

GOOD PRACTICE

Leeds City Region Growth Programme

ORGANISATION: Wakefield Council

TOPIC: Penetration of territories and attraction of investment

TOPIC OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

The topic of this best practice is the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Growth Service. The Growth Service acts as a single point of contact for tailored SME business support in Leeds City Region, designed specifically to support small to medium sized businesses based in Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Craven, Harrogate, Kirklees, Leeds, Selby, Wakefield and York.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

The LEP Growth Service

The LEP Growth Service is a one-stop-shop, helping small and medium-sized businesses in the region to find the right support and funding to realise their growth ambitions. Businesses can find information online quickly and easily about the support available from the LEP and its partners. The programme has replaced separate disparate support schemes at a local level, to ensure consistency for business and a more efficient low cost high impact model.

The programme supports local small and medium-sized business to find the funding and expertise they need to grow and expand, either from the LEP or a network of partners including Universities, Colleges, international trade organisations and private business. The programme also helps to attract new investment and jobs by helping companies looking to take advantage of the investment opportunities in our region.

Where required, businesses can also speak directly to Business Growth Advisors who can connect them with the right support for their individual needs.

Each area of the region has a specialist Growth Advisor who works directly with enterprises, engaging with all sectors (with the exception of retail) to offer a free, impartial service that keeps track of all the latest Government-backed products in the market. Over the last two years the programme has engaged with close to a thousand individual businesses.

The programme encourages businesses in the following areas;

1. Investing in the skills of new and existing employees
2. Looking for external funding, be that grants or loans
3. An interest in creating new products and services and working with universities or an innovation partner
4. An interest in exploring new markets and being open to overseas trade

Grant Funding

The programme can provide grant and loan funding to help companies based within the Leeds City Region, or looking to re-locate to LCR, grow their business and create jobs. Grants from £10,000 to £500,000 are available for companies in our key growth sectors. Loans of £500,000 to £1 million, or more in certain circumstances, are available for infrastructure or development projects. Over 350 companies have benefitted from the funding so far, creating an expected 3,500 jobs in the region.

Inward Investment Service

As well as enabling companies within the region to grow, the programme also works to attract new investment by supporting international and national businesses looking to locate here. By demonstrating the offer of a highly skilled workforce and outstanding business opportunities, we are able to represent our region as having all the ingredients for business success. Our specialist Inward Investment Team can help with finding premises, access to finance and grants, soft landing facilities, recruitment and aftercare.

Workforce Skills

To support small and medium-sized businesses based in the Leeds City Region to grow, with support and funding for training. Eligible businesses can receive grants of between £500 and £50,000.

LEP apprenticeship grant for employers - eligible businesses can access grants of up to £2,000.

Export

An export network aims to encourage and support more companies to trade internationally. It offers regular events where businesses looking to start exporting or break into new markets can get advice and assistance from experienced exporters across the region. We also work with partners including DIT, Chambers of Commerce, Enterprise Europe Network and Yorkshire Universities to offer events and support helping companies do more business overseas. The programme refers to the following organisations;

Department of International Trade

The Department of International Trade offers support and advice to small and medium-sized businesses in the UK, looking to export internationally or increase their export sales.

Chamber International

Chamber International offers export support to businesses including training and help with documentation, insurance, financing and other legal issues when trading overseas.

MYExport Hub

Part of the Mid Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, MYExport Hub offers export events, training and support to businesses of all sizes in Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield.

UK Export Finance

UK Export Finance is the UK's export credit agency. Support includes guarantees, insurance and advice to support UK exports, as well as help for businesses entering UK markets or struggling to find finance.

Open to Export

Find advice, webinars and contacts from the UK's largest online export community, via the Open to Export website.

Enterprise Europe Yorkshire

Enterprise Europe Yorkshire helps businesses do business and win contracts within the European Union, find trade partners and learn about business opportunities in EU member states.

Broadband and Digital Skills

We support businesses in the region to grow and become more productive by making better use of the internet. Grants are available to help companies upgrade to faster broadband, and a programme of digital skills training and masterclasses are also available. This support is currently delivered through the Superfast West Yorkshire programme.

