



Marches Growth Hub Annual Report 2015-16

This template has been produced by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) at the request of a number of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to help with the production of their end of year Growth Hub Annual Report and is being provided as a guide to the type of information that BIS expects to be included. LEPs are however, free to use an alternative format for their Reviews as long as the key content areas specified within the template are incorporated. This will ensure consistency and transparency to help evaluate the impact of the funding provided for the establishment or development of growth hubs in 2015-16 and allow BIS to publish an overarching growth hub summary, drawing on the information provided in individual growth hub reports.

Note: The requirement for each Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to produce a Growth Hub Annual Review is set down in Schedule 3 of individual Grant Offer Letters and is also a requirement of the common 'Metrics and Evaluation Framework' which all LEPs have sign up to.

Growth Hub Overview Summary

The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership launched the Marches Growth Hub on the 19th October 2015 with the creation of a website and (www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk) a dedicated local phone line (0345 6000 727), open between 9-5pm every week day. The website has been designed to create a virtual hub which is business-friendly where start-ups, SMEs and large employers can search for products and services and be signposted to advice and support. To complement the support provided by the virtual hub, three physical sites in Telford, Shrewsbury and Hereford have also been opened. The Marches LEP covers a large geographical area (2300 square miles), to enable businesses to obtain face to face support and have access to local events/workshop the operational model of a virtual and three physical hubs has been set up. The Telford site was the first to be opened on 21 October 2015 located at the University of Wolverhampton Priorslee Campus. This was followed by our Hereford site on 17th November 2015 and Shrewsbury on the 10th March 2016.

The virtual hub is operated and managed by the Marches LEP team and the three physical hubs are managed by the local authority economic development teams. The Hereford and the Telford physical hub are situated within buildings operated by the University of Wolverhampton and the Shrewsbury Hub is co-located with the Chamber of Commerce and UKTI on the Battlefield Enterprise Park with space also available within the University Centre Shrewsbury. At the three physical hubs businesses can hot desk, rent meeting space and meet with a variety of business advisors both public (UKTI and ERDF supported schemes) and the private sector organisation e.g. local legal clinics etc. This delivery model (virtual and physical hub) ensures that businesses can easily access 24hr business support and also have the opportunity to discuss in detail their requirements, provides an opportunity to network with other businesses and have direct access to national service providers and European funded business support schemes. The co-location of the physical hubs at university sites also aims to improve links with graduates with the wider business community, encouraging innovation and helping universities to understand the needs of the local business community.

The Marches Growth Hub only has one dedicated member staff (helpline coordinator) supported by Marches LEP Business Support Manager. Due to the limited resources available we have worked in partnership with the three local authorities who have provided officers to support the operation of the three physical hubs. These officers are business support/ economic development generalists providing additional support for the Hub.

To ensure an efficient and effective service is delivered to our businesses the Marches LEP has devised a service level agreement (SLA) and data sharing agreement with our key delivery partners (currently all public sector). These two key documents specify that direct referrals to partners are responded to within 48hrs, data protection protocols are followed and information on the website is maintained and kept up to date. By creating these documents (agreed by the key partners) we aim to ensure that the service continues to be valued by our local businesses and the wider business support services network and the Marches Growth Hub service is the first 'port of call' for accurate, up to date and impartial information on business support.

The website has been designed with a searchable directory of the all the schemes and services that are available to Marches businesses. Local content has been produced and a filter to the search facility has been created to help businesses pinpoint the eligible products/ services. The site is also fully aligned to the Business is GREAT campaign and links with the national Business Support Helpline and we now live data share. The Business Support Helpline is promoted on the website to assist pre starts and start up businesses. Dedicated pages are provided on the site for the

national business support programmes such as UKTI, in addition to separate directory entries. We are currently liaising with Innovate UK Regional Manager to improve the information on our site in relation to their services.

