

Title: Report on the Support Offered by The Growth Company and the Council to Support Businesses in Manchester to Set Up and Grow

Report to Manchester City Council Economy and Regeneration Committee

Date: 5 March 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Growth Company (GC) is an accredited social enterprise, which has been operating for over 30 years, whose **purpose is to enable growth, create jobs and improve lives** in Greater Manchester (GM). The GC Board is made up of private and public sector members, with 5 LA representatives from across GM. GC supports businesses to start, grow, internationalise, and become more environmentally sustainable, and helps individuals to upskill, secure work, and progress in their careers.

1.2 As a social enterprise not-for-profit distribution company, we set our societal purpose alongside ensuring we are financially resilient and successful. Our funding is made up of contracted public sector income (grants and payment by results contracts) and commercial income from business services.

1.3 Aligned with the Greater Manchester Strategy, the Growth Company's comprehensive suite of business support and promotion services, (alongside its skills and employment) is assembled through both GM and national commissions, supports a greener, fairer, and more prosperous city-region, with a strong focus on inclusive growth, innovation, inward investment, and productivity.

1.4 Services include:

- **GM Business Growth Hub** - Greater Manchester's Business Support Service supporting businesses seeking to start, grow and develop, through leadership and workforce development, innovation, investment, internationalisation, and resource efficiency/carbon reduction (See Section 3).
- **MIDAS** - the lead for inward investment for Greater Manchester, with a strategic aim to secure significant levels of new investment for the city region to create and safeguard jobs (See Section 4).
- **Marketing Manchester** - the city-region's Destination Marketing Organisation, responsible for the strategic positioning of Greater Manchester and the development of its promotional brand framework (See Section 5).
- **GM Good Employment Charter** - a voluntary membership and assessment scheme that aims to raise employment standards across GM, for all organisations of any size, sector or geography, delivered on behalf of GMCA (See Section 6).
- **GC Business Finance** - specialising in simple, ethical loans, supporting businesses to start, grow and thrive (See Section 7).

- **GC Angels** - an Early-Stage Seed Investment Fund, deploying equity investment into innovative purpose driven businesses in GM (See Section 8).
- **Made Smarter Adoption Programme** - technology adoption programme aimed at boosting manufacturing SME productivity, growth and efficiency (See Section 9).
- **Green Economy** - Supporting the transition to net zero, helping businesses to decarbonise with advice, training and support delivering long term resilience, environmental credibility and financial savings (See Section 10).
- **Energy Innovation Agency** - a partnership between eight organisations, established in 2021 to help the GM city-region transition energy systems to a carbon-neutral economy, bridge the energy innovation gap, and help accelerate carbon reductions (See Section 11).

1.5 This report will focus on the breadth of support these services provide to businesses across Manchester, enabling them to set up, survive and thrive.

2. Manchester Delivery Performance

2.1 Between April 2023 to December 2023, GC business support services achieved the following outputs:

Business Growth	MCR	GM
No. of business engagements	2,570	8,733
No. of business assists	710	2,630
Jobs created	743	1,485
Additional GVA from actual jobs created	£21m	£58m
Jobs safeguarded	173	241
Innovation		
New products introduced	30	109
Research collaborations with GM knowledge base	5	17
Investment		
Businesses offered loan or grant funding or equity investment	79	341
Value of loan or grant or equity funding secured by businesses	£2.3m	£8.9m
Inward investment projects secured	23	37
Projected new jobs from secured inward investment projects	646	1,917
Value of GVA growth from projected inward investment jobs	£37.1m	£84.6m
Enterprise		

Engagements with individuals interested in starting a business	488	2,071
Clients advised on starting a business	317	1,319
No. of start-up loans issued - 3rd Party and Direct Lending	109	400
No. of start-up loans issued - Direct lending	55	236
No. of new businesses supported (within first 12 months)	17	63
No. of starts	41	233
No. of completers	68	291

3. GM Business Growth Hub

- 3.1 GM Business Growth Hub (GMBGH) supports businesses seeking to start up, grow, and develop, through leadership and workforce development, innovation, investment, internationalisation and resource efficiency/carbon reduction.

Previously funded through the Business Productivity and Inclusive Growth Programme (BPIIG), GMBGH recently transitioned to a new core funding programme, funded under UK Shared Prosperity (UKSPF) and GM Retained Business Rates (RBR). Initially funded by Local Growth Fund/LA and EU funds, the BPIIG programme, which commenced 2018, delivered sustainable and inclusive growth across the Manchester business base, enabling local businesses to survive and thrive. Demonstrating its success, a further GM investment leveraging ERDF enabled programme delivery to be extended to June 2023.

