

Business Gateway Business Plan

April 2016

Purpose of Plan

This plan is to provide information on the activity planned for Business Gateway Scottish Borders for the year 2016/17. It will be used by the Council, Senior Management team and Business Gateway team to summarise the actions for the year and to provide information to enable monitoring of performance as the year progresses.

1. Background

1.1 The business plan is for the year 1/4/16 to 31/3/17. The actions fit within the 5 year business plan previously written taking the service up to September 2017. Activity under Business Gateway follows a National Service Specification and locally fits with the Scottish Borders Economic Strategy 2023.

1.2 Business Gateway (BG) operates from offices at Ettrick Riverside in Selkirk and covers the whole of the Scottish Borders from these offices. The BG team comprise of 1 administrator, 2 start-up advisers (1 full time and 1 part time), 5 growth advisers (4 full time and 1 part time) and a project officer. In addition in the Business Gateway office space is given to the Princes Trust Regional Manager and also a Railway Tourism Business Adviser, contracted under a Borders Railway Blueprint project. The Business Gateway has a manager who is currently acting up into the role of Principal Officer, Business.

1.3 Within the team there are a number of specialists in the areas of: Tourism, Food and Drink, Renewable Energy, ICT, Social Enterprise and Finance.

1.4 The BG team are integrating with Economic Development and act as the front face of this team for businesses. Recently this has involved the advisers in providing support to the businesses affected by flooding in Hawick and Jedburgh.

1.5 Delivery of BG services follows a National Specification with allowances for a local influence. The national specification demands provision of a Start-Up service and a Growth service. Details of how these will be delivered are below.

1.6 In addition to the core funding provided by Scottish Borders Council the BG service has secured European Regional Development Funding for the period of 1 October 2015 (backdated from 30 March 2016) until 30 March 2019. Details of the targets and activity are also contained in this plan.

2. Start-up Team

2.1 In recent years the BG team has run with one dedicated start-up adviser and each of the sector specialists have been tasked with finding start-ups from their own sector as well. This has not proved to be effective with a number of new businesses being missed and not effectively reported.

2.2 In order to counter this and create early identification of higher growth starts this year will see additional resource put into this area. Wilma Norris will join Lyn Galloway on return from maternity leave in May. This will provide an additional 4 days of focussed start-up support aimed at those businesses that fall into the Potential High Value start and High Value Start segments.

2.3 The start-up team will not have any area boundaries and will cover the whole of the Scottish Borders. They will work with all start-up businesses, being passed referrals from other members of the BG team. This additional resource will also allow us to meet with all start-up businesses and provide them with some extra support. This will enable the identification of higher growth starts.

2.4 Workshops will continue at the same rate as before i.e. an average of 6 workshops per calendar month. This will be mixed with workshops in the Selkirk office and those taken out across the Borders.

3. Growth Team

3.1 Nationally the majority of resources go into the Growth targets and support for growing businesses. This is also reflected locally with 5 people being appointed as Growth Advisers. This year the advisers will be allocated one of the Locality areas designated by the Council. The aim of this approach is to identify more businesses that we have not had contact with before and ensure that the BG service is spread across the Scottish Borders. Each of the advisers will be responsible for all activity in their area and they will have a number of tasks to carry out including:

- Identify and introduce themselves to all local intermediaries and potential referrers of business
- Identifying new businesses and passing them to the start-up team to progress
- Identify businesses that have not had a relationship with BG before, or have not been in touch for a while, meet with these businesses and fit them into our segmentation model highlighting opportunities for support
- Highlight problems for businesses in their area and find solutions to these problems
- Network with businesses and other professionals ensuring promotion of the BG brand and themselves as the point of contact
- Find venues for Masterclasses and other workshops and ensure suitability with their client base
- Share intelligence and best practice with other Growth Advisers at a new weekly meeting
- Ensure Growth targets are met
- Work with other members of localities team to help deliver a highly valued public service in their area.