The website is constantly evolving, the latest development in March 2016 was the creation of an Employer Skills Search facility which was developed by the LEP and its Skills Board (which includes business representatives, training and skills providers and universities) to help employers find the right local training for their staff. This search facility brings together in one place all of the providers delivering training, skills and qualifications in the Marches for the first time. As well as detailing more than 1,000 courses on offer, it is designed with employers in mind. It offers businesses a chance to search directly for courses, training and skills which will benefit their employees and their companies.

Governance:

The Growth Hub Steering Group has been formed to oversee the Marches Growth Hub, this group is chaired by the Marches LEP Board Deputy Chair who is also the business support champion for the LEP and Chair of the Telford Business Board. The membership of this group includes business owners and managers from the three Business Boards plus representatives from the FSB and Chambers of Commerce plus BIS Local. The Steering Group meets quarterly and is a Sub-Group of the LEP Board and presents exception reports at the bi-monthly LEP Board meetings, in order for them to fulfil their monitoring programme finance and output metrics, including other essential information on the Growth Hub performance and management of risk. Below this steering group is an operational group. Initially, the operational group was tasked with setting up the Growth Hub it has now extended its membership to include key delivery partners UKTI, University of Wolverhampton and others, to ensure appropriate referrals are made and monitored and areas of concern or emerging issues can be discussed. The membership of this group is constantly reviewed. Other business support providers (national and local) are called to attend this operational group and the Steering Group, as and when required. All members are required to provide updates on their service area, level of activity in the Marches area and comply with the SLA that has been developed so we can monitor their service standard.

The benefits of this governance structure is that the LEP Board is able to assist with the setting strategic direction for the Growth Hub, a private sector led board which fifteen members which mirrors the Growth Hub boundaries and ensures that the Growth Hub is a useful tool to assist with the LEP's overall strategy for growth. The three local authorities and the three area business boards are members of the LEP Board and therefore fully support and endorse the Growth Hub and have become key members in assisting in the delivery and the success of the Growth Hub. Three Local Authority members and a Business Board representative attend the steering group and/or operations group and each Local Authority provides personnel to help operate the Hub at these physical locations. The business boards help to provide direct links to private businesses testing the effectiveness of the service and provide a route to publicise the service.

Summary of progress of your Growth Hub to date

Overview of Key Achievements

B. Key Achievements.

Detailed below are the Marches Growth Hub achievements against the logasnet metrics from October 2015- March 2016:

- **No. of businesses (or individuals) engaged with:** 2652 plus a further 3916 users of the website. A total of 6568 users of the service
- **Type of Support provided:**

Email	14
Phone	239
Face to face appointments	275
Newsletter	Three newsletters in addition to 3 LA's newsletter promoting hub activity to their wider audience
Website	3916 visitors
Social media	Twitter: @marcheshub Linked in: https://www.linkedin.com/company/marches-growth-hub Youtube channel too: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVYguUBbMCtogTT1wV4VmLA Facebook www.facebook.com/marchesgrowthhub
Events at the physical hubs	77 events, 2080 people attended

- **Website visitors:** 3916 up to March 2015
- **Average time spent on the website:** 4m.39s
- **Click through rates Great/ Gov.uk/ BGS:** 264 (February 2016 – March16 due to the code only embedded on 8th Feb). If we use this data as a typical example, we could estimate that the actual click though rate since the Hub launch has exceeded 1000 clicks

In addition to above our social media account statistics reveal:

- **Twitter** - 880 followers 31/3/16 - with a potential viral reach of 907,000
- **The top tweet** over the period Oct-Mar 16 was the hub promoting the IPO videos- seen by more than 540 people
- **YouTube channel** - our apprenticeship video on this channel has now been viewed more than 230 times.

