

**2nd September 2020**

**Business Growth Board**

**BEIS - Peer to Peer Networks**

### **Purpose of Report**

Following the development of a national programme by BEIS to support business leaders, each LEP area is requested to opt into the initiative, or to opt out. This paper requests approval to opt into the scheme and accept the grant and terms associated with this initiative.

### **Thematic Priority**

- Facilitate and proactively support growth amongst existing firms
- Develop the SCRs skills base, labour mobility and education performance

### **Freedom of Information and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972**

Under the Freedom of Information Act this paper and any appendices will be made available under the SCR Publication Scheme

### **Recommendations**

The Business Growth Thematic Board consider and approve:

1. Agreement to opt into the Peer to Peer Scheme with approval to accept associated grant value.
2. Delegated Authority to the Head of Paid of Service, in conjunction with the Section 73 and the Monitoring Officer, to enter into the contractual arrangements required as a result of the above approval.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 On 29 May BEIS set out to develop and implement a Peer to Peer business support initiative (Peer Network) helping more SMEs to access high quality Peer Networks whilst supporting the economic recovery from COVID-19 in the short term and improving firm level productivity in the medium to long term. Peer Network will enhance the leadership capabilities, knowledge and confidence of business owners and entrepreneurs within a local region. It will help build local connectivity and strength within the SME business community.

## **2. Proposal and justification**

- 2.1 The nationally funded programme will see the creation of a series of Peer Networks (cohorts) through the Growth Hub network, with each group consisting of 8-11 owners or managers from the SME business community participating in each network. Led by an experienced facilitator, these Peer Networks will typically meet fortnightly as part of delivering 18 hours of action learning through 2-3-hour sessions. Individual one-to-one

support (coaching, mentoring, or advice) will also be provided directly by the programme to help to implement and manage change. Our involvement in the The Peer Networks Programme will be funded by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in response to a commitment made in the 2019 Business Productivity Review.

- 2.2** As well as supporting the delivery of the SCR Renewal Plan, the Peer Networks are intended to form an important part of the Government's drive to improve productivity and deliver part of the economic response to the effect of COVID-19 on businesses, offering a nationally funded vehicle to support business leaders in Sheffield City Region. It will provide support to SMEs as they move into and through the Recovery phase of COVID-19 response. The aim is to improve SMEs' capability to adapt their business models to the "new normal", position themselves for future success and drive longer term productivity gains through improved leadership and management skills and tech adoption.
- 2.3** The programme will aim to support up to 6 cohorts of delivery across the Sheffield City Region. These will be delivered in line with local demand and will be delivered externally. Success in delivery will be measured by:
- 2.4** Firm survival, Participant views on the resilience of their SME, Participant views on their leadership and management skills, The SME's ability to access cash to continue trading, Changes in the SME's adoption of technology, Improvements in labour productivity, Growth in value added as an indicator of recovery from COVID-19.

### **3. Consideration of alternative approaches**

- 3.1** Sheffield City Region LEP via its Growth Hub were given the option to take part in this initiative. As the Government is keen to pursue its levelling up agenda, it is vital that SCR is seen as a place to focus on and be involved along with all other 37 LEPs that have opted in.

### **4. Implications**

- 4.1 Financial**  
BEIS will cover 100% of the cost of the project, delivery of the programme will be tendered publicly.
- 4.2 Legal**  
There are no legal implications arising from this report
- 4.3 Risk Management**  
No risk analysis was deemed necessary for this project.
- 4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion**  
No requirements associated with the endorsement of this paper.

### **5. Communications**

- 5.1** Proactive communications opportunities will be sought at appropriate milestones throughout the project, to gain maximum positive publicity from the regional delivery. Communications work will be carried out in collaboration with partners, including BEIS, the and others, and will be delivered across a variety of channels, including through digital, social and traditional media.

### **6. Appendices/Annexes**

None

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ

Other sources and references: NA