An independent evaluation of the BPIIG programme found a return on investment of £10.66 for every £1.00 invested, and that 75% of businesses had seen an increase in their productivity. The evaluation also testified to significant environment and inclusivity outcomes with over 9,000 tonnes of CO2 savings (over 90% of GM's ERDF targets for this outcome) and 20% of businesses saying they had improved their inclusivity practices as a result of the programme. Summary evaluation findings provided within additional supporting information.

Final business support figures from the BPIIG programme (to September 2023) for Manchester were as follows:

	Manchester Total
Businesses Engaged	4,289
Businesses Assisted	1,540
Entrepreneurs Assisted	344
Carbon Reduction (tonnes)	5,194
Jobs Created	950
New Businesses Supported	296
New to Firm Prods/Services	124
New to Market Prods/Services	50
University Collaborations	33

GMBGH's BPIIG/ERDF/ESF funded EnterprisingYou and Skills for Growth contracts ended in September 2023, with UK Shared Prosperity Funding secured under E23 and Retained Business Rates enabling the continuation of all elements of business support across Greater Manchester from October 2023 onwards.

This has allowed for a more flexible approach to delivery and has enabled support to be delivered to a wider range of businesses across the city-region, both in terms of size and type, previously restricted under ERDF/ESF funding rules.

3.2 **GMBGH's Business Support for Manchester under UKSPF/RBR**

Aligned to the Greater Manchester Strategy, GMBGH's programme of delivery under UKSPF strongly focuses on the frontier sectors, and actively supports foundational economy businesses and social enterprises wishing to develop and grow.

A key priority of the programme is to strengthen local entrepreneurial ecosystems. The focus remains on supporting those businesses located within the deprived wards of the City, in addition to targeting underrepresented groups, such as businesses led by females, ethnic minorities, disabled and business leaders over the age of 50. GMBGH also continues to align with Manchester's priorities, ensuring that support is fully distributed across all neighbourhoods, in addition to supporting investment zone, such as ID Manchester and Corridor Manchester.

Support available to businesses includes specialist and sector support covering the following areas:

- Access to Finance
- Decarbonisation
- Innovation and Digitisation
- Leadership and Management
- Workforce Development
- Social Value
- Enterprise
- Internationalisation
- Frontier, Foundational and VCSE sector support

Key changes under the new programme include:

- additional **place-based support** through fully integrated Partner Account Managers, Enterprise Specialists, Workforce Development Specialists and Local Innovation Connectors, based within each Local Authority.
- a new approach to account management, including a **targeted, data-based approach to Key Account Management** for large domestic businesses, aligned with MIDAS, and focusing on employers in the

frontier and foundational sectors demonstrating the highest propensity to grow.

- the return of **match funded grants** supporting GM businesses to reduce their carbon emissions.
- **alignment of GMBGH's Enterprise programmes** under the well-established EnterprisingYou brand to ensure economies of scale, further collaboration, and seamless client service, and working in partnership with the GM Libraries' 'Build a Business' programme.
- embedding a **Workforce Development Programme** to ensure that business owners can identify and manage skills gaps which are impacting productivity and growth aspirations.
- focused and dedicated resource for the **foundational sectors**, supporting areas such as the cost of doing business, growth opportunities, innovation, digitisation, and Net Zero.
- specific focus on **under-represented groups** (50+, women, ethnic minorities and disabled), and the **most deprived areas**.
- specific focus on **supporting businesses who haven't accessed business support in the last two-years**.
- the creation of a range of **digital tools** to create awareness of the wider support landscape, including a new website and CRM.
- the creation of an **alumni network** to encourage ongoing, longer-term support through partner-led workshops and events.
- **increased flexibility under UKSPF** compliance to engage a broader range of businesses and individuals.
- **development of digital toolkits**, such as Business Knowledge and Funding Finder, Skills Map, iMentor and the launch of Simplifi, an entry point for businesses to access information, guidance, funding and investment support, and Growthflag, which launched in January 2023, and identifies businesses with growth potential.

3.3 Account Management and Stakeholder Support

The Growth Company has standardised its Account Management function which operates across GMBGH, MIDAS and Marketing Manchester. Working with an initial data set of 22,000 Greater Manchester businesses (>5 employees), the c.3,300 businesses (31% in Manchester) with 10+ employees in the frontier and foundational sectors and demonstrating the highest propensity to grow were segmented. Of these businesses, the newly established Key Account Management team supports large domestic companies, while SMEs are account managed by the thematic and sector-specific teams within GMBGH.