Enquiries signposted to providers 19/10-31/3	Total
Boost Capital loan	7
BGS	3
Impetus	14
Virgin Start Up	17
Gov.UK	11
Princes Trust	2
Cobra Fact Sheets	14
Herefordshire Council/ Herefordshire Hub	16
Shropshire Council / Shropshire Hub	26
Telford & Wrekin Council/ T&WC Hub	19
IPO	1
Southern Shropshire Leader	2
Mentors ME	3
Cyber Security Innovation Voucher Scheme	1
Marches LEP	1
Graduate Talent Pool	1
Green Shoots Plus	3
Funding Circle	4
Herefordshire Leader	2
Business is Great	1
MIF	1
Innovate UK	1
BCRS	1
Rural Hub Partnership	2
UKTI	2
Total	155

The Customer Satisfaction Question - How Likely are you to refer service to a colleague? The Marches Growth Hub average score from responses received was 3 (5 = very likely). Unfortunately, of the 83 surveys sent out only 4 people have replied (5% response rate)

In addition to this question, which is set by BIS on logasnet, we are also asking a further 2 questions. They are:

1. How would you rate the knowledge of the Marches Growth Hub Helpline regarding your enquiry?
2. How would you rate the overall service of the Helpline?

The average score for both of these questions is 4 (5 being high and 1 low).

The customer satisfaction survey response rate is too low. The Marches Growth Hub Steering group have asked our helpline coordinator to improve this and as a result the virtual hub has recently adopted a process where each month the helpline coordinator randomly selects at least 10 businesses to call back to obtain direct feedback. This has not only helped with assessing customer satisfaction but this has enabled us to provide additional support to these business and to improve the accuracy of referrals to other organisations. Currently, the customer satisfaction surveys are only sent to businesses that have been assisted by the virtual hub. The 3 physical hub are currently amending their CRM system to capture this data to ensure the complete service is monitored for 2016/17.

It is important to note that whilst customer satisfaction surveys have not as yet been issued by the Physical Hubs customer satisfaction can still be monitored by attendance of the events held at the Hubs. Since the hub launched, 2,080 people have attended events at the three physical locations. These are almost exclusively promoted via the Hub and its social media channels. Feedback via social media on those events has been overwhelmingly positive. Social media is an ongoing conversation with businesses engaging with the Hubs on a daily basis and between October to March, not a single complaint or negative tweets or direct message has been received via any of our social media channels.

As explained in the previous section, it is also important to The Marches Growth Hub that our businesses obtain information quickly from our partners and therefore we monitor response rates. We have agreed a 48hr response time within the service level agreement that has been signed by partners. At the end of March, 89% of all referrals made had been responded to within 48hrs.

Finally, for 2016/7 we have amended our CRM system to enable the Marches Growth Hub to record, in line with the BIS new metrics framework, the actual support businesses have received from partners. We will then be able to quantify the impact the Hub as had in enabling businesses to access this support e.g. funding received, jobs created etc.

Summary of Simplification Activity for your Growth Hub Area

C. Simplification.

Principle: The LEP should demonstrate that through its growth hub it is intending to create a more coherent and simpler local landscape for business, by mapping business support in its area, gathering data on the performance and targeting of local schemes, and, working with its partners, reviewing and rationalising schemes. There is no target for % reductions in local schemes nor target date by which simplification should be achieved, but there should be a focus on removing duplication, closing under-performing schemes and promoting schemes which are proven to be most effective at helping businesses to grow in line with the model set down in 'Simplifying the Local Business Support Landscape - Guide for Cities and LEPs' (issued by BIS 17 October 2014).

A study was commissioned by Telford & Wrekin Council on behalf of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in November 2014. The consultant Good2Great were recruited to undertake this mapping exercise and was completed in March 2015 (copy attached)

The three aims of the report were to:

1. Understand the local business community and its requirement for business support
2. Map current business support and its efficacy
3. Make recommendations for the future delivery of business support across the Marches to allow for flexible and tailored support to be offered that is capable of adaptation to meet the changing needs of business

Research activities took the form of desktop research, interviews, questionnaires and stakeholder focus groups across a range of sectors and of businesses at different stages of growth. This was to establish what elements of business support and what methods of delivery have worked well for businesses from pre-start to high growth, what gaps exist and what have been the barriers to businesses accessing relevant business support. The Consultants were tasked with mapping and listing all the business support that was identifiable and currently available in the area against business stage and geography.

