



**BUSINESS GROWTH DORSET –  
Scale-Up Smart Tech  
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.

The decision to provide business support to Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing (AEM) Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Dorset, including those in the Marine and Maritime and Defence and Security sectors, is driven by several strategic considerations. This support aims to encourage these SMEs to identify and leverage opportunities to utilise Smart Technology to enhance their operations.

### Economic Significance

- **Economic Contribution:** The AEM sector in Dorset is a significant contributor to the local economy, with over 17,000\* skilled workers driving more than £1 billion\* in annual economic output with the Marine & Maritime and Defence & Security sectors adding to these figures. (\*Source: [www.investindorset.com](http://www.investindorset.com))
- **Growth Potential:** The AEM sector has experienced substantial growth, with an 18%\* increase in Gross Value Added (GVA) over the past five years. Supporting SMEs in this sector can further accelerate this growth and enhance regional economic resilience. (\*Source: [www.investindorset.com](http://www.investindorset.com))

### Strategic Importance

- **Innovation and Competitiveness:** Encouraging the adoption of Smart Technology can drive innovation, improve productivity, and enhance the competitiveness of SMEs in the AEM sector. This is crucial for maintaining Dorset's position as a hub for advanced engineering and manufacturing.
- **Sector-Specific Needs:** The Marine and Maritime and Defence and Security sectors have unique technological requirements and opportunities. Providing targeted support can help these SMEs address sector-specific challenges and capitalise on emerging opportunities.

### Alignment with Government Initiatives

- **Department for Business & Trade Growth Hub Funding:** The support aligns with the Department for Business & Trade's Growth Hub funding requirements, which emphasise the need for strong and effective business support services to drive local economic growth.
- **Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs):** The integration of LEP functions into local authorities underscores the importance of strategic economic planning and business representation. Providing support to AEM SMEs aligns with these objectives and leverages available funding to maximise impact.



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### Technological Advancements

- **Smart Technology Adoption:** Encouraging SMEs to adopt Smart Technology, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and the Internet of Things (IoT), can lead to significant operational improvements. These technologies can enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and open new market opportunities.
- **Sustainability and Resilience:** Smart Technology can also contribute to sustainability goals by optimising resource use and reducing environmental impact. This aligns with broader objectives such as tackling climate change and promoting sustainable development.

### Supporting Wider Objectives

- **Council Plan Objectives:** The support for AEM SMEs aligns with the wider objectives of the Council Plan, including promoting economic growth, innovation, and sustainability.
- **National Procurement Policy Statement:** The initiative also considers the "Tackling climate change and reducing waste" element of the National Procurement Policy Statement, ensuring that business support efforts contribute to environmental sustainability.

By providing targeted business support to AEM SMEs in Dorset, we aim to foster innovation, enhance competitiveness, and drive sustainable economic growth. This approach not only benefits the SMEs but also contributes to the broader economic and strategic objectives of the region.

## 2.0 Specification

Specific service deliverables to be provided by Scale-Up Smart Tech contract for the period to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026:

### Programme Overview

The **Scale-Up - Smart Tech** 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:

- **Smart Industry Readiness Index (SIRI) Assessment (or similar)** to evaluate a business's digital readiness and identify smart technology opportunities.
- Information and guidance on **AI, automation, and productivity tools** for businesses to streamline operations, enhance decision-making, and improve overall efficiency.
- **Supply chain development and diversification**, including support to integrate smart technologies into supply chain management, improve resilience, and explore new market opportunities.
- **Feeder programme for the Great South West Made Smarter programme** (Made Smarter is a programme to support manufacturing SMEs to adopt Industrial Digital Technologies through a package of intensive support measures), thus preparing businesses to benefit from broader regional and national initiatives.

This programme is open to SME businesses from **Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing, Marine & Maritime and Defence & Security sectors** with an emphasis on strategic support for **business leaders and senior managers** rather than operational staff training.



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**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 mentoring and advisory services to address individual business challenges.
- Specialist support on implementing smart tech solutions, including diagnostics and bespoke action plans.
- Engagements ranging from **1 to 12+ hours** per business, ensuring depth and impact.
- 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 smart technologies, including AI, automation, supply chain management, and productivity tools.
- **Events, networking opportunities, and pop-up sessions** to promote peer-to-peer learning and industry insights.
- **Feeder sessions for Made Smarter**, introducing businesses to the programme and preparing them for participation.
- Engagements ranging from **1 to 12 hours** per business, ensuring depth and impact.
- 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.



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**4. Reporting and Evaluation**

- 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.



