

Reference: Coast to Capital Board Meeting
Date: 14th October 2021
Report Title: Business Engagement
Report by: Kirsten Trussell
Item No: 6
Part: A

Recommendation:

The Board is asked **to note** the progress of the Business Engagement team.

1. Introduction

Following the launch of the new structure, the business engagement team has been merged with the skills and innovation team on an interim basis with Kirsten Trussell as acting Head of the team. There is merit in this arrangement as it brings together the business engagement activity of the Growth Hub and its associated programmes, Peer Networks, and the Enterprise Adviser Network and allows for more coordinated approaches to businesses across the area. It also strengthens the existing collaborative efforts of the Skills team, Growth Hub, and Enterprise Adviser Network in the delivery of the Skills Action Plan.

Whilst we await the outcome of the LEP review, the business engagement team will continue with business as usual. With a greater focus on coordinating efforts (internally and with partners), maximising each engagement opportunity, and gathering business intelligence.

Annex A introduces you to the business engagement team; sets out information on the Growth Hub and Peer Networks progress to date and the business intelligence that we have gathered, and concludes with a series of case studies.

2. Our value proposition

We have begun a piece of work to develop our value proposition to businesses. This is a work in progress and will be developed over the coming months as we learn the outcome of the LEP review and what our renewed focus will be. This exercise will help us to understand where we have opportunities for revenue generation. As a starting point, we have identified our current offer and ask of businesses.

Our offer to businesses

- Excellent knowledge of the regional economy and the issues, challenges, trends, and opportunities facing local businesses
- Access to a large network of local, regional, and national partners and stakeholders
- A 'one-stop shop' for free and impartial business support to SMEs
- Access to bespoke services such as Growth Champions, Digital Champions, and Peer Networks
- An influence over and a role in the delivery of careers education in schools and colleges
- An opportunity to influence policymakers
- An opportunity to raise the profile, share knowledge and experience
- Access to future talent pipelines through encounters with young people in education
- Professional development and increased influence through non-executive membership of our various Boards and Committees

Our ask of businesses

- To share with us, our partners, and fellow businesses the challenges that they face, the opportunities that are emerging, the trends that they are seeing, and the support that they need (sector-specific or otherwise)
- To collaborate with us and our partners, be that as a part of their Corporate Social Responsibility or otherwise, in support of regional economic initiatives
- To volunteer as:
 - a non-executive member of our various Boards and Committees
 - an Enterprise Adviser working strategically with schools and colleges on careers strategy
 - an Industry Champion sharing knowledge with staff and students

3. Business intelligence

Weekly business intelligence report

We continue to produce our weekly report for BEIS which summarises the business intelligence that we have gathered during our engagement with businesses. This report is also shared with local partners for information.

Interactive COVID-19 Dashboard

Last year we commissioned expert consultants to analyse the impact of Covid-19 on the Coast to Capital economy. The first report was first produced in August 2020 and proved to be a valuable tool for us and local partners in developing recovery strategies. We are now producing a significantly evolved interactive version in-house which has greater functionality and is an excellent resource for us and our partners.

This report was first produced in August 2021 and can be found [here](#). It will be updated quarterly. We are considering the revenue potential of this tool and other data and analysis activities.

4. Next steps

- Introduce an internal forum for gathering and sharing business intelligence
- Ensure that the business intelligence that we are gathering is used to inform our future offer
- Review the CRM and ensure it is fit for purpose and used to its maximum benefit to avoid over engagement and duplication of effort
- Develop a collaborative approach with partners to gather, share and analyse business intelligence and to develop interventions
- Explore revenue-generating opportunities

5. Diversity Statement

Gender diversity is being addressed through the work with mnAI (see Annex A). The team had the first meeting in September to explore how to engage with and support a more diverse mix of businesses. Work is also underway to look at disaggregating by ethnicity.

6. Legal Statement

This paper has been subject to a legal review by the Accountable Body

7. Finance Statement

There are no financial implications for this paper.

Annexes:

Annex A – Business Engagement Report