Delivery on the new programme is now underway, with company data segmented into sector specific lists and disseminated across teams to create a consistent, longer term, and directly targeted approach to account management across GMBGH. Manchester City Council's Work and Skills Team has visibility of the data population set for Manchester and progress will be shared through the Stakeholder Account Manager's "Team Manchester" updates.

Manchester's Stakeholder Account Manager co-ordinates the relationship between GMBGH specialist delivery teams and Manchester City Council and is working in partnership with the Work and Skills Team to agree an action plan, determining the City's top priorities and identifying opportunities for collaboration and the support required by Specialist Advisors. This enables us to target resources effectively to deliver economic impacts across all Manchester's neighbourhoods.

Aligned with Manchester's Economic Strategy, activity under the new programme focuses on several pillars, including production and innovation, the green economy and green growth, and bridging the gap of disparity from the city centre region and wards to the north and south. Manchester is the most deprived city within Greater Manchester, with nine of its thirteen neighbourhoods classed as being in deprivation. This disparity to the north and south is evident and a stark contrast to the city centre.

Key areas of focus remain on working with the Local Authority to develop bespoke packages of support for individual wards, each with varying demographics and facing their own individual challenges. Examples of this include supporting Manchester City Council (MCC) with the consultation process for the businesses on Moston Lane East alongside local SME roadshows led by the Work and Skills team. The Stakeholder Account Manager has brokered introductions to additional teams at MCC to ensure that we are taking a strategic and targeted approach to wards and sectors, including the Neighbourhood Management Team and the District Centre Programmes Team. Under UKSPF, businesses within retail, leisure and the foundational economy sectors can now be fully supported, allowing for GMBGH to support more businesses in under serviced wards and begin to assist in building a cohesive business eco-system.

GMBGH is also proactively working to align with Manchester City Council's priorities to drive inclusive growth. We are aware of the ongoing expansion of the city centre region to the north in Cheetham Hill and large-scale redevelopment projects such as Wythenshawe town centre, Holt Town, Victoria North, and Airport City, and are including these locations within our delivery plan. Additionally, we are supporting a more resilient local economy by working to increase the number of community owned businesses and co-operatives in the city and prioritising economic opportunities for residents. Examples of this include supporting residents to close the skills gap and creating economic development plans for neighbourhoods affected by the large-scale regeneration and development.

The continued transition to a zero-carbon city also remains a priority and we continue to work with businesses, residents, and infrastructure to support them to adapt and become sustainable, building resilience to climate change.

More widely, the Stakeholder Account Manager leads engagement across the city to ensure there is strong awareness of our services, also attending

networking events and organising bespoke events to ensure promotion of GMBGH and other GC services.

Place-based provision is at the centre of GMBGH's UKSPF delivery strategy. Alongside the Stakeholder Account Manager, place-based resource has been increased across the business; with Enterprise Specialists, Workforce Development Specialists and Local Innovation Connectors all embedded within each individual Local Authority. Each place-based specialist is highly visible within the City: working in place for a minimum of 3 days per week; proactively engaging with local networks, including the North Manchester Business Network and BW3; organising and attending drop-ins across all wards, as well as working closely with the DWP and Job Centre plus; completing client engagement and outreach; supporting and collaborating with partners; and attending BGH Match Events, organised with support from the Stakeholder Account Manager and the City Council.

Our Enterprise service also supports GM Libraries' Build a Business Programme to ensure full alignment with the E22 funded Generator Startup workspace and the future sites in Royal Mills, The Yard and 422 Stockport Road, making for a transparent, marketable service with a proven Enterprise service model, building on the successful EnterprisingYou brand and programme.

Building on key elements and learnings from the Skills for Growth – SME programme, the Workforce Development service supports transformational change within a business, improving efficiencies through supporting businesses to assess and address workforce development and skills needs.

As part of the E19 contract, GMBGH has introduced the GM Innovation Ecosystem programme; designed to accelerate routes to market and commercialisation in the digital, creative and tech, sustainable advanced manufacturing, net zero and health innovation sectors. The Innovation Connector for Manchester has been in role since January and will focus on developing relationships specifically in priority areas such as Manchester Science Park, ID Manchester and the Oxford Road Corridor.

3.4 GM Business Growth Hub Case Studies

3.4.1 Thomas Kneale

Textile producer Thomas Kneale is a Manchester-based, family owned business supplying bedroom, bathroom and household textiles to public sector institutions, blue chip firms, and private companies throughout the UK.

