

Making a difference: Innovation and Inclusion

Discussion Paper – Types of support and guidance available to business

Hosts: Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy
Kate Forbes, Minister for Public Finance and Digital Economy

Speakers/Facilitators:

- Jane Martin, Managing Director Business Service and Advice, Scottish Enterprise
- David Oxley, Director of Business and Sector Development, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- Hugh Lightbody, Chief Officer, Business Gateway National Unit
- Rob Dickson, Lead Individual, South of Scotland Economic Partnership

Scribe: TBC

Overview

The Scottish Government aims to grow Scotland's economy by making it one of the best places in the world to do business. This means supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), improving business regulation, and investing in the future. To do this, the Scottish Government needs to ensure that Scotland's businesses have all the information and support they need to succeed and grow. Working with key partners is essential to succeed.

This discussion group will provide an opportunity to share your experiences, both good and bad, of accessing business support in Scotland, and put forward ideas and suggestions for improvement through open dialogue with leaders from Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Business Gateway and the South of Scotland Economic Partnership. The four organisations are committed to working closely together to optimise service delivery. Understanding the current needs of customers is crucial to achieving that goal.

In a highly participative session, you will be invited to offer your views on what currently works well and what can be improved. There will be opportunities to discuss how the organisations can work most effectively, be more closely aligned, promote what support is available, and ensure that customers can access their services as easily and swiftly as possible.

Participants comments and ideas will be shared in open forum and captured to inform future planning and delivery by each of the organisations taking part.

Scottish Enterprise

Scottish Enterprise (SE) is Scotland's main economic development agency with a remit to stimulate sustainable, inclusive, economic growth. Our ambition is to create more, quality jobs for people across Scotland; to support competitive advantage by providing access to finance, support, information and markets that help businesses across Scotland to thrive and go global; and to sell Scotland to the world to attract even more global businesses.

SE's work is guided by the Scottish Government's economic strategy and the Enterprise & Skills Board's Strategic Plan. Alongside stimulating more trade & investment for Scotland, and accelerating business growth, SE has a focus on emerging opportunities where

Scotland can compete globally and become a world leader. Opportunities centre on adoption of new technology and ways of working that are applicable to many sectors and regions across Scotland - such as High Value Manufacturing, Digital Economy, Low Carbon.

We work with partners in the public and private sectors to help maximise Scotland's competitive advantage by building an effective and dynamic business environment, enhancing the depth of industry capability to compete in global markets, supporting growing companies and using our connections to the global marketplace. SE plays a vital role in creating the right conditions and infrastructure for sectors to grow such as Edinburgh's Bio Quarter (which hosts Europe's greatest concentration of researchers in regenerative medicine), Glasgow's International Financial Services District, Fife Energy Park and Dundee Waterfront.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) is the Scottish Government's development agency for a region that covers more than half of Scotland's land mass and is home to around 470,000 people. HIE's remit combines powers to drive business and sectoral growth with those to strengthen communities, enabling it to take a holistic, place-based approach to address opportunities and challenges, particularly in rural mainland areas and islands. HIE delivers Scotland's Economic Strategy through four priorities that address the specific needs and opportunities of the Highlands and Islands: accelerating business growth; strengthening communities; supporting growth sectors, and developing regional attractiveness.

Business Gateway

[Business Gateway](#) (BG) is a first point of contact for all businesses seeking publicly funded advice. BG supports people to start new businesses and helps existing businesses to grow. Growth support in the BG Growth Pipeline is delivered in partnership and collaboration with the enterprise agencies and the aim is to get businesses with ambition and potential into the enterprise agencies Account Management programmes. BG also works in partnership with Digital Scotland to deliver DigitalBoost, a programme aimed at raising awareness of the opportunities presented by digital technology and to enhance the capacity and capability of Scotland's SMEs to exploit that technology.

South of Scotland Economic Partnership

The [South of Scotland Economic Partnership](#) (SoSEP) was established to respond to the economic needs and opportunities of the South of Scotland in advance of the establishment of a new South of Scotland public body. While the [South of Scotland Enterprise Bill](#) was published on 25th October and sets out the provisions to establish the new public body – South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) – and the legal framework for it going forward, SoSEP lays the foundations for the public body and is ensuring that the area benefits from a new approach to economic development.