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**3.0 Target Outputs and outcomes**

| <b>Intervention</b>   | <b>Target Output</b>          | <b>Number / Measure</b> | <b>Target Outcome</b>  | <b>Number / Measure</b>           |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Business Growth Dorset</b><br><br><b>Scale-Up Smart Tech</b> | Light touch (<1 hour)         | N/A                     | Made Smarter referrals   | As appropriate, no minimum target |
|   | Medium intensity (1-12 hours) | 25                      | Number of SMEs introducing new Smart Tech to the firm  | As appropriate, no minimum target |
|   | High intensity (12+ hours)    | 25                      | Amount of investment made by SMEs to introduce Smart Tech  | £'s invested                      |
|   |                               |                         | Number of case studies   | 2                                 |
|   |                               |                         | Number and type of onward referrals for each SME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Skills &amp; Training</li> <li>• Finance &amp; Funding</li> <li>• Innovation/R&amp;D</li> <li>• Export support</li> <li>• Import support</li> <li>• Investment support</li> <li>• Net Zero</li> </ul> | As appropriate, no minimum target |



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## 4.0 Essential Skills and Experience

Organisations interested in tendering for this contract must demonstrate:

Commented [NW1]: Just changed order as I initially read this as spec for the support recipients not the deliverers. Probably just me.

- Successful service delivery of smart technology support programmes.
- Knowledge and expertise in SIRI assessments (or similar), AI, automation, and supply chain strategies.
- The ability to provide bespoke advisory services to a diverse range of SMEs.
- Experience engaging with advanced sectors including Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing, Marine & Maritime and Defence & Security SMEs.
- Strong promotional and communication capabilities to ensure the programme's reach.
- Capacity to deliver the programme effectively 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](mailto:businessgrowth@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk) by **5pm on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> 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                | <p><b>Explain how you will deliver the following:</b></p> <p><b>One-to-One Support and Advice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tailored mentoring and advisory services to address individual business challenges.</li><li>• Specialist support on implementing smart tech solutions, including diagnostics and bespoke action plans.</li><li>• Engagements ranging from <b>1 to 12+ hours</b> per business, ensuring depth and impact.</li><li>• Onward <b>referrals</b>, where appropriate for specialist advice.</li></ul> | Specify a total price for the whole contract |

|     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| 2.2 | <p><b>Explain how you will deliver the following:</b></p> <p><b>One-to-Many Interventions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Workshops, webinars, and training sessions</b> on smart technologies, including AI, automation, supply chain management, and productivity tools.</li> <li>• <b>Events, networking opportunities, and pop-up sessions</b> to promote peer-to-peer learning and industry insights.</li> <li>• <b>Feeder sessions for Made Smarter</b>, introducing businesses to the programme and preparing them for participation.</li> <li>• Engagements ranging from <b>1 to 12 hours</b> per business, ensuring depth and impact.</li> <li>• Onward <b>referrals</b>, where appropriate for specialist advice.</li> </ul> | Specify a total price for the whole contract |
| 2.3 | <p><b>Explain your approach to the following:</b></p> <p><b>Promotion and Outreach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and execute a robust marketing strategy to raise awareness of the programme across all business sectors.</li> <li>• Leverage partnerships with business networks, trade bodies, and local stakeholders to maximise engagement.</li> <li>• Use diverse communication channels, including digital marketing, newsletters, and in-person outreach.</li> </ul>   | Specify a total price for the whole contract |
| 2.4 | <p><b>Explain your approach to the following:</b></p> <p><b>Reporting and Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain accurate and detailed records of support provided, outcomes achieved, and feedback collected.</li> <li>• Submit reports in a <b>specified format</b>, demonstrating the programme's impact, including key performance metrics and qualitative insights.</li> <li>• Highlight success stories through the provision of case studies and recommend areas for improvement.</li> </ul>  | Specify a total price for the whole contract |
| 4.0 | <p><b>Outline how your organisation demonstrates the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful service delivery of smart technology support programmes.</li> <li>• Knowledge and expertise in SIRI assessments, AI, automation, and supply chain strategies.</li> </ul>   | Specify a total price for the whole contract |



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|            |   |  |
|------------|---|--|
|            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The ability to provide bespoke advisory services to a diverse range of SMEs.</li><li>• Experience engaging with advanced sectors including Advanced Engineering &amp; Manufacturing, Marine &amp; Maritime and Defence &amp; Security SMEs.</li><li>• Strong promotional and communication capabilities to ensure the programme's reach.</li><li>• Capacity to deliver the programme effectively across Dorset.</li></ul> |  |
| <b>5.0</b> | <b>Budget</b>   |  |

### 7.0 Result

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

### 8.0 Queries

For any queries please email [businessgrowth@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:businessgrowth@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk) by Friday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2025, any responses will be anonymised and sent to all parties invited to quote.