

One of LEP's flagship projects in the Strategic Economic Plan is the Growth Hub. The Gloucestershire Growth Hub is unique in that a total of £9.4 million of Local Growth Funding has been allocated for the development of facilities and a comprehensive digital infrastructure.

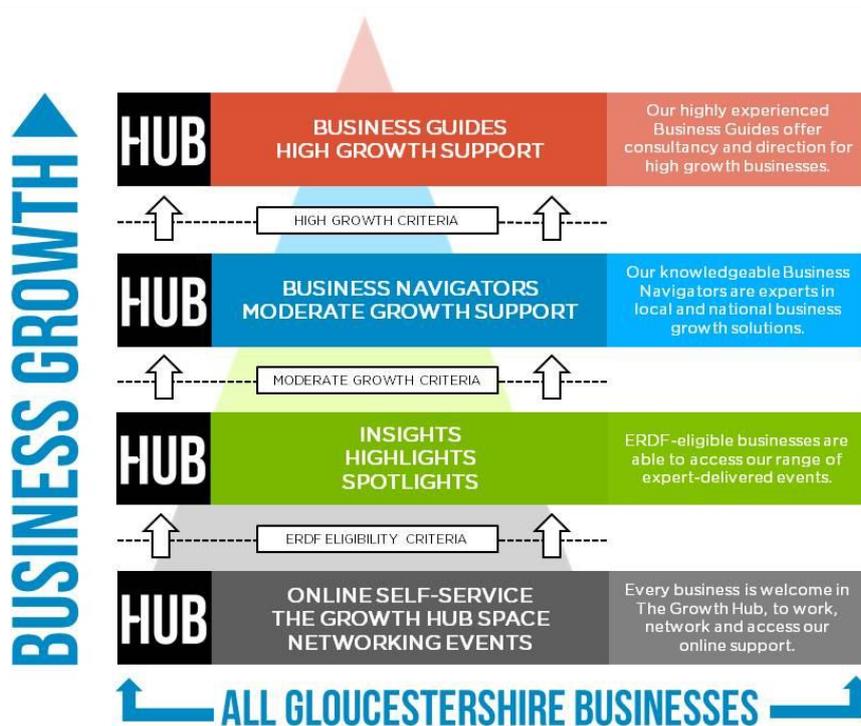
The Growth Hub at Oxstalls, Gloucester opened in October 2014 and, following investment of £5 million towards a brand new building, is now collocated onsite with the University's School of Business and Technology.

Further details are available on The Growth Hub website: [www.thegrowthhub.biz](http://www.thegrowthhub.biz)

The Growth Hub helps businesses realise their potential and grow. It provides a free impartial diagnostic and sign posting service to businesses of any size and any sector and support leading to the creation of Growth Plans and impartial brokerage services for businesses with moderate and high growth potential.

The key aim of the Growth Hub is to grow the Gloucestershire economy above the national rate of growth. There are three core principles that drive this aim:

- Providing support for businesses to enable business growth
- Providing support for individuals to enable them to reach and exploit their full potential
- Creating opportunities for businesses to meet, network and promote their services to each other
- Depending on the growth stage of business, different options will be available to clients as shown below.



To extend the reach of the Growth Hub GFirst LEP is working with project partners to establish the Growth Hub Network.

The Growth Hub Network partners currently include:

- The Royal Agricultural University (Cirencester);
- Tewkesbury Borough Council (Tewkesbury);
- Vantage Point Business Village (Forest of Dean);
- Gloucestershire County Council (through their 31 library locations across the county);
- Workshop Cheltenham Limited (Cheltenham);
- South Gloucestershire and Stroud College (Stroud)

Alongside capital investment to create attractive and vibrant facilities for businesses to access, partners will be supported by central Growth Hub activities and a digital infrastructure to deliver the 'virtual' Growth Hub and facilitate reporting processes.

Growth Hubs will be / are developed in locations which are unique but create comfortable places for businesses to work and network whilst reflecting and meeting the needs of their locations. The aim is to create a 'no wrong door' approach for businesses with locations clearly branded and operated as part of The Growth Hub.