Strategic Board – Strategic Plan – ambitions for the various supporting agencies and organisations

In 2017, following completion of an end to end review of the enterprise and skills system undertaken by the Scottish Government, a new Strategic Board for Enterprise and Skills was established. With an independent chair, and representation from the private, public and academic sectors, the Strategic Board sought to maximise the impact of the collective investment we make in enterprise and skills development across Scotland. On 17 October 2017 the [Enterprise and Skills Board: strategic plan](#) was published. This plan provides clarity around strategic direction to enterprise and skills agencies and a blueprint to Government to turn up the dial on productivity and drive inclusive and sustainable economic growth. In response to this plan, the Scottish Government launched its [Economic Action Plan](#) (EAP) on 24th October. The EAP aims to support business, accelerate growth and prosperity for all. Included in the plan are recommendations to streamline business support to ensure a

competitive business environment. This supports greater ever collaboration between the various enterprise agencies and organisations and recommends closer alignment of business support activities.

Examples of the type of support currently available

[Prepare for Brexit](#)

Public bodies are working to promote support that can help Scottish businesses to plan for Brexit, including a new self-assessment tool. See www.prepareforbrexit.scot for details. This recently launched site provides support to help actively plan for Brexit, helping to increase business and wider economic resilience in the face of significant change. In addition to the diagnostic tool, there is also a wide range of online advice, the opportunity to speak to an expert adviser, plus information on a suite of services that are delivered specifically in the context of Brexit.

[Scottish Enterprise](#)

SE provides a range of support to business at all stages of growth. Specialist advisors work alongside companies to help them overcome day to day challenges, enhance business practices and explore new markets and opportunities to grow. Support includes:

- [Business Development and Advice](#) - such as business mentoring, improving business processes, exploring new international markets and scaling businesses.
- [Developing Products and Services](#) – supporting companies to innovate, for example, by increasing investment in R&D, securing intellectual assets, developing new products and services, choosing the right business model, or achieving efficiency gains through innovation.
- [Funding and Grants](#) – helping companies understand and access the funding, grants and specialist advisory services available to help start, grow or scale a business
- [Exporting and International Markets](#) – supporting companies develop an export plan, access global market expertise, and identify new opportunities to boost international sales.
- [Improving Productivity and Skills](#) – helping companies build a more empowered, engaged and productive workforce, improving workplaces and creating more efficient and effective ways of working.

[Highlands and Islands Enterprise](#)

Through account management, HIE is currently supporting the development of around 600 businesses and social enterprises, and 50 communities. Many services, including internationalisation and innovation support, are also available to customers that are not account managed. Access to all HIE services is available locally through eight area teams, based from Shetland to Argyll.

[Business Plan Template](#)

Whether you want to start a business; are an established firm seeking help; need to determine your objectives; or want to raise funds to start your business, entrepreneur.com asserts that you're two and a half times more likely to get into business if you write a business plan. BG has a template to help with each step of the plan. It is designed to guide users through the correct process at every stage, with plenty advice on how best to complete each section.

[DigitalBoost](#)

The digital world is moving fast and changing the face of business as we know it. While this presents huge opportunities for Scotland's small and medium enterprises, embracing digital transformation is not without its challenges. To make digital part of your business future, you can gain free access to workshops, guides, an online digital Healthcheck and expert support through the DigitalBoost programme.

[Digital Tourism Scotland](#)

Digital Tourism Scotland is a partnership that's made up of seven organisations; Business Gateway, Scottish Government, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Tourism Alliance, Skills Development Scotland and VisitScotland. It offers online and face-to-face advice to tourism businesses on learning how to use digital marketing and technology. In many circumstances, the advice and technology used can be applied to business regardless of the sector it is part of.

Points to think about in advance of the discussion

- What are the key issues and challenges affecting business growth in Scotland at present?
- What are the key issues and challenges facing your business today, medium term (1-3 years) and long term (3-5 years)?
- From the view point of the business community, what would successful business support look like?
- Do you have views on what works well and should be developed?
- What kinds of support would make the biggest difference?
- How should that support be delivered?
- What kind of support and/or guidance is needed that isn't currently available?
- A programme to streamline and align all business support services in Scotland is currently underway – what type of services to you think this new unified function should prioritise?
- If you have accessed public sector business support or advice...
 - How easy was it to find and access that support and/or advice?
 - What would have made it easier?
- If you have **not** accessed such support or advice...
 - What prevented you from doing so?