ROLE OF ACTORS

The BP is reliant on a number of different actors/agencies that include the following:

Universities - Providing technical and R&D support.

Local Authorities - Providing referrals and local support.

Chamber of Commerce - Specialist advice in exporting and business development.

National Funding Programmes - National Government funded grant programmes providing funding for development.

Local Enterprise Partnership - Regional delivery organisation.

Private Enterprise - Providing mentoring and support activity.

DIT - Providing specialist international support.

BENEFICIARIES

The primary beneficiaries are local enterprises and the Leeds City Region;

Local Enterprises

A lot of research has been done demonstrating that businesses who bring in external support are more successful than those who don't. The programme endeavours to encourage businesses to make a modest time investment to bring in different perspectives and expertise. Considering and developing new strategic plans that ultimately save time and make the business more effective in the future. The programme has worked with a large number of businesses and keeps a catalogue of specific case studies quantifying the success.

The Leeds City Region

The GVA growth of the LCR - by creating more successful business, the region experiences high growth levels.

CULTURAL ASPECTS: POSSIBLE KEY LEVERAGES FOR INTERNATIONALISATION PROCESSES

N/A

INNOVATION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE, POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT AND REPLICABILITY

Innovation should be considered in two ways - The Growth Programme refers to the following agencies where appropriate:

Innovate2Succeed

Innovate2Succeed is for ambitious companies who want to unlock their innovation management potential with fully funded support.

Innovate UK

Innovate UK runs funding competitions for various kinds and sizes of business. Funding of between £5,000 and £10 million is available.

R&D tax relief from HMRC

Research & development relief is a corporation tax relief that may reduce your organisation's tax bill on investments in R&D activities.

Business and Intellectual Property (IP) Centre

The Business and IP Centre has a wide range of resources available to help business stay informed and protect intellectual property in your products and services.

Intellectual Property Office

The Intellectual Property Office's website provides a wealth of information on protecting IP, creations and inventions.

The programme also refers into the new business support programme AD:Venture delivering across the Leeds City Region, the AD: Venture programme offers a comprehensive and innovative mix of tailored business support to boost growth and develop businesses in their early years. Support includes:

- A full business start-up programme, with assistance in those early set up stages and business planning
- One-to-one support - you can access a dedicated business advisor to guide your growth journey and to help you develop your business plan
- Workshops targeted to develop skills that will help drive business growth, in topics such as; HR, Strategy, Cash flow forecasting, Branding, Marketing, Innovation and Research and Development
- Entrepreneur Knowledge Exchange (EKE) - expert University partners will support you to solve business problems using the shared experiences and insight of a small group

Business incubation space and services.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS AND THE ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT AND RESULTS OF GOOD PRACTICE

The programme keeps detailed statistics on investment levels, jobs created, companies exporting and specific case studies.

An example case study is as below;

A £68,000 grant from the LEP has been instrumental in the creation of a revolutionary prototype being developed by optical technology business, Optalysys.

Pioneering research

The money has allowed Pontefract based Optalysys to carry out ground breaking research to create a radical computing processor prototype that will revolutionise 'Big Data' processing technology.

Dr Nick New, CEO at Optalysys, said there are currently 'Big Data' issues within areas of science and engineering where it is becoming increasingly common for traditional high performance computing methods to fall short of delivering the processing power required, particularly within weather forecasting, MRI data analysis and quantum computing.

The Optalysys 'Big Data' product - launching in 2017 - could provide a solution to this, as it uses light instead of electricity to deliver the larger amounts of processing power.

Developing international partnerships

The business has already established links with several international institutions including NASA and British Aerospace.

Dr New said: "The development of the prototype has been a key focus for the business and its success will launch it to the forefront of the computer processing, as it will be the first technology of its kind."

LEP grant helps realise potential

Dr New added: “As a business which is currently conducting vast amounts of expensive research, we are reliant on funding to support and develop our concept. The grant was a crucial boost that has allowed us to reach the next stage of research; without it we couldn’t have advanced with our studies.

“Everyone who works here is eager to reach a pivotal point in optical information processing, a technology that has been evolving since 1859, but require vital funds like the grant support on offer from the LEP in order to achieve this.”

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