The primary customers of the Growth Hub are businesses so all partners have clearly evidenced the business community they will serve and support from businesses, business membership groups and local authorities in the area within their business plans.

The Growth Hub Network will be delivered via a Tiered model:

Tier 1: - Specialist Resource Centres that provide support to targeted high growth potential businesses, including technical, sector-specific, R&D and innovation support.

Tier 2: - Generic or General Resource Centres which will provide access to the wider Growth Hub network and a wide range of business support services, networking and work space and potentially business incubation support for new start-up businesses.

Tier 3: - Points of access into the Growth Hub Network. They may not directly provide any support or services, but simply provide access points to the virtual Growth Hub and refer businesses to information or other providers within the Growth Hub Network.

The Cheltenham Growth Hub will be a Tier 2 Network centre and will:

- Provide a physical Growth Hub centre
- Provide a free impartial diagnostic and sign posting service to businesses of any size and any sector.
- Provide and evidence Navigator services leading to the creation of Growth Plans and impartial brokerage services for businesses that meet the EU eligibility criteria and can demonstrate moderate growth ambitions.
- Ensure the referral of high growth potential businesses to the core Growth Hub Business Guide team.
- Provide networking opportunities.

- Provide opportunities to meet support providers/professionals.
- Signpost to specialist advice provided elsewhere.
- Support and build the network of business support and skills providers that are working with the Growth Hub.
- Work with the core Growth Hub to share intelligence about the need and demand for new products and services.

All Growth Hub Network Centres will:

- i. Display clear corporate branding.
- ii. Facilitate Growth Hub delivery as a result of the capital funding received and add to/complement and not directly compete with existing business support facilities in their local catchment areas.
- iii. Have demonstrated how they will pay for ongoing revenue costs including staffing, property and IT infrastructure.
- iv. Ensure compliance with the standards and reporting processes set out by GFirst LEP and other funding partners including government departments and EU funding streams.
- v. Comply with use of the central Customer Relationship Management system and website.
- vi. Ensure their long-term financial sustainability.

#### European Regional Development Funding

Central Growth Hub services are delivered by the University of Gloucestershire from the Growth Hub at Oxstalls Campus utilising European Regional Development funding (ERDF). All partners, through a service level agreement, commit to deliver and evidence outputs that contribute to the ERDF contracted outputs.

The main aim of the current ERDF project within which the Growth Hub operates, is to provide impartial diagnostic and brokerage support and simplified access to business support, in order to stimulate economic growth and SME competitiveness in the county.

The six year project (January 2017 – December 2022) outcomes include:

- Providing 860 businesses with high-growth business support
- Providing 1,620 businesses with information diagnostic and brokerage support
- Supporting the creation of 620 FTE jobs

Resulting in:

- An increased number of SMEs receiving business support
- An increased number of FTE jobs created
- An increase in SME productivity

And will be particularly targeting:

- SMEs in rural or harder to reach locations in Gloucestershire
- SMEs that are likely to grow as a result of Growth Hub support
- SMEs that are operating in specific high-growth sectors

## Long-term sustainability

Growth Hubs are part of a national project overseen by the department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). GFirst LEP reports biannually to BEIS against an agreed monitoring and evaluation framework.

Building the capacity and capabilities of Growth Hubs will be a feature of the local industrial strategy planning in LEP areas.

Additional responsibilities and activities as set out by BEIS include:

- Delivering countywide Scale Up activity
- Working closely with national and locally funded projects and programmes – DIT, Innovate UK, MAS etc
- Building the relationship with the British Business Bank
- Participating in the BBFA national pilot - one of five pilot areas
- Developing mentoring services
- Coordinating services with other key LEP projects eg Inward Investment
- Developing the Growth Hub digital infrastructure
- Working with partners to seeking additional sources of funding for new products and services

<https://www.thegrowthhub.biz/the-buzz/news/futures-not-bright-its-electric-cleevely-electric-vehicles>

<https://www.thegrowthhub.biz/the-buzz/news/creating-ps5m-brand-18-months-hawkins-brimble>

<https://www.thegrowthhub.biz/the-buzz/news/case-study-rockatek-ltd>