



# **South Midlands Growth Hub**

**Growth Hub Board  
8 October 2025**

## Aim

Provide free, comprehensive business advice and support to businesses across the region.

## Vision

To be a trusted resource for businesses and partners fostering innovation, sustainability, and economic growth across the South Midlands.

## Objectives

1. Support economic development in the South Midlands.
2. Enhance business capabilities through resources, funding, specialist support and market intelligence through partnership working across the region.
3. Showcase the region as a premier destination for businesses.

*'The Growth Hub serves as a vital resource for businesses in the South Midlands region, offering a wide range of services aimed at facilitating growth and sustainability. Our multifunctional approach caters to the diverse needs of businesses, whether they are start-ups or established enterprises and regardless of sector. Our main priority is to drive economic growth across The South Midlands.'*

# South Midlands Growth Hub

# SM Growth Hub Team

## Growth Hub Strategic Support Team



Ruth Roan  
Growth Hub  
Manager



Emma Panter  
Senior  
Administrator



Melinda Frankland  
Project Support  
Officer



Mark Horder  
Project Manager



Patrick Kitson  
Marketing Lead

## Growth Hub Business Support Team



Kelly Griffiths  
Business Advisor  
Team Lead (MK  
Specialist)



Carl Mayers  
Business  
Advisor (Northa  
mptonshire  
Specialist)



Jess Stead  
Business Advisor  
(Bedfordshire  
Specialist)



Appointed  
Business Advisor  
(Northamptonshi  
re Specialist)



