

Appendix 5: Supporting Businesses – BIPC and Build a Business

Manchester Libraries have supported the business community for over 100 years. The Commercial Library opened in the Royal Exchange in 1919, with nearly 70,000 readers in the first year, moving into Central Library in 1934 and remaining open throughout the Second World War. Manchester led the way: the Financial Times stated “it is a scandal that Britain has no national or centralised business information service...The Manchester Commercial Library is an outstanding example of efficient provision of business information...provided and paid for by the ratepayers...the staff are courteous, efficient and rushed off their feet” (23rd May 1973). In 2014

When Central Library re-opened in 2014 the business information service returned, rebranding as the Business & IP Centre Manchester and taking a prime location on the second floor of the library. Manchester was one of the initial six cities to establish a national network of BIPCs in partnership with the British Library (alongside Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle, & Sheffield).

Key elements of the service comprise:

- free access to high-quality UK and global market intelligence, customer insights and company data, combined with intellectual property advice and guidance
 - free one-to-one support, mentoring and workshops delivered by library staff and private/public sector business experts and partners
 - topical and inspirational networking events, featuring role model entrepreneurs
 - accessible and welcoming spaces with access to PCs, desks and Wi-Fi
- The BIPC has a unique place in the region’s business support ecosystem, offering services unavailable elsewhere:
- Free access to over £5 million of high value business and IP research databases. Most SMEs and new businesses would find the cost of subscribing to these industry-standard databases prohibitively expensive.
 - Free Intellectual Property advice and support including workshops, search facilities, and the Patent and IP Clinics with local IP attorneys.
 - Unlike some other business support which is conditional (e.g. age of business, postcode), BIPC support is a universal offer with no eligibility criteria and an ‘open door’ for everyone.

This is a highly successful model, as highlighted in the British Library commissioned evaluation report. “Democratising Entrepreneurship” shows for the period 2016 - 2019 the BIPC Manchester:

- Had 6,687 unique users (requiring staff assistance, footfall is considerably higher)
- Helped create 1,928 new businesses
- Created additional 863 FTE jobs
- Net additional sales of £16.7 million
- Added £7.6 million GVA

- Delivered a payback of £6.95 for every £ of public money spent, representing excellent Value For Money

In addition, the BIPC Manchester performs strongly in engaging minority groups traditionally harder to reach:

- 57% of new business owners supported by the BIPC were women (women represent only 22% of business owners across the UK)
- 33% of users come from BAME backgrounds

Critically, users of the BIPC are more successful in staying in business: three-year survival rates are approximately **90% for BIPC businesses, compared to 60% for the general business population.**

(Democratising Entrepreneurship, ERS, 2019)

The success of the Business & IP Centre Manchester has resulted in two significant GM-wide projects with major funding attached:

- The expansion of the BIPC model across Greater Manchester (Total value over £700,000 over three years starting in 2020)
- The launch of the £2.6 million ERDF part-funded Build A Business in GM Libraries service.

These both build upon Manchester Libraries' significant experience of working across the Combined Authority:

- This includes our successful ACE-funded 'Enterprising Libraries: Start-Up Engines' project (2014-15) and more recently the 'Big Ideas Generators' (BIG).
- BIG delivered over 400 workshops and activities in GM Libraries over a 10 month period (June 2017 - March 2018) and proved both demand and the ability to work together successfully due to our existing strong relationships.
- The BIG project helped to inform the British Library's Start-Up In London Libraries ERDF programme.

In the March 2020 Budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a major funding award of £13m to the BIPC National Network, recognising the unique contribution being made by libraries to enterprise and small business growth. This funding will further strengthen our delivery across the region, with increased access to market intelligence resources, UK and global company data, sector news and business journals.

The funding has been awarded for three years (from 2020-23), and is enabling more Greater Manchester businesses to gain access to the vital information needed to start well, grow and be sustainable for the long-term. This major investment has enabled the British Library to widen its support network to local entrepreneurs in towns and cities across the country via a "hub and spoke" model centred on the 15 existing Centres across the country.

Our existing partnerships through the Manchester Libraries-led Ask About Business collaboration put us in a unique position in the national network,

resulting in the establishing of nine new BIPC “Locals” (encompassing seven GM authorities, plus Lancaster and Blackpool). These locations feature new branded spoke BIPC’s in specific spaces within Altrincham, Ashton, Blackpool, Bolton, Bury, Lancaster, Oldham, Eccles and Stockport Libraries. Each location had funding allocated for new equipment ranging from furniture, seating, tables to AV equipment for talks, plus marketing materials. Inevitably the pandemic has meant limited access to the new services but they are available for use once restrictions ease and more in person events will happen.

