



Department for
Business & Trade

Small Business Strategy and Business Growth Service Engagement Pack

February 2025

Small Business Strategy Framework

The Government's new Small Business Strategy aims to **increase small business productivity and growth**. It will complement and align with the Industrial Strategy and Trade Strategy as part of a comprehensive approach to driving economic growth. The Strategy will focus on the **five core pillars** and be underpinned by the **cross-cutting themes** below.

High Streets

Creating safe, thriving high streets for small businesses in their communities.

Finance*

Enabling access to finance for firms to start and scale, and addressing late and long payment.

Markets*

Opening up international and domestic markets for small businesses.

Business Capabilities

Unlocking the business skills and enablers for firms to succeed.

Wider environment*

Delivering a stable, long-term environment for entrepreneurship – strong foundations from skills to tax and regulation.

Cross-cutting themes

- **Targeting and segmentation:** Setting out, across the five pillars, the government's universal offer for all small businesses and more targeted offers for scale-ups and those businesses that want to grow.
- **Information, guidance and support:** Delivering the Business Growth Service, working with local and devolved partners, as part of a clearer business support offer and easy-to-navigate digital interface.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Championing, celebrating and encouraging entrepreneurial culture and mindset.
- **Hardwiring the voice of small business:** Through intensive stakeholder engagement, including through the ministerial-chaired Small Business Growth Forum.

* Core Industrial Strategy and Trade Strategy links

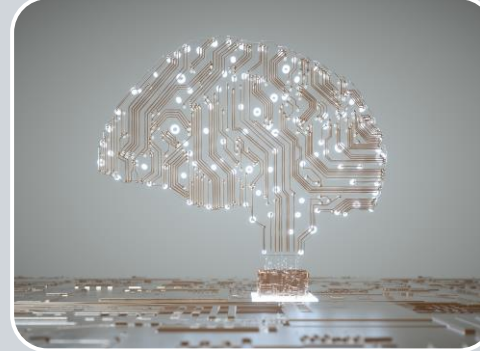
Business Growth Service – objectives



Enhance SME productivity and growth in the UK through a tiered service model that provides universal access to foundational support and more targeted, resource-intensive interventions aimed at SMEs with the greatest potential.



Improve the SME experience in finding and accessing business support by providing a seamless and navigable system that eliminates fragmentation and improves hand-offs. Leverage digital innovation to create a cutting-edge, AI-driven digital platform that personalises support and guidance based on each business's needs.



Embed devolution and innovation principles into the design and delivery of SME support by working in partnership with Growth Hubs and local and devolved governments across the UK to ensure that business support services are co-created and implemented with local partners.



Hardwire the voice of SMEs into government by building business insight, analysis and expertise into everything the Business Growth Service does. Proactively spread best practice and ensure the whole of government hears the voice of SMEs in policy development.

Business Growth Service (BGS) – at launch

- DBT are aiming to launch the BGS later this year, linked to publication of the Small Business Strategy. The launch will introduce the new BGS brand under which will be the core business support services provided centrally by DBT and locally through the Growth Hubs, with both integrated with the new, improved digital offer (the BGS website).
- The focus will be on providing businesses with a more cohesive, joined-up route to support to help them start up, scale and grow. Key to this will be improving the online support offer as well as promoting the in-person support available, with a focus on local provision.
- Between now and launch later this year, DBT are focused on the three core considerations below, ensuring join-up (through strong comms, client referrals and handoffs) under the BGS banner of core centrally and locally led business support services (via DBT and the Growth Hubs), underpinned by an improved digital offer that both provides and signposts to key information to support businesses on their growth journeys.
- Close collaboration between DBT and the Growth Hubs is required to ensure a seamless join-up between the BGS website and Growth Hubs' own digital offers, co-branding and triaging processes to ensure that the BGS is set up for success at launch.

Business Growth Service (Umbrella)

BGS Policy and Coordination

A central coordinating unit in DBT that oversees the direction, development and delivery of the overall BGS project, ensuring that milestones throughout implementation and across all elements of the service are set and met and that the mission of improving the business support landscape across the UK is ultimately fulfilled.

BGS Central Delivery

Teams across DBT that design, maintain and deliver the core business support services to be incorporated under the BGS umbrella (including the digital offer and programmes like Help to Grow). These teams will work with the BGS central unit to strengthen processes, triaging and join-up across the BGS.

BGS Local Delivery

Teams embedded in Growth Hubs across England who provide essential, targeted support services to local businesses. Collaboration with the BGS central unit will ensure effective join-up and triaging between local, central and digital support offers and seek to ensure a level of excellence across all locally delivered elements under the BGS umbrella.

Improved digital offer: A 'front door' website where businesses can go to get help relevant to their specific needs (e.g. to identify local support, to enrol in relevant capability building programmes or to access advice on diverse business issues such as financing, skills and exporting). The website will be built upon to provide a more personalised route to support for all businesses reflective of sector, size, location and growth ambition.

Business Growth Service – longer term evolution



- **Collaboration:** Continued engagement with delivery partners to improve join-up and processes across the BGS and with SMEs to ensure the BGS meets their diverse needs.
- **Scope:** Continue to build the BGS over the next few years with in-depth consultations and service design with key partners.
- **Integration:** The BGS is likely to integrate wider government-funded business support services and potentially link with university and private sector services.
- **Additional services:** Subject to Spending Review outcomes, the BGS may include new services and programmes (e.g. for scale-ups).
- **Digital experience:** Significant improvements expected if One Login for Business is approved, facilitating a modernised digital interface and personalised dashboards.
- **Long-term setup:** Focus on setting up the BGS for the long term, potentially through legislation or a new government body.

Onward engagement with local support providers, business rep organisations, and other stakeholders

Core questions to engage your networks on:

- Considering the main Strategy pillars, what **are the priority barriers/issues to growth and productivity** that SMEs in your local area face? How do these **differ depending on the type of SME** (for example, their size, location, sector, level of ambition) **at different stages**, and **what support might make the biggest difference** to them on their journey?
- What **case studies** are there of excellent business support programmes being delivered locally that are having a clear impact in boosting SME growth and productivity?
- What **gaps** have you identified in the national, regional and local provision of business support services and how do you think the BGS could help close these?
- How best can the new **national BGS and Growth Hubs** work with stakeholders and support providers across the local ecosystem?

Please provide any written feedback, ideally by 21 March but no later than 28 March, to:

- Sam Hooper, Head of Small Business Strategy Engagement
(sam.hooper2@businessandtrade.gov.uk)

Onward engagement with local small and medium-sized businesses (where relevant)

Core questions to engage local businesses on:

- Considering the main Strategy pillars, what are **the priority barriers/issues to growth and productivity** that you face? What **support might make the biggest difference** to you?
- Where have you **identified issues in the current business support service landscape**? For example, where have you looked for help and not found it or found the landscape/routes in unnecessarily complex/unhelpful?
- What **aspects of the current business support landscape do you think work well** and which don't – thinking of national, local and online services/programmes? **What would you want to see incorporated into the BGS** that already exists, and what new support offers for SMEs could we consider too?

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