Allison Coleman  
Senior Grants  
Executive

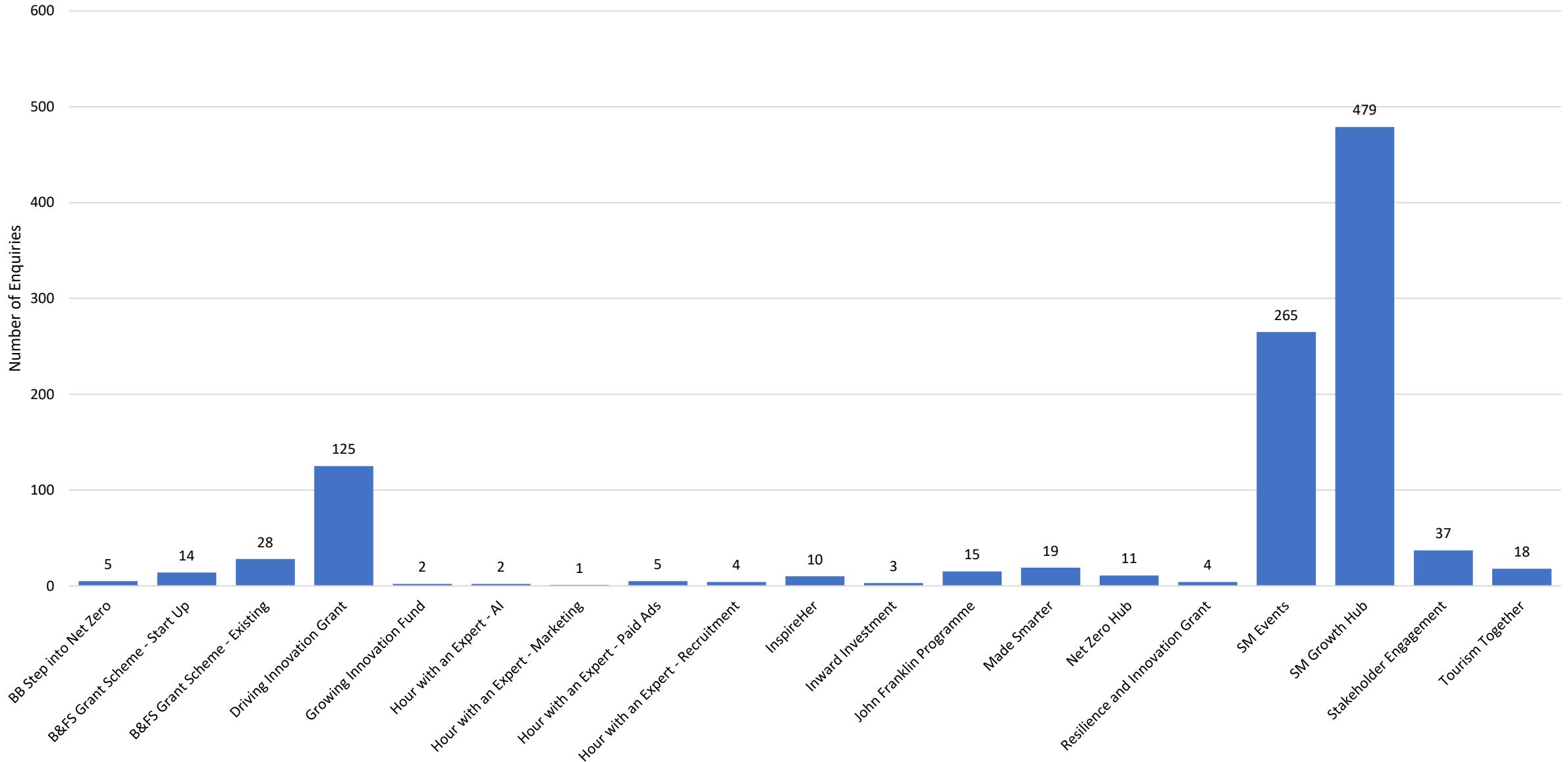


Samantha Hunter  
Partnership &  
Events Manager

# FY to date vs Target

KPI	25/26 Target	As of 25 September 2025	Variance
Total number of enquiries received	1,500	1108 from 874 businesses	73%
Light intensity support (0-1 hours)	800	473	60%
Medium intensity support (1-12 hours)	550	383	70%
High intensity support (12+ hours)	50	18	36%
Workshop / Event attendees	450	218	48%
Workshops / Events	25	9	36%
Referrals to external support	800	359 referrals between 192 businesses	45%
Unique website visitors	19,000	5,618	29.5%
Private Sector Match Secured	£750,000	£1.5m	200%
Membership	400	268	67%
Hours of Support	3000	1792	60%

# Enquiries by Type – FY to date (23 Sept)



# KPI per Local Authority – Enquiries (to 23 Sept)

Enquiries	SM	Bedford	Central Beds	Luton	MK	North Northants	West Northants
<b>Annual Target</b>	1500	148	248	160	252	308	484
<b>To Date</b>	1108	80	72	62	160	122	312
<b>Variance</b>	73%	54%	29%	39%	63%	39%	64%

West Northants has additional outputs due to additional UKKSPF funding

# KPI per Local Authority – Hours (to 23 Sept)

Time Spent	SM	Bedford	Central Beds	Luton	MK	North Northants	West Northants
Annual Target	3000	295	497	320	504	617	767
To Date	1792	130	158	77	291	228	677
Variance	60%	44%	32%	24%	57%	36%	88%

# KPI per Local Authority – Referrals (to 23 Sept)

Referrals	SM	Bedford	Central Beds	Luton	MK	North Northants	West Northants
<b>Annual Target</b>	800	79	132	85	135	164	205
<b>To Date</b>	359	38	26	19	77	46	91
<b>Number of Businesses</b>	192	23	17	11	40	23	41
<b>Variance</b>	45%	48%	20%	22%	57%	28%	44%

# KPI per Local Authority – Event Attendees (to 23 Sept)

Time Spent	SM	Bedford	Central Beds	Luton	MK	North Northants	West Northants
Annual Target	450	44	75	48	76	93	115
To Date	218	19	27	13	48	39	59
Variance	48%	43%	36%	27%	63%	42%	51%

# Referrals and Sources

**359 referrals** made between **192 businesses** across the South Midlands region, referring and signposting to **56 different partners** for further support

Key referrals include:

- Pre start support – 126
- Financial support – 60
- SM Local Authorities – 57
- Chamber and FSB – 18

**361 sources** of incoming engagement tracked

- 27% sourced through website and google searching
- 23% through word of mouth and existing clients
- 17% referrals came from SM Local Authorities
- 37 different partners making referrals to the Growth Hub and increasing from last year

# 2025/26 Activity

**Core Business Support** – 1:1 business advice, Hour with an Expert, online resource library.

**Confirmed 3-year grant programme** using unspent LGF money and GIF/RIG Grant money

**Events programme** – July Show me Success conference, new podcast, showcasing and supporting key partner events.

**Partnership Engagement** – Continuing strong partnership engagement with private and public sector partners.

## **Additional Projects and Income Generation**

- West Northants – Commitment of UKSPF for core delivery and local grants scheme.
- Recent tenders include: Luton grant programme (awaiting response)
- Exploring opportunities of private sector match

**LSIP** – Integrating into Growth Hub and Careers Hub activity.

**Membership** - Free, Premium, and Partner to provide easy access to business guidance, Business Adviser support and collaboration with your peers.

