



collaborate
GROWING BUSINESS TOGETHER



Growing Business Together



A celebration of what's been
and what's to come...



FOREWORD BY LEICESTER CITY MAYOR

Sir Peter Soulsby

Leicester is in the heart of the country and is one of the fastest growing cities in the UK. Leicester has a vibrant economy, predominately built on a very strong and diverse small business community which provides a platform for excellent future growth.

The city has a long-standing reputation for innovation, creativity and entrepreneurialism owing to the rich diversity of its local communities and the enterprising culture developed.

The Collaborate project funded by the European Regional Development Fund has helped Leicester City Council and its partners, East Midlands Chamber (Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire), the Food & Drink Forum and Leicestershire County Council to develop and deliver a programme of activities for our local businesses.

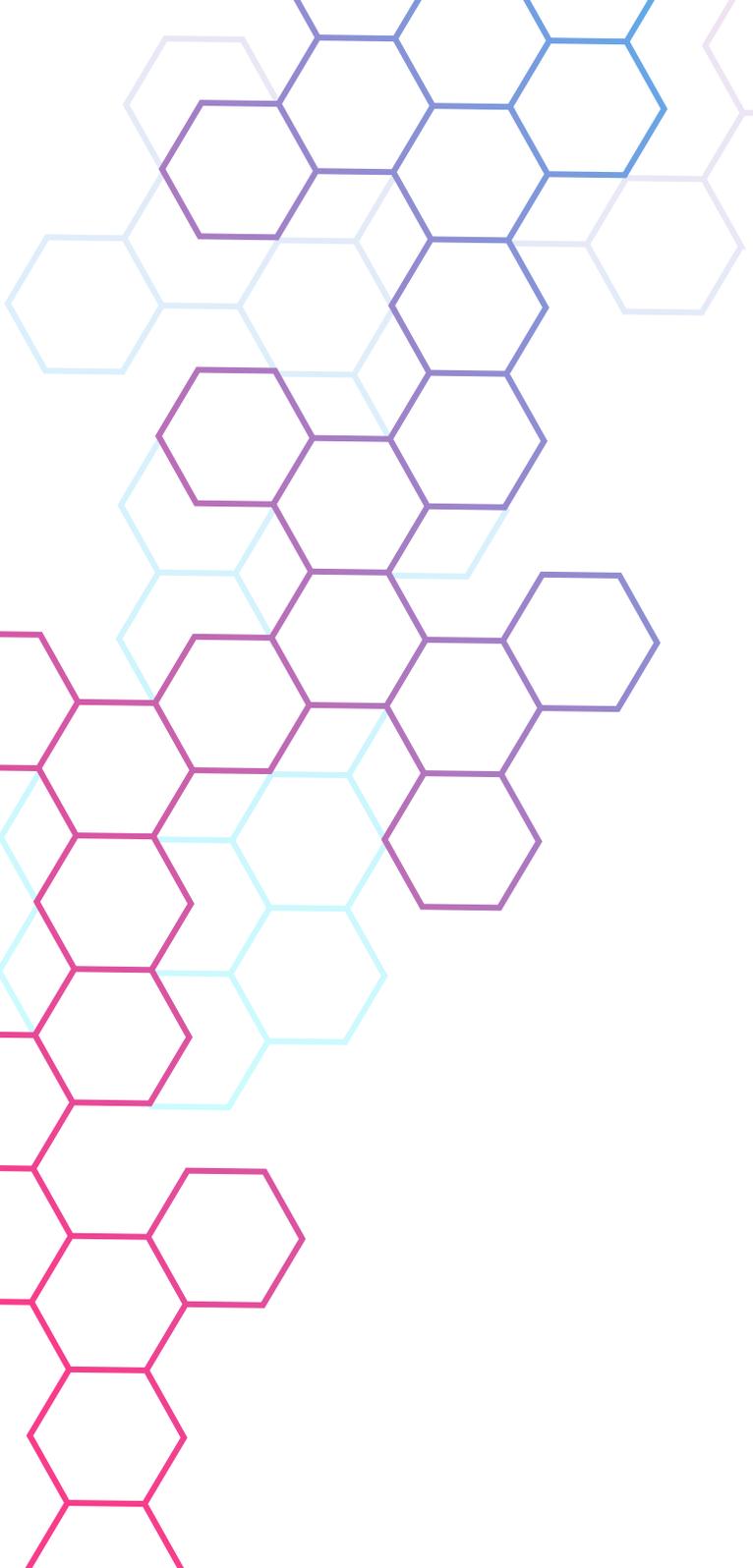
A specific focus of the Collaborate project for Leicester has been supporting those businesses from the creative industries, textiles manufacturing, food & drink manufacturing and tourism sectors.