Currently employing 21 people, the business began its journey with GMBGH in 2016. Having worked with several service streams including Growth, Access to Finance and Resource Efficiency, they were recently recognised with a King's Award for Enterprise in the Sustainable Development category, which was awarded to just 15 businesses nationwide. The support offered

from GMBGH was referenced within their submission and supported their ultimate win.

Since working with the Resource Efficiency team and undertaking the Journey to Net Zero programme, Thomas Kneale replaced its old boiler with a modern, combi model, saving 2.3 tonnes of CO₂e every year and enabling them to achieve their green goals.

The business also took part in the Growth Company's Skills for Growth - SME Support and Growth Lens programmes, focusing on upskilling employees through training and development, and growing the business through sales strategies.

3.4.2 Wisterias Care Software Ltd

Wisterias Care Software Ltd began its journey with GMBGH under ERDF's StartSMART programme, building the foundation of the business and creating a new care software management package. Our Enterprise Specialist recently assisted in the bid writing process of a successful application for GMCA foundational economy funding, and since securing the initial £10,000 funding round, the company has developed a care management system that gained credibility from several Manchester-based care providers. Rigorous testing and additional research have been undertaken to progress towards a minimum viable product, that aims to enhance care plans and set the standards for person-centred care.

The business is continuing its journey with GMBGH under UKSPF to support an application for phase two funding from the Foundation Economy Innovation Fund and is receiving support from the Innovation team to assist in bringing the product to market.

4. MIDAS

4.1 MIDAS is the lead for inward investment for Greater Manchester and its strategic aim is to secure significant levels of new investment for the city region, by creating and safeguarding jobs. This is achieved through the global business marketing of the city region's key sectors and the provision of an extensive package of free advice for businesses.

MIDAS provides tailored support to businesses whether looking into their first investment into the city-region, or through ongoing support to large foreign-owned businesses with an existing presence here. As set out within Manchester's refreshed economic strategy, Investing in Success, MIDAS works closely in partnership with MCC to ensure continuous growth and engagement with the city-region's ambitions and initiatives.

Aligned with the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy and Manchester's priorities of nurturing thriving, productive and innovative sectors, MIDAS focuses on GM's key sectors: financial and professional services, technology, life sciences and advanced manufacturing and low carbon. This

includes Manchester’s specific strengths: cyber, FinTech, genomics, and the Green Economy.

MIDAS aims to bring high value jobs into the city-region, as talent is the number one driver for businesses interested in investing in the city, and in 2022/23, 63% of jobs created had an annual salary of at least £35k.

Manchester ranks very highly in terms of its existing skilled workforce and talent pipeline, as businesses aim to diversify their workforce across gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background. Investors are also increasingly prioritising environment, social, and corporate governance goals, which is well-aligned with Manchester’s focus on inclusive growth. To further grow and diversify the Manchester talent pool, several programmes have been established by MIDAS Account Managed businesses including the Diverse Talent Accelerator by AutoTrader, the North West Tech Talent Forum with PwC UK, Siemens, GCHQ and Arup (of which MIDAS is involved as a participant); CISCO and BNY also deliver apprenticeship schemes in Manchester.

Furthermore, MIDAS supports the implementation of the Greater Manchester Internationalisation Strategy through market engagement and market vehicles. This includes the Manchester China Forum, Manchester India Partnership, and the US market.

4.2 Key Performance Indicators

	Manchester		
	Projects	Jobs	GVA (£)
2023/24*	24	651	37,228,229
2022/23	38	3926	237,244,813
2021/22	27	3720	211,919,125

*2023/24 to date

4.3 Examples of Manchester Based Projects

Completed	Business	Sector	Jobs	Additional
2023/24	JP Morgan	Financial services	12	
2023/24	Alvares and Marsal	Financial services	160	
2022/23	Starling Bank	Financial services	850	
2022/23	Rolls Royce	Energy and Environment	50	UK HQ
2022/23	Hologic	Life Sciences	40	

2022/23	Concretene Ltd	Construction & Engineering	30	R&D
2022/23	Roku	Technology	300	
2022/23	EY	Professional Services (Tech roles)	1,200	Regional HQ
2021/22	Cloud Imperium Games	Gaming	615	UK HQ
2021/22	Hilti	Engineering	250	UK and European HQ/ R&D
2021/22	PwC UK	Professional Services (Tech roles)	1,000	
2021/22	DCMS	Public Sector	270	Regional HQ

4.4 MIDAS Case Studies

4.4.1 **Starling Bank** (New investor, 850 jobs planned over three years, GVA £51,755,650)

Starling is a British challenger bank with a bold and disruptive vision. They were attracted to Manchester because of the strength of the talent pool and increasing recognition of the city-region as an international FinTech hub. MIDAS provided information and research on Greater Manchester and supported Starling with research on the extensive Tech and Financial Services ecosystem. Through familiarisation visits, MIDAS introduced Starling to networks and contacts at local universities as well as collaborative tech partners and previous investors. PR coverage was also generated through a coordinated announcement.

