

Business grant and support programmes delivered, or part funded, by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Business Growth Programme

(Current iteration: 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2021)

(Previous iteration: 1 January 2013 – 1 April 2015)

The Business Growth Programme (BGP) provides grants of between £10,000 and £250,000 to businesses in the City Region towards capital investment (land, building, plant, equipment, machinery) that will lead to new job creation. Grants contribute up to 20% of the total cost of an investment, with businesses needing to demonstrate that they have access to the remaining finance required.

The programme was originally launched in 2013 and funded through the Regional Growth Fund. The current programme launched on 1 April 2015, and is funded with £42.7m of funding from the Local Growth Fund (LGF) up to the end March 2021. £3.74m of this is being used to provide match-funding for four projects being supported by the European Regional Development Fund (Access Innovation, Strategic Business Growth, Digital Enterprise and Ad:Venture).

A review to identify the most effective way to deliver BGP was undertaken in mid-2017. Following this review, a tender opportunity for the delivery of the small-scheme (grants of up to £50,000) was advertised to all local authorities in the Leeds City Region.

Leeds City Council was the only respondent, and a formal contract has been signed for the new delivery model which commenced in April 2018.

Applications of over £50,000 are appraised and monitored directly by the Combined Authority and for grants of all values, the Combined Authority makes the final decision as to whether or not to award grant support, completes the funding agreements with businesses and makes all the payments to grant recipients.

Leeds City Council is now undertaking the grant appraisal and monitoring activity for all awards up to £50,000 in a three year contract with the Combined Authority.

Apprenticeship Grants for Employers (AGE)

(Current iteration: 1 August 2018 – 31 September 2019)

(Previous iteration: 1 August 2015 – 31 July 2017)

Supports businesses with 50 or fewer employees to take on their first apprentice, aged 19-24. The new programme launched on 1 August 2018 and is open to businesses in West Yorkshire and York. Apprentices must be following a recognised Apprenticeship Standard or Framework relating to priority sectors with known skills gaps; namely, Construction, Planning and the Built Environment, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies, Information and Communication Technology – including digital.

Businesses must be paying the apprentice the national minimum wage from the first day of training and not the lower apprenticeship wage. This equates to £5.90 per hour for 18-20 year olds and £7.38 per hour for 21-24 year olds. A core grant of £1,500 is available, with a top up of an additional £500 if the apprenticeship is at a Higher or Degree Level as defined by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Business Flood Recovery Fund (January 2016 – December 2016)

Following the floods of Boxing Day 2015 and the subsequent devastating impact on many businesses across the City Region (particularly in Calderdale and parts of Leeds), the LEP and the Combined Authority agreed to ring-fence £5m of the overall Business Growth Programme budget to a Business Floods Recovery Fund.

The fund has provided grants of between £5,000 and £100,000 for capital investment in plant, machinery and premises that were damaged by the floods and that were not, for legitimate reasons, fully covered by insurance policies. The focus of the fund has been on safeguarding jobs, as opposed to creating new ones, and on supporting businesses to return to something like their pre-floods level of operation.

Commitments through the Business Flood Recovery Fund currently stand at £2.86 million. A total of £3.18 million was approved through the fund, but 3 projects (totalling £168k) have been withdrawn and a further 16 projects have gone ahead, but at a lower level, thereby reducing commitments by £152k. Of the 66 projects approved, 3 have been withdrawn, 52 are complete and £185k is left to pay to 11 businesses whose projects are still live. To date, the fund has helped to safeguard 1,682 jobs and will leverage nearly £13m of public/private sector investment.

Ad:venture (1 July 2016 – 30 June 2019)

Provides advice, coaching, events, academic support, incubation workspace and finance brokerage for new and young businesses (in their first 3 years of trading). Grants of up to £25,000 are available towards capital expenditure. This programme is delivered by Leeds City Council with the Combined Authority contributing match-funding of £1,000,000 from its Local Growth Fund allocation.

A large consortium is involved in delivering the programme including Chambers of Commerce, local authorities, universities and the Prince's Trust.

Digital Enterprise (1 September 2016 – 31 August 2019)

Incentivises businesses to invest in digital technologies through a grant scheme and associated workshops and masterclasses. Grants of up to £5,000 are available on a competitive basis with open calls for projects, with the next call open in October 2018. This programme is delivered by Leeds City Council, with the Combined Authority contributing match-funding of £750,000 from its Local Growth Fund allocation.

Resource Efficiency Fund (16 November 2016 – 31 October 2019)

The Resource Efficiency Fund (REF) is being delivered through the Growth Service until October 2019 as a key product to improve productivity and efficiency for SMEs in the City Region. It is jointly funded by the Local Growth Fund (LGF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and provides advice and funding (grants of up to £10,000) to SMEs to identify and implement improvements related to their use of resources i.e. water,

waste and energy. Planning is underway to develop a follow-on project proposal in response to the next ERDF Call which opens in October 2018

Strategic Business Growth Programme (1 April 2017 – 31 December 2019)

The £6.75m Strategic Business Growth (SBG) project is being delivered by the LEP and its appointed contractor, Winning Pitch. It is also part-funded by ERDF and LGF and provides small, ambitious businesses with a package of tailored support to help them achieve their growth potential. This includes one-to-one business coaching, one-to-many workshops on key areas of business growth and an important peer-to-peer element that allows businesses to share their experiences and expertise.

Access Innovation (1 April 2017 – 31 December 2019)

Access Innovation is being delivered across the City Region with funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Local Growth Fund (LGF). Its primary objective is to help SMEs to become more productive and competitive through the development of new products, processes and services. The programme links SMEs directly to the expertise and facilities within research intensive organisations, such as universities or Catapult Centres. It provides advice to businesses on which organisations can support them with their innovation activities, and also grants of between £5,000 and £100,000 towards the cost of working with expert organisations. Capital grants up to £20,000 are also available.

Strategic Inward Investment Fund (7 July 2017 – 31 March 2021)

Supports large scale strategic investments into the Leeds City Region with grants of up to £1 million (or more in exceptional cases). A total fund of £12.45m is available. Grants are specifically linked to the creation of significant numbers of new and/or safeguarded jobs.

Digital Inward Investment Fund (January 2018 - 31 March 2021)

A £1m fund supporting new business investments into the Leeds City Region specifically linked to the digital sector. Grants of up to £50,000 are available and are linked to the creation of a minimum of five new jobs. We have recently awarded the first grant on this project.