These are just a few key sectors within the city that have benefited from the support provided which has ranged from provision of face-to-face advice, delivery of technical and generic workshops and grant funding of £1.2 million helping 61 businesses to either purchase new equipment or improve their business premises.

Overall, more than 300 businesses have been supported to grow by financially investing in their business, creating new jobs, increasing sales and profitability, looking towards future inward investment opportunities and exploiting marketing opportunities.

To showcase and demonstrate the impact that this project has achieved for the Leicestershire area this booklet describes some of the energy and enthusiasm for growth that we have seen from our local business community over the past couple of years, summarising some of the important facts and figures from the Collaborate project.





Collaborate for Growth... a celebration.

Collaborate for Growth is a £7.3 million partnership project created to boost the economic growth of Leicester and Leicestershire.

The project has successfully provided business support, capital grants and an inward investment service for small and medium-sized enterprises over the last three years.

Collaborate is funded by the European Regional Development Fund and partners: Leicester City Council - lead partner, Leicestershire County Council, East Midlands Chamber (Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire) and the Food and Drink Forum.

Sector specific business advice, themed workshops and grants have helped growing companies in eight core sectors, identified as priorities for growth by the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) including:

- food and drink manufacturing
- creative industries
- textile manufacturing
- low carbon
- logistics and distribution
- tourism and hospitality
- professional and financial services
- engineering and advanced manufacturing.

Here we celebrate the project's achievements and showcase some of the inspirational businesses that have taken advantage of support.

As Collaborate ends the Business Gateway Growth Hub will continue as the place to go for businesses seeking help to prosper and grow.

What has been achieved?



**in grants to
61 businesses**



**hours of intensive
support for 230
businesses**



**new jobs
created**



**private sector
investment**



**businesses given
information, advice
or guidance**



**free sector-
specific workshops
or events**



**new products
created**



**delegates attended
growth workshops**

Case Study



Business advice sounds good to BabyGigs

When it comes to the creative side BabyGigs founder, Eleanor Hodgkinson was totally tuned in to the value of high quality, live music for children. Classical pianist and teacher Eleanor always knew her business had potential but her busy schedule of teaching, performing and a new baby left her with concerns about capacity as her concert series grew in popularity.

BabyGigs provides classical concerts for babies, young children and their families. These concerts are fun, interactive, family-friendly and most importantly allow noise and movement from the young audience. Since inception BabyGigs has given over 200 concerts in venues across the Midlands, with instruments ranging from flutes to double bass and bass trombone to harp.

Eleanor was organising and performing in 25 different concerts in a year and struggling to sustain her concert series at multiple venues with a viable financial model and limited external support.

Through business advice Eleanor looked in-depth at her business strategy, resources and finances. She was helped to streamline the operation which has led to expansion of her concert series into new geographical areas.

“Collaborate has helped transform BabyGigs. Having the opportunity to discuss the business in-depth was invaluable. I was constantly challenged and as an artist it was great to be able to step back and view the business wearing a different hat.”

Eleanor Hodgkinson, Founder

Key facts

Support: Business advice

District: Harborough

Employees: 2 directors

Impact: Sell out concerts. Increase in turnover by 75%.

T-Shirt Guy has business all sewn up

The T-Shirt Guy had been trading from its Barkby Road base for nine years. The company designs and sells printed t-shirts and other garments to major high street retailers including New Look, River Island, Topman and Topshop.

As part of its ambitious growth plans, the company wanted to create a new garment processing unit and bring the printing, embellishment, re-processing, labelling and packaging of its t-shirts in-house. These had previously been contracted out to other firms.

The company was awarded a £25,000 grant to support its ambitious growth plans. This has enabled The T-Shirt Guy to take on new premises on Ulverscroft Road, invest in new equipment and create 14 new jobs.

Rob Booth, Managing Director said: "The grant enabled us to quickly set up our new factory at a time when capacity in Leicester was restricted, so speed of set up was critical for us.

"It meant we could invest in new machinery without compromising the working capital needs of our business; without the grant, purchasing this machinery would not have been possible for us.

"We are proud to have created 14 new jobs in the new factory and hope to create 14 more in the year ahead by taking on re-processing work from other businesses."

"The grant meant we could invest in new machinery without compromising the working capital needs of our business; without the grant, purchasing this machinery would not have been possible for us."

Rob Booth, Managing Director

Case Study



Key facts

Support: £25,000 grant

District: Leicester

Employees: 15

Impact: Enabled move to new premises. Improved efficiency and reduced costs through new processing unit. Job creation.

Case Study



Key facts

Support: £11,880 grant

District: Leicester

Employees: 5

Impact: 58% cost saving. Reduced production times. Job creation.

Bluefrog Design jumps ahead of the crowd

Bluefrog Design provides product design, engineering and graphic design to industry, supporting the development process from concept to mass production. The business, founded in 1990 by Chris Samwell, has developed a broad portfolio of work for the kitchen and bathroom markets as well as power tools for Kango and toys for Palitoy and Mattel, trading both domestically and internationally.