4. Workshop Delivery

4.1 BG Scottish Borders has an excellent reputation for delivering high quality workshops and seminars. Last year over 1500 people attended our range of seminars. This year this range will be increased and with the help of ERDF funding we will put on more Masterclasses.

4.2 Seminars are seen as an excellent entry to the services offered by BG. Our 4 start up workshops are delivered each month and bring in a high number of new start and potential start-up businesses. Our range of seminars aimed at Growth businesses will increase this year. We will repeat our successful Tax workshops started last year, we will deliver the range of National Digital Boost seminars regularly and make use of the national funding for this. We have agreed to partner with the Exporters Association to deliver seminars aimed at new and existing exporters and we will look for similar partnerships with other business organisations, again to increase our business reach. The range will be further bolstered by national activity currently looking at new subject areas.

4.3 Our series of seminars will continue to be run across the Borders including areas with highest deprivation. We will make use of venues in each of the localities to ensure a wide reach and to help us identify a new client base. We will also look for new opportunities to run networking events in these areas to encourage closer working between businesses.

5. European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

5.1 We have secured an ERDF grant of £564k using identified match funding of £820k. This grant covers the period to March 2019. This has enabled us to support 2 full time and one part time adviser. The 2 full time advisers are part of the Growth team and this resource allows us to provide focus across the whole of the Borders. The part time adviser will be used for projects relating to Internationalisation and Innovation.

5.2 Internationalisation will see closer links formed with the Exporters Association and a number of joint seminars. A target of new Exporters has been set and we will aim to encourage businesses to look at exporting for the first time or to research new countries to sell their products to. We will research the barriers to exporting from local businesses and implement projects to overcome these.

5.3 For Innovation we will work with Scottish Enterprise to deliver their products to businesses relating to Innovation. We will research opportunities for Business Innovation Centres in the Scottish Borders and aim to have a business base that is encouraged to improve business processes and products.

5.4 We will deliver a range of Masterclasses across the area aiming for 10 per year. These will be on business topics most relevant to our customer base. These sessions will include a high profile speaker and will be followed by a networking session at the end. These sessions were well attended last year and led to some new clients being identified by the advisers.

5.5 The Expert Help scheme has been started again. This allows businesses to access funding for consultancy projects in their business. This will be available for growth businesses and accessed via their adviser. A framework has been used to find a number of consultants that can advise across six Lots – Business Strategy, Investor Readiness, Marketing and Brand Development, HR, ICT and Innovation Support. The ICT support will not be used until the Digital Boost Programme finishes in March 2017. This fund will allow 100% funding up to £3k on consultancy support.

6. Marketing

6.1 In order to find new businesses to work with, Business Gateway will again look to market services in the press and also on Radio Borders. Marketing is funded centrally as part of the National budget managed by COSLA but the ERDF funding gives us the opportunity to expand on this.

6.2 Client case studies are gathered and these are used to promote the service in the press. We will consider running some radio advertising that can also give some local businesses an opportunity to promote themselves.

6.3 ERDF funding paid for design, printing and delivery of an information leaflet that went out with the Non-Domestic Rates invoices. We will look for other opportunities within the Council to promote our services and use our network to promote the services of other business related Teams in SBC.

6.4 We have been asked to provide a monthly column in the Border Telegraph giving business advice and providing case studies of businesses that have used our service. This has proved successful in creating leads. Similar opportunities will be sought with other local newspapers.

6.5 Our Intermediary Visits will create new opportunities for us as we start to spread the word on how Business Gateway can help other professionals and their clients.

7. Targets and Outputs

7.1 The next page shows the targets that we will be aiming for over the 12 month period. These will be reported internally and nationally on a monthly basis. Those relating to ERDF will be reported on quarterly and we will feed back to Executive Committee after 6 months.