Charlotte Richards, Head of Talent Acquisition said: *“We’ve had a great experience and have felt very supported by MIDAS. They have supported us in many different ways including local introductions, supporting/discussing with our PR/Comms function and assisting us with our recruitment efforts.”*

4.4.2 **Rolls Royce SMR** (New investor, 50 jobs planned over three years, GVA £2.6m)

Rolls-Royce recently opened a new HQ office for their ‘Small Modular Reactor’ (SMR) division. SMRs are new civil nuclear power technology that allow small power stations to be built off-site, in modules that can be transported to nuclear licenced sites, for construction into an operational power station. Rolls-Royce SMR is one of the leading businesses in the sector, with engineering operations in Derby and Warrington.

In 2022, Rolls Royce SMR began looking for an HQ location, and MIDAS put forward a proposition detailing the opportunities for locating future manufacturing facilities in Greater Manchester: highlighting the nuclear engineering, manufacturing, and academic strengths of the city region. Rolls-Royce decided to take space at 11 York Street in Manchester, quoting expected job creation of 50 to 75 new roles. Support is ongoing, with MIDAS helping the Rolls-Royce SMR team integrate into the Greater Manchester ecosystem, and setting in place support options for further skills development, recruitment, and options for potential manufacturing locations.

Tom Samson, CEO of Rolls Royce SMR said: *“Rolls-Royce SMR is coming back to Manchester, where Charles Rolls and Henry Royce first met in 1904. We’re growing as a company and, as we move at pace to build our SMR power stations in the UK, the time is right to set up our head office in this fantastic city.”*

4.4.3 **Hologic** (Expansion of existing investor, 40 jobs planned over three years, GVA £2.1m)

Hologic, a US healthcare and medical company, further expanded its operations in Wythenshawe with the support of MIDAS. This included a new Covid testing manufacturing line with new technology and machinery, along with a new warehousing operation.

MIDAS was instrumental in Hologic’s decision to invest in Manchester and provided a variety of support services. This included extensive help with recruitment, industry networks via events and key stakeholder contacts, including GMCA, universities, and charities.

5. **Marketing Manchester**

5.1 Marketing Manchester (MM) promotes GM nationally and internationally as a place to visit, invest, meet, and study. MM is the Destination Management Organisation (DMO), the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) and incorporates the Manchester Convention Bureau and the Sports Bidding Unit. MM supports MIDAS in promotional delivery, focusing on priority sectors and campaigns including digital, innovation and green.

Hatch consultants evaluated Marketing Manchester’s activities in 2022/23, based on the economic impact of conferences/events and trackable campaigns. These activities attracted visitor expenditure to GM, supporting 360 net additional jobs, 54% of which were based in Manchester. £20m in net additional GVA was supported, representing a return on investment of £11 for every £1 of public investment.

5.2 **Visitor Economy**

- MM was one of the first destination organisations to be accredited as a **Local Visitor Economy Partnership** by VisitEngland in 2023.
- MM is developing the new **Greater Manchester Strategy for the Visitor Economy 2024–2030**, through extensive collaboration and engagement

across the sector. The new Strategy will set out the collective ambition for growth in the sector.

- **Manchester's Accommodation Business Improvement District (ABID)**, which launched in 2023 with 74 properties, is delivering a programme to increase overnight stays in the city.
- MM has collaborated with Core Cities to participate in the **Global Destinations Sustainability Index**, allowing over 100 destinations to benchmark best sustainable practice within the visitor economy. A new post in Marketing Manchester will now champion this.

5.3 Business Visits and Events

The conference and business events sector in Manchester attracts 4.4m delegates per year, supports 35,100 FTE workers and generates a total spend of £904m, of which, £862m is generated from core conference and business event activity and a further £42m from leisure extenders.

Since April 2023, 75 bids have been submitted by MM for conferences and 5 bids submitted for sporting events to be held in Manchester. In the same period, 26 conferences have been confirmed, worth £35.3m and bringing 17,600 delegates to the city; 4 major sporting events have also been secured, including UEFA Men's Championships 2028 and the Women's Rugby Union World Cup 2025.