From 2010 Bluefrog Design stepped up its involvement in the design and development of products for high-value manufacturing, particularly in the industrial, medical and transport sectors. Initially the business was supported by a Business Gateway Growth Hub adviser who signposted Chris to funding from Collaborate and the Digital Growth Programme.

The business received a Collaborate grant of £11,880 towards the cost of a vacuum resin casting system to help enhance its in-house prototyping capabilities. This enabled the business to manufacture low-volume, high-value production-quality prototypes, supporting current and future design and development requirements.

The new system enables the company to improve the prototyping processes and services to address the ever-increasing levels of design complexity required by customers. Also, to satisfy the demand to deliver high quality against diminishing timescales, cost effectively and right-first-time.

Chris said: "The new system will allow our design engineers to concentrate on the higher-value design elements of projects rather than time-consuming and lower-value prototype activities securing existing jobs. It will also open up opportunities to grow both our design and prototyping services and create a new full-time position for a dedicated prototyper."

"By purchasing this equipment through Collaborate we'll be able to carry out work more efficiently guaranteeing quality by removing hand-finishing and transforming our prototyping process.

"This will enable us to iterate designs and optimise performance, then 'serial manufacture' real parts for production."

Chris Samwell, Director

Gokul Foods has a taste of success

Family-owned business, Gokul Foods specialise in pure vegetarian catering for a range of events from small parties to elaborate weddings and is also known for its Nylon Patta Gathiya* snacks.

The business had a modest beginning, established in 2005 by Bhavna Rajpra and husband Jayendra in the kitchen of their rented home. It was Bhavna's passion and intuition for creating delicious food, together with the support of her husband and their three children, which led to a business that now runs from a fully-functioning factory employing from four to 30 people over the busy wedding season.

Business Manager and daughter, Rajal said: "Once we established strong roots and customers it was important for us that we expanded, and that we did this with sustainability.

"The challenge was that we needed to be more versatile and to access the right opportunities; it was important to have recognised food standard agency procedures. This would make us more attractive as a supplier and enable us to approach other established food businesses. We were a small fish in a big pond and needed guidance."

With Collaborate support they achieved their HACCP system. HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) is a system that helps food businesses look at how they handle food and introduces procedures to make sure the food produced is safe to eat.

Rajal added: "With this support we have had quick results and having the required processes in place we were able to expand further and introduce our frozen food range.

* Crispy snacks, often deep-fried, originally made by people in India's most western state of Gujarat.

"Collaborate is a great way of allowing small businesses to thrive and be supported that would otherwise probably just struggle along and miss opportunities.

"We had such positive results I have already recommended the support available to other businesses."

Rajal Rajpra, Business Manager

Case Study



Key facts

Support: Technical advice

District: Leicester

Employees: 4-30

Impact: Introduction of new frozen food range.

Case Study



Key facts

Support: £8,000 grant

District: Harborough

Employees: 5

Impact: New product development. Increase in turnover by 20-25%. Job creation.

Brewery crafts out new products with support

Langton Brewery is a small local brewery historically producing traditional beers. When the brewery first started in 1999 it operated from the back of the Bell Inn, East Langton and only intended to produce enough beer to supply the pub and the cricket club across the road. However, the locals really enjoyed the beer and word began to spread. Twenty years later, Langton Brewery now supply a variety of local outlets including pubs, restaurants, hotels and farm shops.

While the team were pleased to see the popularity of their beers increase, the business wasn't making much profit. They were also keen to modernise and move into the craft beer market which required different equipment. The brewery clearly had the potential to become profitable in the future but that required scale which needed investment in new kit. To achieve this, they successfully applied for a Collaborate grant of £8,000.

The new equipment has enabled Langton Brewery to add three new craft beers to its core range. Turnover has increased by 20-25% year-on-year and the business has employed three new people. It is also experimenting with some limited-edition craft beers and exploring the idea of an onsite tap room.

Langton Brewery is very much a local brewery and one of its core values is staying true to its roots. Every year in July it hosts a beer festival which is hugely important as it allows the business to celebrate its origins with the local community.

"Probably the key factor that most small businesses fail on is cash, because as you grow you need working capital. Getting a grant at that critical stage can help you through that really sticky patch."

Sion Roberts, Owner

Case Study

Support means rapid changes at Speedel

Speedel provide same-day courier services to companies of any size, to and from any UK location, 24/7 and 365 days a year. Its mission is to provide the finest quality delivery solutions to clients whilst embracing diversity and maintaining high ethical standards.

Director, Shiraz Sidat was looking for business support and advice to develop a focused strategy for business growth and came across Collaborate via the East Midlands Chamber website.

