

BUSINESS RECOVERY AND GROWTH BOARD

6th JANUARY 2021

**EU TRANSITION BUSINESS READINESS FUNDING FOR GROWTH HUBS - GRANT
ACCEPTANCE**

Purpose of Report

This paper requests approval to accept the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Grant, approval to waive the Contract Procedure Rules (CPR's) to award a contract totalling £104,500 to Sheffield Chamber of Commerce and seeks delegated authority to be given to the S73 officer in conjunction with the Head of Paid Service and Monitoring Officer to enter into legal agreements for the schemes.

This paper supports the following Thematic Priorities:

1. **Ensure new businesses receive the support they need to flourish.**
2. **Facilitate and proactively support growth amongst existing firms.**
3. Attract investment from other parts of the UK and overseas and improve our brand.
4. **Increase sales of SCR's goods and services to other parts of the UK and abroad.**
5. Develop the SCR skills base, labour mobility and education performance.
6. Secure investment in infrastructure where it will do most to support growth.

Freedom of Information

The paper will be available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme.

Recommendations

The Board consider and approve:

1. Acceptance of the BEIS grant allocation of £136,050 for EU Transition Business Readiness Funding for Growth Hubs
2. Approval of a Waiver Request for award of contract totalling £104,050 to Sheffield Chamber of Commerce
3. Delegated authority be given to the S73 officer in consultation with the Head of Paid Service and Monitoring Officer to accept the grant of £136,050 and enter into legal agreements for the schemes covered above.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 5th November 2020 the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) announced £6.4m EU Transition Business Readiness Funding for Local Enterprise Partnerships and their respective Growth Hubs nationally:
Up to £2.4m for advisors to provide outreach and advice on EU Transition for businesses
Up to £4m for improving business readiness and resilience for the end of the EU Transition period

- 1.2 Funding must be spent before 31st March 2021
- 1.3 The Growth Hub of the MCA has been awarded £136,050 of grant funding based on its business population:
£54,000 for advisors to provide outreach and advice
£82,050 for improving business readiness and resilience
- 1.4 This paper requests acceptance of the grant award from BEIS, and of the proposed use of the grant through approval of a waiver of Contract Procedure Rules and the granting of delegated authority to enter into associated legal agreements.

2. Proposal and justification

- 2.1 The level of preparedness for the impacts of Brexit is a key challenge facing businesses in the Sheffield City Region (SCR). Additional BEIS funding will enable the MCA Growth Hub to provide additional support to the region's businesses.

Of the £136,050 grant offered, £54,000 is ringfenced for the provision of EU Transition Advisors for Outreach & Advice. The remaining £82,050 is for EU Transition Business Readiness more generally, activity will include:

Specialist and General advisors
Intelligence, Analysis and Metrics & Evaluation
Regional Co-ordination and Targeting including event support

- 2.2 The timescales associated with the date of grant award and period of funding (November 2020 – March 2021) prevent the MCA completing competitive recruitment and / or procurement processes to deliver this activity directly.

Delivery support has been sought from the 3 chambers of commerce representing the SCR local authority areas based on their established links to the business communities and ability to mobilise additional support quickly. Sheffield Chamber of Commerce will act as the lead party on behalf of the 3 chambers.

- 2.2 The proposed grant will be used to provide support through award of contracts to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, with additional wrap around activity to be funded by the MCA directly:
£27,000 of BEIS grant to be contracted to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority for recruitment of 1 Specialist advisor for South Yorkshire
£104,050 of BEIS grant to be contracted to the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce; for recruitment of 2 outreach and advice advisors, and provision of further specialist and general advice, and intelligence
£5,000 to renew the licence fees on the existing UK transition resilience online tool for a further 6 months to cover the period following completion of the transition period

To expedite delivery of support it is recommended that the Board authorises acceptance of the grant and approves the Waiver of Contract Procedure Rules relating to the direct award of contract to the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce and delegates the terms of the grant award to the Section 73 Officer in consultation with the Head of Paid Service and Monitoring Officer and to enter into legal agreements for the schemes.

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

- 3.1 **Do nothing:** The Board could choose to reject the acceptance of £136,050 from BEIS. Rejection of this funding would limit the ability of the MCA to provide specialist advice and outreach to businesses, impairing their readiness for the transition from the EU following Brexit.
- 3.2 **Direct Delivery:** The Board could accept the grant but reject the request to Waiver Contract Procedure Rules via direct award of contracts. Running a recruitment and / or

open procurement process to appoint advisors / advice services directly would increase the timescales before delivery could commence and result in the full grant allocation not being spent before the deadline of 31st March 2021.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

This report proposes the acceptance of a £136,050 grant from BEIS and the on-award of contracts for delivery. The report notes that grant resource may be used to support the appropriate administration and control of activity from within the MCA

4.2 Legal

The legal implications of the project have been fully considered by a representative of the Monitoring Officer

4.3 Risk Management

Risk management will be achieved through contract management of the delivery partners by the Programme and Performance Unit, and day to day interaction via the dedicated Growth Hub Gateway Officer associated with the EU transition support programme

4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

Appropriate equality and diversity considerations are taken into account as part of the contract award and management processes.

5. Communications

5.1 Delivery of EU transition support to SCR businesses present opportunities for positive communications; communication requirements will be included in any contracts awarded and the MCA Executive Team will work with the relevant officers on joint communications activity.

6. Appendices/Annexes

6.1 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