5.4 Marketing Campaigns and Promotion

MM promotes GM as a vibrant leisure destination, targeted at the priority markets of the UK, USA, Germany, Spain and the UAE, with China and India as secondary markets. Often campaigns are run in collaboration with partners in the travel industry, with activities such as paid multi-channel digital campaigns and influencer programs. In 2022/23, campaign activity achieved a reach of over 18 million, economic impact of £8.9m and ROI of 34.1.

MM's digital portfolio includes:

- **visitmanchester.com** - The official tourism site for Greater Manchester and the most visited regional DMO site outside of London. Traffic is driven to the site through content-lead activity and ongoing domestic and international digital campaigns with international visitors currently accounting for 15% of traffic.
- **meetinmanchester.com** - Promotes the destination as a place to hold major meetings, conferences and events.
- **investinmanchester.com** - Promotes GM to increase foreign direct investment.

Together the sites have over 4 million visitors annually, and social media channels generate 17 million impressions per year.

An international media relations programme is coordinated to achieve positive coverage and elevate perceptions of Manchester as a place to visit, meet, invest and study. In 22/23, there were 200 media visits and engagements with journalists to GM, showcasing the destination. Over 250 pieces of positive coverage were generated across print, digital and broadcast channels, providing 1.2 billion opportunities to see.

5.5 Place Promotion

Marketing Manchester has supported GM's place promotion, capital investment and real estate ambitions for over 20 years, helping to facilitate important discussions about infrastructure, housing, innovation, equality and sustainability. Using the Manchester Invest Partnership as an overarching brand, a presence is coordinated at several leading global place promotion events including MIPIM in March, UKREiiF in May, LREF in September and EXPO Real in October.

5.6 Sector Marketing

MM leads on the development of marketing activity that promotes GM's key sectors nationally and internationally through an annual programme of business-to-business marketing and communications activity that includes paid media partnerships, paid multichannel digital campaigns, media, conferences and events. Activity falls within campaign themes of *Digital in our DNA*, *Powering Innovation* and *Greener Greater Manchester*.

5.7 Global Perceptions, Benchmarking, and City-to-City Partnerships

MM works to increase positioning, raise the profile and positive perceptions of GM. Benchmarking activity is undertaken by MM for GM across five priority indices, overseen by the International and Marketing Advisory Board (IMAB): Resonance World's Best cities; IESE Cities in Motion; QS Best Student Cities; Schroders Global Cities Index and FDI European Cities of the Future.

MM agreed a two-year city-to-city tourism partnership with NYC & Company in January 2020. Due to the pandemic, activity was limited. A new city-to-city partnership has been agreed with NYC Tourism & Conventions, starting February 2024, incorporating £250K advertising asset share, PR and best practice.

In January 2024, MM worked with the New York Times to secure Manchester's prestigious place on its annual '52 Places to Go' list for 2024.

6. Good Employment Charter

- 6.1 On behalf of the GMCA, GC delivers the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter. The Charter is a voluntary membership and assessment scheme that aims to raise employment standards across GM, for all organisations of any size, sector, or geography.

The Charter has two tiers of membership:

- **Supporters** – Employers that support the aim of the Charter and have made a commitment to improving practice in all characteristics of good employment.
- **Members** – Employers that have made the Supporter Commitment and meet the membership criteria in all characteristics of the Charter.

Within Manchester, currently the Charter has 214 Supporters and 46 Members.

The Charter sets out seven 'Characteristics of Good Employment' relating to Pay, Secure Work, Flexible Work, Employee Voice and Engagement, Recruitment, Management, and Health and Wellbeing. The Charter works with Supporters to assess their employment practices against defined membership criteria, bring evidence to an independent technical panel and make recommendations to the Charter Board every quarter.

In addition to the Supporter Membership assessment, the Charter also delivers a wide range of engagement activities including in-person events, 'Share and Learn' sessions, 'Explore Days', webinars, masterclasses, workshops, an annual Good Employment Lecture as well as the popular podcast 'Good Employment Chatter'. All of this is curated and delivered in collaboration with key partners including ACAS, CIPD and TUC. The Charter also produces a weekly Good Employment News bulletin and monthly newsletter.

In June 2023 the Charter held the country's first Good Employment Week, with over 25 events across the city region throughout the week, highlighting the benefits of good employment, the principal focus of the week was to inform and empower employers about what 'good work' should feel like. Utilising the advertising assets of TfGM and Manchester City Council members of the public were invited to take a short quiz to establish how good their job was. This together with other social media activity across the week attracted over 200,000 engagements. In 2024, Good Employment Week (17-21 June) will focus on equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

The Charter also hosts the annual Good Employment Awards, celebrating employment excellence and recognising achievements over the previous year.