Table 1. Business Gateway Targets 2016 - 17

Service Output Targets		
Start-up Service	Target 2016/17	Actual 2016/17
Total number of start-up customers who have begun trading	220	
Potential High Value Start-ups (PHVSU). Businesses expected to start turning over in excess of £70k in yr. 1 or employ someone	25	
High Value Start-ups (HVSU) turning over in excess of £70k in yr. 1 or have employees	20	
Number of start-up workshops/seminars held	72	
Number of clients attending start-up workshops/seminars	432	
Growth Services		
Local Growth Advisory Service (LGAS) businesses expected to increase annual turnover by £100k on 3 years	30	
Growth Advisory Service (GAS) businesses expected to increase annual turnover by £200k in 3 years	15	
Growth Pipeline (GP) businesses expected to increase turnover by £400k in 3 years, approved by Scottish Enterprise	6	
Account Managed (AM) Businesses who meet SE criteria for acceptance on to national account management structure	2	
Number of workshops aimed at Growing Businesses	60	
Number of clients attending growing business workshops/seminars	360	
ERDF Targets		
Number of Masterclasses held	10	
Number of Scottish Borders Business Fund grants issued	20	
Increase in Employees in assisted companies	40	
Number of businesses assisted to export for the first time	15	

8. Business Gateway – Performance Improvement Plan – 2016/17

Improvement Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Cost/Resource	Expected Result
1). Increase activity in the Start-up team ensuring greater focus on business starts with the greatest potential for growth	BG Manager & Start-up Advisers	April 2016	Staff Time	Better service given to all start-ups, individual businesses given adviser time not just in workshop situation. Better identification of growth potential clients, better monitoring of start-ups and achievement of target.
2). Implement 'localities' type approach to Growth service allocating a growth adviser to each area.	BG Manager and Growth Advisers.	April 2016	Staff Time	Greater visibility across the Borders, better service to existing clients, identification of new prospects, closer working with intermediaries and other Council partners, increased networking across the area and achievement of growth targets.
3). Better integration with Economic Development and other business facing Teams in the Council	BG Manager	Ongoing	Staff Time	Meetings to be held to explain more about the service, asking for representatives from each Team to present at BG meetings. Aim is to have better communication between departments and ultimately provide a better service to the business customer.
4). Increase delivery of workshops to harder to reach areas and communities in the area.	BG Manager and BG Advisers	Ongoing	Staff Time plus venue hire approx. £2k per annum	Provision of a better service from BG, carrying out our wider social responsibilities as part of SBC. Discovering new businesses and individuals that we should be working with and who will contribute to our national targets.
5). Research opportunities to increase internationalisation with local businesses. Working in partnership with Exporters Association, hold related workshops, actively seek out businesses who could export their products.	BG Manager, Project officer	From May 2016	Staff time and small budget £5k ERDF funded	Increased number of businesses looking at exporting as an option, closer working with partners, and ultimately greater number of sales from outside the Borders increases local GVA.

Improvement Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Cost/Resource	Expected Result
6). Research opportunities to provide a better service for Innovation to the businesses in the Borders, working with SE colleagues and researching premises that could be used for Business Improvement Bases.	BG Manager and project officer	May 16 – onwards	Staff Time, Budget of approx. £5k ERDF funded	More innovative businesses operating in the Borders, a better understanding by the businesses of what innovation means and why it is so important to their business. Identify future project for a Business Improvement Base.
7). Launch a new series of Masterclasses and networking events.	BG Manager and BG Administrator	May 2016	£10k budget ERDF funded	Knowledge transfer to businesses across the Borders on subjects important to their business. Better informed business owners making their chance of success greater. Networking opportunities will result in potential new collaborative working between businesses.
8). Run a 'Business Week' providing a wide range of seminars with partners.	Business Gateway team	Nov 2016	Staff time, £4k core budget	Knowledge transfer to businesses. Opportunity to promote services and skills on offer from BG. Opportunity to create closer partnerships and working relationships with other organisations.
9). Run a number of retail workshops across the Scottish Borders, in partnership with Retail Mentors and Scottish Business in the Community.	BG Manager	September 2016	£500 per workshop paid from existing budgets	Advice to small retailers on our local High Streets. Providing retailers with some extra focus and new ideas to improve their offering, improve the survival rates of retailers and make our High Streets more attractive to shoppers and tourists.