Collaborate adviser, Ian Evley supported him in developing a structure which has enabled Speedel to create comprehensive sales and marketing strategies. Shiraz has also attended workshops and networking events to improve his skills and raise the company's profile.

Shiraz said: "Previously I was wearing several different hats and struggling with a number of things I had to do. But now, with help, I've been able to delegate and think outside the box - that's really helped us."

Since working with Collaborate the business has been able to forecast more efficiently, which has already resulted in turnover increasing by 100 per cent! The business anticipates it will double or even triple its turnover over the next three years.

In more good news the Speedel team was delighted to learn that they have been named as finalists in two categories at the Chamber's Leicestershire Business Awards 2019.



"Prior to getting in touch with Collaborate we had a vision, but we didn't have direction. The support we received has put us in a completely different position; we're able to make informed decisions and do things more strategically."

Shiraz Sidat, Director

Key facts

Support: Business advice

District: Leicester

Employees: 4 (soon to be 5 and currently looking at taking on apprentices)

Impact: 100% increase in turnover.

Case Study



Key facts

Support: Business advice, workshops

District: North West Leicestershire

Employees: 1

Impact: More sustainable business structure.
Increase in website visitors.

E-bike tour business gears up for growth

National Forest E-Bike Holidays is a new business offering self-guided luxury e-bike cycling tours around the National Forest region. It aims to provide guests with 'gentle adventures' where everything is taken care of.

Guests are provided with a comprehensive guide to their cycling route, which will take them along quiet country lanes and tracks. The guides even include recommendations for lunch stops and the best places for tea and cake!

The company books all the accommodation and delivers top of the range electric bikes to the first hotel. It transports luggage from hotel-to-hotel, which means that guests can relax and enjoy their holiday.

Director, Sue Jerham wanted to learn more about the local tourism industry and heard about Collaborate through North West Leicestershire District Council. Sue said: "I hadn't worked in tourism before and the project sounded perfect to help me learn more about the best way to build and develop my business."

"When I first had the idea, I thought it would be better for the business to be bespoke and to create routes to suit individual interests. I was shown that this would be unproductive as the business grew. It was clear that I would be a busy fool, and this would not be sustainable. Potential customers need more structure to help their buying decision. The advice was to create routes of all different lengths and interests."

Sue also attended a few Collaborate workshops, which helped her understand how to structure her website in a user-friendly way and enabled her to network with other delegates. "When I started, I knew no-one within the tourism sector. It was invaluable to meet and learn from others."

"The one-to-one support helped me shape the business. They listened to my business plan, what my ideas were and helped me structure that into a more sustainable option for the tourism industry."

Sue Jerham, Director

Capacity springs ahead for local manufacturer

Charles Blyth & Co is a family-owned business specialising in the manufacture of pocketed springs for mattresses. The business supplies well-known mattress makers such as Hypnos, Duflex and Vi-Spring. It was struggling with production capacity and successfully applied for a Collaborate grant of £16,734 towards the purchase of a new pocket spring machine. The grant enabled it to produce larger and more complex units opening up more market opportunities.

The manufacturer is a strong, established business but aspired to increase its market share and start competing with the leading brands in the field. That kind of growth wasn't possible with the capacities that the business had, so it sought assistance.

The new machine is the fastest the company has and allowed it to take on more business and create new jobs.

Managing Director, Carl Bown said: "This new machine has increased our production capacity by 13.9%. Over the last year we have secured further contracts that have resulted in establishing a new framing department to meet the increased demand, which in turn has increased our direct labour base from 33 to 38 employees.

It really has given us the opportunity to take control, introduce new departments and seek to collaborate with our largest customer even further so that we can both benefit."

"The grant didn't just enable us to get what we wanted, it changed our whole culture and it changed the whole way we were thinking. Now we know there is someone out there to help us, we're going to see how far we can go."

Carl Bown, Managing Director

ENGINEERING AND ADVANCED
MANUFACTURING

Case Study



Key facts

Support: £16,734 grant

District: North West Leicestershire

Employees: 38

Impact: Increase in production capacity by 13.9%.
Job creation.

Business Gateway Growth Hub

Supporting business growth

Business support for small and medium enterprises in Leicester and Leicestershire will continue through an enhanced service from the Business Gateway Growth Hub. This is a fully-funded and impartial service for any business in any sector. You can access:

- Business Growth grants to finance growth plans*
- Presentations and workshops to learn, improve skills and network
- Tailored, commercially-focussed, face-to-face business advice
- Referrals and signposting to expertise, funding and support to accelerate growth.

* Eligibility criteria applies

“We aim to provide easy, simplified access to the range of business support provision available across the local area.”

Helen Miller, Growth Hub Manager, Business Gateway



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With thanks to:





**If you are looking for support to grow your business
contact the Business Gateway Growth Hub now.**



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