7. GC Business Finance (GCBF)

- 7.1 Regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and operating as a Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI), GCBF is an established lender to the start-up, high-risk market, providing a blend of public/private capital to businesses struggling to raise funds from mainstream sources.

As a key component of GM's Business Growth model, GCBF finance products integrate with other Growth Services to create a packaged 'finance with support' offering, addressing:

- Significant market failure/gaps, including start-ups, female founders and ethnic minorities, alongside other underfinanced demographic segments.
- Barriers to finance/support for cashflow issues.
- Banks inability to ethically/profitably lend to target customer.
- Current finance options being regional/inconsistent/bureaucratic/time-consuming for entrepreneurs create market failure.

Within Greater Manchester, GCBF provides a range of business finance products, including:

- **Start-up Loans – up to £25,000** through UK Government backed loans, each business owner or director can borrow up to £25,000 over 1-5 years. GC Business Finance Start Ups are a national business support partner delivering the Start Up Loans Scheme.
- **Growth Loans – £25,001 to £300,000** available to those who are to be able to demonstrate a viable business plan, for a wide range of purposes including filling gaps in working capital, funding expansion projects, leasing commercial premises and asset acquisitions.
- **GM Export Loans – up to £250,000** can be used for working capital or as cash support to enable clients' bank to issue tender bonds, advanced payment guarantees, or performance bonds and applicants have access to a team of International Trade Advisors through DIT if appropriate to develop their export strategy.
- **GC Angel Investment** - specialising in £25k-£2m investments for early-stage start-ups at critical innovation stage.

GCBF lends/invests £10m each year in GM and manages £125m funds per annum elsewhere across the rest of the UK, to entrepreneurs whose businesses are unable to access mainstream finance.

Between April 2023 – December 2023, GCBF lent £2.4m to 118 Manchester businesses helping to create or protect 253 jobs. Of these, 93% were start-ups, and 41% of loans were to female entrepreneurs and 40% to ethnic minorities.

Since April 2018, GCBF have funded 3,320 GM SMEs including 2,911 business start-ups, lending £52.5m, whilst creating and protecting 1,518 jobs.

8. GC Angels

- 8.1 GC Angels is an Early-Stage profit with purpose Seed Investment Fund, deploying equity investment into innovative purpose driven businesses in GM. GC Angels invests £25,000 - £150,000 in each enterprise, and has previously been recognised as the most active Seed investor in the region.

GC Angels was set up to offer direct funding to bridge the 'equity gap' for innovative SMEs struggling to find the finance they need to grow and enable a vital pipeline of investible 'growth' projects for institutional capital and other GM backed funds by way of follow on. GC Angels collaborates with innovation

partners across GM including Universities, Accelerators, Tech Hubs, and investors (Venture Capitalists, High Net Worth Individuals), to create a wide range of support for companies.

GC Angels has invested in 36 innovative GM businesses to date. 57% are based in the City of Manchester, deploying £3.2m directly to the market. The team has supported the scaling up of the portfolio, with >40% getting follow on funding >£16.5m. The fund achieved its first exit in 2023 and investing those funds back into GM to support more startups. 42% of the current portfolio comprises female and mixed gender founding team, and 25% ethnic minority founders. Both metrics are well above the industry average. GC Angels is the leading early-stage investor in innovation across GM.

GC Angels is a recognised Investment partner for InnovateUK. This gives scaling GM businesses access to exclusive grant opportunities and helps bring InnovateUK products to market. Currently, 33% of GC Angels portfolio companies have utilised InnovateUK grants to develop innovative products. Without this early-stage intervention, GM businesses cannot access the required capital to grow and scale, reducing their economic benefit to the area.

GC Angels is now in the process of setting up a larger Seed Fund, looking to ensure capital deployment in GM for the next 5 years, funding ~100 more innovative startups, and taking a leading role in ensuring that the next wave of innovative GM businesses have the capital required to expand.

9. Made Smarter Adoption Programme

- 9.1 The Made Smarter Adoption programme boosts manufacturing SME productivity, growth and efficiency. The programme supports businesses to adopt Industrial Digital Technology (IDT): Robotics and autonomous systems; additive manufacturing; data analytics; AI & data; Virtual modelling/VR. The objectives of the programme are focused on addressing the barriers to IDT adoption set out in the Made Smarter Review, including low-level awareness of IDTs and their benefits; accessing funding to invest in IDT solutions; and developing the know-how and skills to maximise the benefits of IDTs for manufacturing businesses and their employees, including increasing leadership and management skills.

