



Department  
for Business  
Innovation & Skills

**FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF  
GROWTH ACCELERATOR**

BIS Response

MARCH 2015

# Contents

<b>Durham Business School Formative evaluation of Growth Accelerator: BIS response.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Background.....	3
Summary of findings from the formative evaluation: .....	3
Recommendations in the formative evaluation .....	4

# Durham Business School Formative evaluation of Growth Accelerator: BIS response

## Background

BIS commissioned Durham University to undertake a Formative Evaluation. The purpose of this research was to assess how effectively GrowthAccelerator (which was launched on 23 May 2012) was being delivered and to provide indications of how to further improve delivery.

The research, undertaken between April and June 2014, is based on in-depth interviews with a wide range of customers, coaches, Growth Managers and stakeholders.

The findings from the research contributed to informing the design of the Business Growth Service (details below) which was launched in December 2014. The formative evaluation was then published in January 2015.

It should also be noted that in October 2014 BIS published an Interim Evaluation of Growth Accelerator which gave an assessment of the economic value of the service (but had no recommendations for policy). Hence this policy response focuses on the formative evaluation.

## Summary of findings from the formative evaluation

The formative evaluation's findings were largely positive:

- GrowthAccelerator has been regarded positively by the majority of interviewees across all groups;
- The overwhelming majority of small and medium sized enterprises that were interviewed have already realised or anticipated impacts on turnover, jobs and/or skills;
- Growth Accelerator has appeared to address the market failures that it was designed for: most customers would not have used external advice without GrowthAccelerator (suggesting low deadweight) and customers are more willing to use business support in the future, after their positive experience of GrowthAccelerator.

## Recommendations in the formative evaluation

The Formative Evaluation provided insights into how to refine and improve delivery of GrowthAccelerator. BIS accepts these recommendations and has used them to inform the design of the Business Growth Service, as outlined later in this section.

The Business Growth Service now brings together expert advice to improve and grow in one place. The service has brought together the support provided by Growth Accelerator, the Manufacturing Advisory Service, Intellectual Property Audits and Designing mentoring as well as UKTI/ UKEF export advice. The service is closely linked to InnovateUK and the British Business Bank.

The recommendations and the BIS responses are as follows:

### 1. Ensure clients are appropriately signposted before, during and after using GrowthAccelerator

To ensure that businesses are referred to the right range of business support a new Diagnostic and Referral Tool has been developed to identify the range of client needs and ensure customers are referred to appropriate sources of external services before, during and after accessing the Business Growth Service. This is underpinned by improvements which have been made to systems and processes to ensure effective monitoring of referral activity.

### 2. Consider how best to use success stories to raise awareness/buy-in from stakeholders

The service works closely in partnership with local and national stakeholders and intermediaries as well as local and national business support providers in order to ensure high degrees of awareness of what the service provides and how to access it. This has been and continues to be supported by appropriate training and awareness raising activity.

A range of case studies have been developed to raise awareness and buy-in amongst stakeholders and are being disseminated through the service's website, and through marketing collateral used at events and meetings.

### 3. Ensure that all (potential) referrers are appropriately briefed, and aware of the full range of GrowthAccelerator services

Grant Thornton, BIS Delivery Partner, are specifically communicating with stakeholders who provide referrals into the Business Growth Service to explain what the service offers. This is further underpinned by a close working relationship and referral arrangements between the individual services to make sure that businesses approaching any service get referred directly to whatever form of support is right for them.

In addition, BIS also works in partnership with local growth hubs, banks, accountants and other trusted intermediaries to ensure business can connect to the government support they need, wherever they turn to for help.

4. Consider the role which masterclasses and workshops play within the service, and how they are delivered

A review of the effectiveness of workshops and masterclasses will be completed by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 to ensure better integration of masterclasses and workshops with the product offering, with clearly articulated benefits to participants on the rest of the programme.

5. For Leadership & Management support, consider introducing a database of providers

A database of leadership and management providers will be incorporated into the database of coaches and manufacturing consultants over Summer 2015.



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Contact us if you have any enquiries about this publication, including requests for alternative formats, at:

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills  
1 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0ET  
Tel: 020 7215 5000  
Email: [enquiries@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@bis.gsi.gov.uk)

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