



**BUSINESS GROWTH DORSET –
Scale-Up Finance
Invitation to Quote**

April 2025

1.0 Background

Dorset Council have been awarded funding from Department for Business & Trade to deliver the pan-Dorset Growth Hub for the financial year 2025 – 2026. The official, pan-Dorset Growth Hub is now branded as Business Growth Dorset.

Business Growth Dorset is part of the network of 41 Growth Hubs across England that exists to support and improve business performance, enabling businesses to build their capacity and capability. Business Growth Dorset is supported and managed by Dorset Council with core funding from Government and delivers services across the County including Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. Each Growth Hub sits at the centre of the local business support ecosystem, bringing together the best of public, private, third sector and university support, providing a single 'go to' contact point for businesses of any size or any sector to access advice and support.

Providing access to finance business support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) across pan-Dorset aligns with Dorset Council's strategic objectives in several key ways:

Economic Growth and Resilience

- **Boosting Local Economy:** SMEs are vital contributors to the local economy. By supporting their financial needs, Dorset Council can help these businesses grow, innovate, and create jobs, thereby boosting the overall economic output of the region.
- **Enhancing Resilience:** Financial support helps SMEs navigate economic challenges, ensuring they remain resilient and can continue to operate and thrive even in difficult times.

Innovation and Competitiveness

- **Encouraging Innovation:** Access to finance enables SMEs to invest in new technologies, research and development, and innovative projects. This drives competitiveness and keeps Dorset at the forefront of advanced sectors like engineering, manufacturing, and smart technology.
- **Improving Productivity:** Financial support can be used to adopt smart technologies and improve operational efficiencies, which in turn enhances productivity and competitiveness.

Alignment with Government Initiatives

- **Growth Hub Funding:** The support aligns with the Department for Business & Trade's Growth Hub funding requirements, which emphasise effective business support services to drive local economic growth.
- **Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs):** Integrating LEP functions into local authorities underscores the importance of strategic economic planning and business representation, which is supported by providing financial assistance to SMEs.

Sustainability and Environmental Goals

- **Promoting Sustainability:** Financial support can help SMEs adopt sustainable practices and technologies, contributing to broader environmental objectives such as tackling climate change and reducing waste.



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- **Supporting Council Plan Objectives:** The initiative aligns with the Council Plan's goals of promoting economic growth, innovation, and sustainability, ensuring that business support efforts contribute to the region's long-term strategic vision.

Community and Social Impact

- **Strengthening Communities:** Thriving SMEs contribute to vibrant local communities by providing employment, supporting local supply chains, and fostering a sense of community pride and engagement.
- **Reducing Inequality:** Access to finance can help level the playing field for smaller businesses, ensuring they have the resources needed to compete with larger firms and contribute to economic equality.

By providing targeted financial support to SMEs, Dorset Council can drive sustainable economic growth, foster innovation, and enhance the resilience and competitiveness of the local business ecosystem, all while aligning with its strategic objectives and broader government initiatives.

2.0 Specification

Specific service deliverables to be provided by Scale-Up Finance contract for the period to 31st March 2026:

Programme Overview

The **Scale-Up - Finance** strand is designed to be flexible and adaptable to meet diverse business needs, offering both **one-to-one support** and **one-to-many interventions**. The programme will incorporate information and guidance on the following:

- **Funding education, awareness, advice, and support** to help businesses understand financial options, including grants, loans, and private investment.
- **Funding searches** to identify suitable grant and finance opportunities.
- **Bid writing support** to enhance businesses' ability to secure funding through strong applications.
- **Investment readiness support**, helping businesses prepare for investor engagement, financial due diligence, and growth funding.
- **Meet the funder sessions**, providing direct access to investors, lenders, and grant providers.
- **Pitch days**, offering businesses the opportunity to present to potential funders and receive feedback.

This programme is open to businesses from **all growth sectors** and is **not intended for general financial training**, but rather strategic support for **business leaders and senior managers** in navigating finance and investment opportunities.

Scope of Delivery

The successful provider will be expected to design and deliver a **comprehensive** and **engaging** programme, including:

1. One-to-One Support and Advice

- Tailored financial mentoring and guidance for SMEs, addressing specific funding and finance challenges.
- Support with identifying appropriate funding opportunities and navigating application processes.
- Investment readiness assessments and action plans.
- Support engagements ranging from **1 to 12 hours** per business.
- Onward referrals, where appropriate for specialist advice on the following:
 - Mentoring
 - Skills & Training
 - Finance & Funding
 - Innovation/R&D
 - Export support
 - Import support
 - Investment support
 - Net Zero

2. One-to-Many Interventions

- **Workshops, webinars, and training sessions** on topics such as funding options, financial planning, investment readiness, and bid writing.
- **Meet the funder events**, connecting businesses directly with grant bodies, lenders, angel investors, and venture capitalists.
- **Pitch days**, providing businesses with an opportunity to present to potential funders and receive expert feedback.
- **Networking and pop-up sessions** to promote peer learning and industry insights.
- Support engagements ranging from **1 to 12 hours** per business.
- Onward **referrals**, where appropriate for specialist advice on the following:
 - Mentoring
 - Skills & Training
 - Finance & Funding
 - Innovation/R&D
 - Export support
 - Import support
 - Investment support
 - Net Zero

3. Promotion and Outreach

- Develop and execute a robust marketing strategy to raise awareness of the programme across all business sectors.
- Leverage partnerships with business networks, trade bodies, and local stakeholders to maximise engagement.
- Use diverse communication channels, including digital marketing, newsletters, and in-person outreach.