Access to eight new high-quality databases is now in place across the spoke libraries –Grantfinder, Local Data Online, Mintel, Passport Euromonitor, IBIS World, EMIS Emerging Markets, Frost & Sullivan and E-Marketer. All partners have key team members trained in using the resources and providing further assistance. This has been delivered by the new roles secured through this funding. There are 3 posts recruited for 3 years: a dedicated Outreach Officer, a BIPC specialist (business information & IP expert), and a coordinator for the hub and spoke offer.

The BIPC Manchester is a key member of the national network of Business & IP Centres, in partnership with The British Library. This brings additional benefits to the project:

- The reputation of the British Library is an asset and association with this trusted brand is an endorsement of quality, valued by users, delivery partners and stakeholders alike.
- Our partnership with the British Library means we are at the forefront of dialogue with national partners, maximising added value, new opportunities, sharing our delivery models.
- Operating as a network also brings shared capability and adds value in the following areas: (i) Marketing; (ii) Content (industry guides, webinars); (iii) Programming (Inspiring Entrepreneurs); (iv) Monitoring information; (v) Funding (ACE/DCLG funded Enterprising Libraries and other sponsorship).

The BIPC Manchester and the National Network responded rapidly to the pandemic to support local businesses. We switched all our activity online immediately, enabling the continuation of one to one support, workshops and events including Patent and IP clinics, and the Start-Up Step Up Resilient Business programme. In late summer 2020 we joined with the British Library to launch a dedicated, six-month programme: Reset. Restart, to support SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) in GM to transform, future-proof and grow their business through the Covid-19 pandemic. Open to all UK business owners, Reset. Restart offered practical, jargon-free training and advice through a free, tailored programme combining a national programme with localised support. Delivered by the British Library, the national programme comprised a series of 10 monthly webinars on topics including: opportunities in the ‘new normal’, product and service innovation, marketing, finance and new business models, repeating each month. This programme will be re-launched in Spring 2022. The Build-A-Business in GM Libraries project provides intensive support

for new start-ups and businesses, supporting people from diverse backgrounds to turn their business idea into a reality and improve their chances of success. The project has been informed by the BIPC Manchester's success in supporting people from diverse backgrounds to start, protect and grow successful businesses and builds upon the proven model of library-based business support, up-skilling, enabling and adding value.

The project is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund, and in total is valued at £2.6 million, creating 12 FTE posts across GM.

Delivery commenced in Autumn 2021 (ending June 2023) and to date has:

- Delivered 9 sets of workshops across 8 authorities
- 140 attendees
- 68% of attendees are Women
- 45% BAME
- 97% rated Excellent / Good (84% Excellent)

A range of businesses are being supported, including:

- Fabric and Fashion Design
- Supported Living Accommodation
- Architectural design: smart cities
- Lease vehicles for filming
- Physio services
- IT: App for hospitality industry

It has established a coordinated network of support through 8 Greater Manchester authorities, led by the Business & IP Centre Manchester in Manchester Central Library (partner authorities are: Bolton; Bury; Oldham; Salford; Stockport; Tameside; Trafford).

Feedback is very positive:

- Opened the door to a world of answers I found it difficult to find anywhere else
- Fantastic, engaging session, well done + thank you!
- Learnt the essential key elements like the business models, customer relationships, market research...
- Really informative and idea provoking
- Friendly staff who make the learning experience fun and enjoyable. Look forward to developing my business and learning more

The project is coordinated by a core delivery Project Management Team, based at Manchester Central Library, overseeing all aspects of project delivery and compliance. This team sits within the Information & Digital Team in Manchester Libraries, who have experience of successfully delivering GM-wide enterprise projects and is supported by MCC's ESIF Support team. Build A Business in GM Libraries will make a significant contribution to local economic growth, safeguarding and creating jobs and helping to set up successful new enterprises in a diverse range of sectors, including social enterprises.

The Business & IP Centre Manchester is the most attended in the national network outside London. Alongside offering access to the business information assets, the team have a track record of delivering innovative programming engaging with entrepreneurs and local enterprises.

This has enabled the successful launch of the BIPC Locals and the Build A Business programme, offering informal, accessible support across the Combined Authority, complementing other business support (e.g. Growth Company, People Plus, etc).

A full evaluation will be carried out in due course with a view to making these services sustainable.