**Website revamp** – From Q3 with richer content including more tool kits and how to guides

**Economic Growth Strategy** – Aligning activity to Growth Strategy Action plan. Expecting to publish November 2025

**Business Growth Service** - New national support services for businesses.

# Events and Partnerships 2025/26

## Events Update

9 events hosted by SMGH, over 200 attendees

Further 10 events either in partnership or exhibited at reaching approximately an additional 200 businesses

Coming up we have a further 18 SMGH events and workshops planned to the end of 25/26 and a minimum of an additional 5 partner events we will be supporting

## Sponsorship update

1 Platinum, 2 Gold and 1 Partner are already committed prior to the official sponsorship launch, generating over 10k of income to the Growth Hub



# Communications

- First episode of the Network & Learn Podcast launched:  
**The secrets to Paid Advertising**
  - New episodes will be released during months there is no live Network & Learn event
- LinkedIn and social strategy reviewed and updated: Continued focus on driving awareness and increasing followers – 109 new in the past 90 days – while increasing position as a thought leader in the region
- Community membership launched: 268 in two months with the target of 400 for the year
- Website survey launched

# Driving Innovation Grant

- The Driving Innovation Grant (DIG) launched on 25 June 2025, offering £340,000 of capital and revenue investment for SMEs within West Northamptonshire funding to drive innovation, accelerate Research & Development, boost productivity and enhance competitiveness.
- A Grant Panel was held on the 17th September, with representatives from the UON and WNC, and outcomes shared with applicants the w/c 22nd September.
- We received the highest response and highest quality applications from any grant scheme we've ran so far.
- Due to the overwhelming demand we have put a programme of support in place for those who were unsuccessful in securing a grant, including referrals to other relevant partners, additional Business Adviser support and an invite-only Lenders Clinic which will take place on 14th October.

## Overview:

- 57 applications received
- 23 grants awarded, ranging from £3,000 to £25,000
- Supporting a mix of startups to well established businesses
- Private sector match – £782,584.79

# South Midlands Growth Grant

A £1.375 million grant fund

Expected November 2025

## **Grant Scheme 1: Micro Capital Grant**

Up to £3,000 grant (50% match)

Sole traders & microbusinesses

Equipment and machinery to support innovation

## **Grant Scheme 2: Capital Growth Grant**

£5,000 to £50,000 (50% match)

Established SMEs

Investments in plant, facilities, innovation infrastructure

# Business support from the Growth Hub

## Business advice & guidance

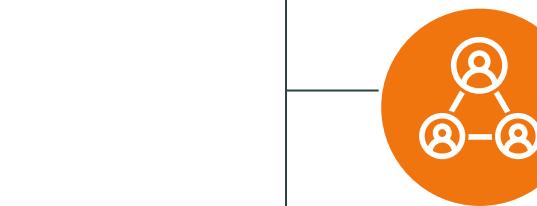
- Bespoke programmes
  - Lord Lieutenant Mentoring Programme
- 1:1 business adviser support
- 'Hour with an Expert' series:
  - HR
  - AI
  - Digital Marketing

### New for 2025/26

- Rural
- Sustainability

## Network & Learn Podcast

In every episode we sit down with a business expert to share best practice tips, tools and advice on how to help your business to grow.



## Grant programmes 2025/2026

- Made Smarter
- New grants launching soon.

## UKSPF Driving Innovation Programme

- Grants
- Support – Startup Accelerator, Inspire Her, Sustainability programme

## Networking & Events

- Opportunity to engage with peers, partners, and industry experts through regular events.
- Opportunity for businesses to sponsor these events

## Community Membership

- Complete access to the South Midlands Growth Hub website
- Access to resource library
- Early invites to our N&L events
- Community profile