4. Reporting and Evaluation



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- Maintain accurate and detailed records of support provided, outcomes achieved, and feedback collected.
- Submit reports in a **specified format**, demonstrating the programme's impact, including key performance metrics and qualitative insights.
- Highlight success stories through the provision of case studies and recommend areas for improvement.

3.0 Target Outputs and outcomes

Intervention	Target Output	Number / Measure	Target Outcome	Number / Measure
Business Growth Dorset Scale-Up Finance	Light touch (<1 hour)	N/A	Number of SMEs bidding for grant funding	As appropriate, no minimum target
	Medium intensity (1-12 hours)	70	Number of SMEs successful in bidding for grant funding	As appropriate, no minimum target
	High intensity (12+ hours)	30	Amount of investment into SMEs from grant funding	£'s invested
			Amount of investment into SMEs from equity funding	£'s invested
			Number of case studies	4
			Number and type of onward referrals for each SME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring • Skills & Training • Finance & Funding • Innovation/R&D • Export support • Import support • Investment support • Net Zero 	As appropriate, no minimum target



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4.0 Essential Skills and Experience

Organisations interested in tendering for this contract must demonstrate:

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- Successful service delivery of finance-related business support programmes.
- Expertise in business funding, investment readiness, and financial planning.
- The ability to provide high-quality advisory services tailored to SMEs.
- Strong networks with funders, investors, and grant providers.
- Strong promotional and communication capabilities to ensure the programme's reach.
- Capacity to deliver a high-impact programme across Dorset.

5.0 Budget

The total budget for this work is up to £30,000 to include all fees, associated costs and expenses. All rates charged shall be fully inclusive of all expenses including but not limited to travelling/subsistence, expenses and disbursements. This excludes VAT.

6.0 Quotation

Please complete the "proposed delivery" and "price" columns and return via email to businessgrowth@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by **5pm on Friday 23rd May 2025**. Brief responses are encouraged. Please put "proposed delivery" information in a separate document if this is more appropriate.

Specification item	Proposed delivery	Price (£)
2.1	Explain how you will deliver the following: One-to-One Support and Advice <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tailored financial mentoring and guidance for SMEs, addressing specific funding and finance challenges.• Support with identifying appropriate funding opportunities and navigating application processes.• Investment readiness assessments and action plans.• Support engagements ranging from 1 to 12 hours per business. Onward referrals, where appropriate for specialist advice.	Specify a total price for the whole contract
2.2	Explain how you will deliver the following: One-to-Many Interventions	Specify a total price for the whole contract

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops, webinars, and training sessions on topics such as funding options, financial planning, investment readiness, and bid writing. • Meet the funder events, connecting businesses directly with grant bodies, lenders, angel investors, and venture capitalists. • Pitch days, providing businesses with an opportunity to present to potential funders and receive expert feedback. • Networking and pop-up sessions to promote peer learning and industry insights. • Support engagements ranging from 1 to 12 hours per business. • Onward referrals, where appropriate for specialist advice. 	
2.3	<p>Explain your approach to the following:</p> <p>Promotion and Outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and execute a robust marketing strategy to raise awareness of the programme across all business sectors. • Leverage partnerships with business networks, trade bodies, and local stakeholders to maximise engagement. • Use diverse communication channels, including digital marketing, newsletters, and in-person outreach. 	Specify a total price for the whole contract
2.4	<p>Explain your approach to the following:</p> <p>Reporting and Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain accurate and detailed records of support provided, outcomes achieved, and feedback collected. • Submit reports in a specified format, demonstrating the programme's impact, including key performance metrics and qualitative insights. • Highlight success stories through the provision of case studies and recommend areas for improvement. 	Specify a total price for the whole contract
4.0	<p>Outline how your organisation demonstrates the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful service delivery of finance-related business support programmes. • Expertise in business funding, investment readiness, and financial planning. 	Specify a total price for the whole contract



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The ability to provide high-quality advisory services tailored to SMEs.• Strong networks with funders, investors, and grant providers.• Strong promotional and communication capabilities to ensure the programme's reach.• Capacity to deliver a high-impact programme across Dorset.	
5.0	Budget	

7.0 Result

Dorset Council aims to notify the successful bidder by midday on Monday 16th June 2025.

8.0 Queries

For any queries please email businessgrowth@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by Friday 16th May 2025, any responses will be anonymised and sent to all parties invited to quote.