any changes to delivery models should be based on ‘client need’ and be customer led. A programme of business/client engagement should be undertaken as a next step in order to inform this.
- Free, impartial advice and events were all felt to be an important part of growth hub delivery and should be retained. However, how this is delivered (in person/digital), length of delivery and how it is measured were key aspects to review through client engagement and survey work.
- The group felt the current processes (e.g. form filling) may be off-putting and hard for businesses. It was also felt that the operational service delivery may be too bound up in target delivery (e.g. 3 and 12 hr interaction targets) and the restrictions of funding.

Next Steps:3-6 Months:

- a. Programme of customer engagement/survey work
- b. Evaluation of customer survey/engagement work
- c. Mapping and review of network facilities
- d. Events strategy review
- e. Review of metrics/output measuring strategy

2. New operational programmes and activities -lead Sam Hoad, GFirst LEP

- There was a general feeling that the ‘multi-dimensional’ support provided by GH’s is a good model.
- Innovation should be a clear focus and priority going forward and referral routes should be clear in terms of identifying specific business needs and directing to relevant help.
- It was felt that the existing system is fairly robust, but client journey routes could be improved with an Account Management process.
- Specialist Guides are also considered to be a valuable resource across the Network.
- Involvement of larger businesses - it was felt the opportunity to involve larger companies would help engage with supply chains creating CSR opportunities for these companies and also an opportunity to gain business intelligence

Next Steps:

- a. Upskilling Navigators on priority areas
 - Cyber Security
 - Net Zero
 - Innovation

- b. Challenge Network on outreach activity

There is comfort in the current delivery model, how do we build on it? To address this by a consultative approach across the network.

- d. What are the ‘specialisms’ we currently have and where are the gaps?

3. External Stakeholder and partner engagement

- Two workstream sessions have now taken place with representation from GFirst LEP and the GH Network.
- They are currently working with a list of 20 stakeholder group types including internal and external to the operation
- Now creating a Stakeholder Communications Plan which will include Information requirement, Channel and Relationship owner so can map out short, medium- and longer-term activities and resource and any new channels required to deliver this.

4. Marketing and Comms

- Need to develop a strategy for businesses that are not able to receive support now but maybe eligible in the future.
- Need to segment and use our data in a way to deliver targeted support for businesses to ensure they receive the right help and are made aware of all the services we have to offer.
- As well as reaching new businesses, need a focus on re-engaging lapsed customers, or changing the perception of businesses who think we are not for them.
- Key target markets –
 - a. Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering
 - b. Cyber Tech
 - c. Renewables
 - d. Recovery sectors – Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism
- Themes for events and support should be focused on
 - e. Cyber security
 - f. Net Zero
 - g. Digital Implementation
 - h. International Trade
 - i. Innovation and Productivity

Areas for improvement:

- Communicate marketing plan to the whole network and provide monthly updates
- Work on clear & consistent messaging across the network
- Focus on target markets, rather than a 'catch-all' approach
- Position our people front and centre to create 'faces' of the Growth Hub
- More case studies showcasing business and the journey they went on with us

	<p>Individual plans –</p> <p>Individual Growth Hubs were asked to respond to a number of questions, see embedded word template.</p> <p>Set out below are the key asks presented by Tewkesbury, Stroud and Gloucester -</p> <p><i>With regards to Network development what activities or input would you like to see from –</i></p> <p><u>GFirst LEP</u></p> <p>Overarching input and direction in terms of economic strategy and key economic drivers</p> <p>Stronger presence and input into the hubs</p> <p>Funding support</p> <p>Business development activities and events.</p> <p>Continued investment and support in network communication resources.</p> <p>Continued support in partner match funding and delivery as per existing agreements.</p> <p><u>Other partners</u></p> <p>Strengthen partnership with all network partners with equal input and sharing of workload.</p> <p>Working together on clarity of offer.</p> <p>Work experience/placement opportunities for our learners.</p> <p>Network Managers making a greater contribution to lead generation and local client engagement.</p> <p>Increased communication and collaboration between partner institutions to ensure common themes are reinforced across the network and opportunities for market engagement are maximized.</p> <p><u>Your organisation</u></p> <p>Continued revenue funding</p> <p>Continued high priority in the business plan</p> <p>Further support from ‘in house’ services to develop and strengthen ‘one stop shop’ USP.</p> <p>Increased marketing campaigns.</p> <p>More awareness in the community of our services.</p> <p>Business development activities and events.</p> <p><u>Government</u></p> <p>Continued high priority support and recognition for Growth Hubs</p> <p>Funding support for key infrastructure</p> <p>Development of business support programmes to be delivered through Growth Hubs – promoting and strengthening the concept of hubs being the single point of access for business support.</p> <p>As soon as possible, clarity on UKSP focus and likely opportunities for funded support for GH’s.</p>
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Business issues	<p>Funding Mechanisms workstream – Sarah Danson/Alex Cottrell – Gloucester</p> <p>We are awaiting announcements from government with regards to the replacements of European funding the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. It is hoped clarity with regards to this fund and what activities it will support will be provided at the CSR on 27th October.</p> <p>The current EU funded contract for our core Growth Hub ends December 2022.</p> <p>The capital expenditure secured in the Strategic Economic Plan for Growth Hub investment has now been distributed. As well as physical sites this investment also supported the development of the shared digital infrastructure – CRM, website, digital resources. Funding for licenses for the CRM and digital tools will end in March 2022. BEIS funding for Growth Hubs could be considered as a replacement but commitment to this funding is also part of the CSR process.</p> <p>In return for capital investment all partners have committed to providing Growth Hub services for an agreed period. The first of these commitments finishes July in 2023. Whilst there is no sign that these partners will cease to operate Growth Hub facilities it is important that the interests of these organisations are clearly reflected in the Strategic Development plan to support this.</p> <p>Some partners are utilizing membership models, renting incubator/office space and meeting rooms. These activities will be considered alongside potential sponsorship and commercial services as part of this workstream.</p>
Project Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deadline to develop the full plan by December 2021 - maybe ambitious given the additional activity already developing in the work streams and the 27th October funding announcements.

For further information about any points raised in this Board paper, please contact Sarah Danson:
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