Greater Manchester's Local Industrial Strategy sets out its strategic priority to improve productivity in the city-region's manufacturing base by adopting Made Smarter approaches to accelerating the development, design, adoption and creative application of digital technologies, Artificial Intelligence, environmental technologies, and graphene and 2D materials, thereby revolutionising manufacturing processes and accelerating commercial growth.

Since the start of the pilot programme in 2018, Made Smarter has delivered technology adoption grant-funded project support to 98 SME manufacturing and engineering firms across Greater Manchester (8 in Manchester), representing: total project value of £6.7m; private sector investment of £4.9m;

£1.8m grants awarded; 1337 new or upskilled jobs; and a forecast gross GVA increase of £70.6m.

Primarily, this involved projects relating to Data and Systems Integration, and Robotics and Process Control Automation, but also included investment into: additive manufacturing (3D printing); augmented and virtual reality; big data and analytics; cognitive computing and AI; enabling technology; and industrial Internet of Things.

The Government has confirmed continuation of the Made Smarter Adoption programme from 2025/26, including a national roll out to cover the whole of the UK.

10. Green Economy

- 10.1 Green Economy (GE) provides end-to-end support to businesses, supporting the UK's transition to net zero, helping businesses to decarbonise with advice, training and support, delivering long term resilience, environmental credibility and financial savings.

Simultaneously, GE helps to grow local green technologies and services businesses, increasing their visibility, improving their competitiveness and providing access to new sales opportunities. This includes connecting businesses who are looking to decarbonise directly with green technology suppliers.

By supporting the entire green supply chain, GE aims to deliver an equitable net zero transition, working with local government and combined authorities to implement business support that simplifies the business path to net zero, whilst removing barriers linked to slow or low adoption of green technologies.

11. Energy Innovation Agency

- 11.1 Created in 2021, the Energy Innovation Agency (EIA) is a partnership set up to help the GM city-region transition energy systems to a carbon-neutral economy, bridge the energy innovation gap, and accelerate carbon reduction.

EIA supports energy innovators (local, national, and international) to scale low-carbon energy innovations in GM, and help end-users access validated, effective solutions that help decarbonise buildings and transport.

Its four focus areas, aligned with GMCA's 5-year Environment Plan, include:

- Decarbonisation of heat
- Energy generation and storage
- Energy diversity and flexibility
- Low-carbon transport

Innovation should make energy use more efficient, greener, and equitable, but developing new technologies doesn't traditionally occur on a timescale that

matches the urgency of our current energy crisis. Connecting start-up and university innovators with industry guidance and commercialisation support accelerates product development, bringing forth solutions that address real-world challenges. These innovations open new avenues for business decarbonisation that crucially make financial, as well as environmental sense.

There are three broad strands of innovation that the EIA helps to deliver:

- Incremental innovation – better versions of existing technology: flexible, lightweight solar panels, micro wind turbines for road and rail, industrial-scale heat pumps.
- Novel innovations – brand new technologies (long duration flow battery storage to complement increased renewables).
- “Smart” innovation – using data and connectivity (AI ‘brains’ for buildings that can detect if HVAC is breaking down or machinery is running out of hours).

To enable this innovation, EIA delivers a 1-1 support service for innovators and access to funding through InnovateUK grants. In addition, EIA hosts energy challenge events and meet-the-buyer events to draw out end-user energy challenges and connect with solution providers. There are also collaboration agreements in place with public and private sector businesses/properties who are willing to support new innovators to test their innovations prior to full commercialisation.

12. Future Focus

- 12.1 The requirement for business support has never been greater as companies innovate and navigate increasing costs, inflation, and labour/skills shortages resulting from the EU Exit and COVID 19, amidst global instability, shifting geo-political environments and economic shocks. The Growth Company’s future focus is to continue to deliver a wraparound, sector-focused programme of business support, aligned to and in support of Manchester’s strategic priority: to create a strong, inclusive, and innovative economy with diverse growth sectors. To that end, further activity is planned in support of Manchester’s world-leading Investment Zones, innovation assets, and the forthcoming £1.7Bn innovation district, ID Manchester.

Additional Supporting Information if required:

[BPIIG Evaluation Impacts.pdf](#)
[Skills for Growth Performance](#)
[EnterprisingYou Impacts Report](#)
[GMBGH Organogram](#)