



Growth Hub & Business Regulatory Support

In 2015 following a review of national business support Ministers identified a central role for growth hubs, being established by LEPs and their partners, in simplifying and rationalising business support in local areas, and ensuring that national and local support offers are joined up for businesses. Growth hubs provide in each LEP area a single access point for business support, bringing together both Government and local offers together for the first time.

92% of C&IoS economy relies on micro and small businesses; this is coupled with a rural and peripheral location. C&IoS growth hub addressed the most common concern from our business community; that the business support landscape was confused and difficult to navigate, which led to unwillingness to engage or uncertainty around whom to contact.

The C&IoS European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) Strategy set out the ambition for the growth hub in our region, echoing BEIS with the desire for a simplified, single access point to business support channelling demand to appropriate solutions.

The Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (C&IoS) LEP led Growth for Business Board (G4BB) was established in April 2014 and worked on the design and delivery of the growth hub through the European Programme. The G4BB designed a set of 'principles' with the business community which informed the open EU tendering process for the procurement of the growth hub.

In essence the growth hub is able to support any SME that requires help through a variety of diagnostic processes, eventually (if required) leading to a further intervention with a support partner where in depth support and advice to enable growth will be delivered.

European Regional Development Fund investment has been made available to deliver a growth hub for initial period of up to three years (December 2018) supported by co-investments from Cornwall Council and C&IoS LEP. The LEP investment is to unlock additionality within the growth hub thanks to BEIS funding linked to the Cornwall Devolution Deal.

The learning from the previous LEP online business support tool was incorporated into the interim LEP led growth hub (July 15-April 16) leading to the full growth hub (www.ciosgrowthhub.com) launch in May 2016.

The growth hub is a critical component of how we facilitate and provide access to a cohesive and coordinated business support system that:

- Integrates business and enterprise support provision and services providing access to finance
- Hides the wiring by facilitating the customer journey
- Is clearly informed by an understanding of what works

- Is underpinned by a demand –led business support offer that is client focussed
- Works pro-actively to support businesses to understand growth opportunities
- Is supported by an integrated financial support offer that covers all possible sources of support
- Is enhanced by a network of peer-to-peer channels
- Features devolved government resources and links to national programmes

The growth hub team comprises an Operations Director and 5 peripatetic Business Connectors (1 of which is a non-eligible Connector paid for by the LEP with BEIS funding) and 2 Navigators supported by marketing communications and IT specialists and a small back-office. The Business Connectors offer long term client relationship opportunities for businesses with high growth potential.

Target beneficiaries are start-ups, micro businesses and SMEs, including social enterprises, throughout C&IoS. As the C&IoS growth hub is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) eligible businesses are taken through a detailed diagnostic, action planning and referral service toward relevant referrals. This is achieved by the growth hub working closely with local, national, private and public business support providers, and also by co-ordinating promotional activity and events to ensure join-up, efficiency and the best economic use of public money.

A collaborative and inclusive partnership led by the growth hub with LEP support has drawn on extensive local and national networks to create Governance frameworks. The business sectors have a direct influence on the growth hub through their seats on both the Management Board and Steering Group.

Each work stream have their own management, but all are overseen by the growth hub Steering Group (Figure 1) which continues to grow and adapt as each work stream joins the growth hub umbrella offer. Note: Figure 1 outlines the potential management for the Skills Access Hub when it comes online in early 2017.

One of the first work streams to be aligned to the growth hub will be the Business Regulatory Support Service (BRS) (part of the Better Business for All (BBFA) programme) this will be the first step towards the commercialisation of services to be placed under the growth hub umbrella into one business facing service. BRS is a partnership between Cornwall Council's regulatory services and the business community that aims to provide regulatory advice and guidance to save companies time and money.

There is continuous evaluation of the growth hub using an *agile* approach to the provision throughout the lifetime of the project. The growth hub submits bi-monthly reports to the LEP board and a long term robust evaluation of the ERDF element is included within the CDC bid to DCLG. The growth hub Management Board has detailed oversight of the ERDF element of growth hub whilst the Steering Group oversees all aspects of the growth hub (including new and emerging work streams) to ensure the hub is fit for purpose in the business community. Cornwall Council (under the Cornwall Exec Group) also monitor and garner feedback on the growth hub from the LEP under the two work streams of business support and employment & skills as outlined in the Cornwall Devolution Deal. In addition the growth hub will be monitored by the C&IoS Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) Board which is responsible for overseeing the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly European Growth Programme.

Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Growth Hub Governance Structure

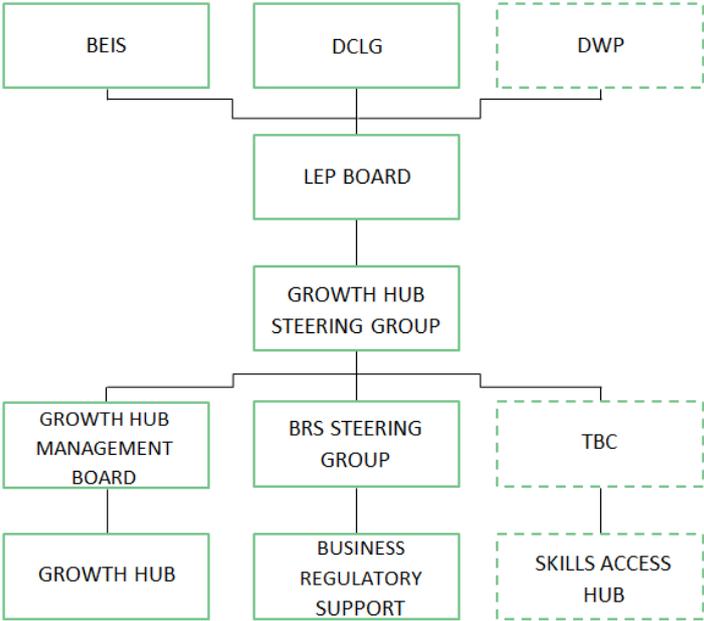


Figure 1 Governance structure relating to C&IoS LEP (the growth hub will have additional reporting activities as agreed with various funding streams).