Conclusions:

- business support within the Marches LEP, and indeed the wider UK economy, is disjointed, disparate and often with competing services all calling on business owners to sample their programmes
- Emphasis appears to be one of 'product pushing' rather than engaging with businesses to fully understand their needs. Comprehensive growth plans need to be developed, implemented and monitored to ensure that all individual interventions are effective and lead seamlessly to continued support.
- A central database tracking the business journey over short, medium and long term is created.

- Independent diagnostic tools to match need with solutions
- Account management to link businesses with programmes
- A low cost to serve engagement model for micro and small businesses
- Ranking of providers and their programmes
- Virtual and physical hubs appropriate to the urban centres and context
- Flexibility within programmes to respond to market demand to refocus delivery based on results

The Report was completed in March 2015 and has been considered by the LEP Business Support operational group. This document has helped determine the model for the Growth Hub i.e. virtual and physical hubs. The Marches Growth Hub website has been created with a searchable database to provide micro /small businesses with support 24hrs but with access to a local helpline phone number. The LEP has adopted a CRM system called Tractivity to account manage all enquiries for the helpline. Three physical hubs are looking to adopt the same system but due to licence agreements already in place this will be a gradual integration onto one system, where possible.

The Marches European Investment and Structural Fund Committee has used this document to help shape calls for business support applications for ERDF funding, ensuring schemes do not overlap and where gaps in provision exist 'ERDF calls' seek applications to address this.

D. Evaluation.

The Marches Growth Hub only went live in October 2015 and procedures and protocols are still being developed. It is proposed that after 12 months of operation the Marches GH Steering Group will review the model that has been adopted, how funds have been spent, its effectiveness in providing signposting/ support to the local business community.

The Marches Growth Hub did not receive City Deal so only had a limited number of services that can provide intensive support e.g. BGS, MAS, UKTI and a number of University Schemes.

The Marches Growth Hub will be putting in more intensive support programmes during Summer 2016 using ERDF funds and will start to monitor their impact early Spring 2017. Our focus in 2015/16 has been to set up the virtual hub with website and phone line support, as detailed in section B.

E. Lessons learned/good practice.

The Marches Growth was launched on 19th October with a budget of £250,000. We were the 30th hub to launch and have found the BIS networking events helpful to understand how other Hubs are operating, adopting these process where appropriate. Detail below are our strengths and the lessons that have been learnt to date. The Hub will continue to evolve, improving our services to our local businesses and ensuring that we address the issues raised in the Marches LEP strategic Economic Plan.

Strengths of the Marches Growth Hub:

- Dedicated local phone line. Businesses are now making repeat calls to the service and have developed a rapport with staff at the Hub and use this service first, before using other channels.
- Partnership and integration of the Growth Hub, LEP, Local Authority and Universities to deliver business support through the creation of a virtual and physical hubs
- Greater visibility of government programmes locally with staff hot desking at the physical hub e.g. UKTI
- Regular meeting with all business support providers
- Knowledge days for key Growth Hub personnel and the wider business support network to inform and update them on new product and services.

Lessons Learnt:

- Due to the model adopted virtual/ physical hubs it has been important to ensure that businesses understand and recognise the brand, 'Marches Growth Hub'. Media and branding guidance/protocols have been created to prevent confusion and watering down of the brand across the geographical area.
- Having a clear referral process and tracking the business journey is important to show the benefits of the Growth Hub but also understanding the issues affecting businesses. All partners involved in business support across the area are gradually becoming aware of the importance of this and now report monthly on what businesses that have assisted.
- Regular operational meetings amongst partners to ensure concerns and issues are raised. The development of a service level agreement to ensure we are all aware of role and how we can contribute to the success of the Hub.
- The need to communicate changes/ amendments to website in a timely way. Weekly alerts are now sent out.
- Event and workshop planning is time consuming. The need to share information on events that worked well to replicate these across the area to ensure business have an equal opportunity to access these events. Event planning group is being formed to create a 6 monthly programme of events.