

YORKSHIRE FORWARD

# BUSINESS SUPPORT IN YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER

An Introduction



The Region's  
Development Agency



## CONTENTS

- 3 **YORKSHIRE:  
REALISING OPPORTUNITY**
- 4 **BUSINESS LINK YORKSHIRE**
- 6 **BUSINESS SUPPORT  
PROGRAMMES**
- 7 **PRIORITY SECTORS**





## YORKSHIRE: REALISING OPPORTUNITY

**Yorkshire and Humber has an economy which is stronger than ever and is one of Europe's fastest growing regions. Unemployment is at a 30 year low and there are strong industries in the region with the second highest level of manufacturing investment in the country.**

Business survival rates have risen 15% since 1998 and we have one of the largest concentrations of Universities in Europe investing heavily in Research and Development.

However, the challenges of globalisation and increasing competition from the world's developing economies mean we cannot stand still. Fewer businesses start in our region than nationally and expenditure on Research and Development by our regions companies stands at a third of the national average. Productivity, whilst continuously improving, is still well below the national average.

Yorkshire Forward's role as the Regional Development Agency for Yorkshire and Humber is to stimulate the economic regeneration of the region. We support the expansion and development of businesses in our region by encouraging public and private investment and investing our own funds in order to achieve the objectives of the Region's Economic Strategy (RES 2006-2015) and its vision for Yorkshire.

We must encourage our region's people and businesses to be even more ambitious, to do better, to be better and to achieve more. We must create the environment which will enable them to realise their goals and move towards their vision for the future.

In line with the national Business Support Simplification Programme, we have committed to improving the quality and impact of business support, making it easier to access and ensuring value for money for both the businesses it serves and the taxpayer.

We are implementing this change through a number of key initiatives:

- Business Link Yorkshire – the regional "gateway" to Yorkshire and Humber's business support, providing an independent and impartial service linking customers to the support they need.
- Business Support – working closely with other providers of publicly funded support in the region, we are developing six programmes aimed at both starting a business and helping businesses to develop key areas of their business; people, operations, product and services, sales and finance.
- Priority Sectors – working closely with our region's growth sectors to encourage collaboration and ensure that the business support we deliver meets their needs.
- Regional Knowledge System – using a shared Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) to improve the customer's journey through business support and using the resulting intelligence to continuously improve the service we offer.

We are committed to evaluating the service and impact the changes have on businesses in the region and the environment they operate in.





## BUSINESS LINK YORKSHIRE

Launched on 1st April 2008, Business Link Yorkshire is the regional “gateway” for all business support in Yorkshire and Humber.

The service ensures that businesses can access the support they need to help run and develop a business whilst overcoming the challenges of entering into and growing in a commercial environment.

Working with over 90,000 customers across the region, Business Link Yorkshire has a crucial role in stimulating change and raising the ambitions of businesses across Yorkshire and Humber.

The new service was created to help Yorkshire and Humber achieve the vision set out in the RES 2006-2015 and has three main roles:

1. Making information available to help customers to run their business, recognise the opportunities that are available to them and encourage them to take action.
2. Helping businesses to recognise the challenges and opportunities their business faces and develop a prioritised action plan which will enable them to maximise their growth potential in a sustainable manner.
3. Helping businesses to fulfil their action plan and access the most appropriate support, leading to improved performance. Solutions may be sourced from within a business, a private sector supplier or the provision of publicly funded support.

Focussing on the customer and tailoring support to their specific needs, the service ensures that customers are in the driving seat with advisors providing information that allows the customer to choose the best option for them.

The single regional “gateway” is open to all businesses, and all individuals thinking of starting a business, and means that customers have just one website and one telephone number to call, ensuring that Business Link Yorkshire is easy to access and delivered to a consistently high standard across the Yorkshire and Humber.

The service provides region-wide business support and delivers that service locally with over 100 Public Access Points across the region. Customers of all types can access Business Link services within their community.

Business Link Yorkshire provides a wide range of events and workshops on key business issues which are delivered at venues across the region. Around 50,000 delegates are expected to attend planned events during the course of a year.

More intensive assistance is available to businesses with the greatest development potential delivered at the customer's premises through a team of 100 business advisors. Organised into 9 teams with specific geographic areas of responsibility, these teams work closely with around 5,000 businesses across the region each year.

Business Link Yorkshire also delivers Yorkshire Forward's Business Start up programme. This programme works with over 23,000 people considering starting a business each year, assisting the creation of 5,000 businesses as a result.

Support will be available to all start-ups, including Social Enterprises with additional resources directed towards start-ups with the highest potential for growth. As with the core Business Link Yorkshire service, customer focus and choice lies at the centre of this programme.

The start-up service:

- stimulates interest in starting a business, including working with those in more hard to reach communities;
- helps individuals understand the implications of starting a business and the actions they need to take;
- helps to develop a feasible business proposition; and
- provides support from the initial business idea through to growing the business once established.

Business Link Yorkshire sits at the very centre of business support and must work closely with all stakeholders within the region as a critical factor to its success.

A team of 10 partnership managers are deployed to work closely with partners, other business support providers and intermediaries. Their role is to ensure that, where appropriate, Business Link Yorkshire and their partners add value to each others work. The partnership managers are mobile and are responsible for particular geographic areas and industry sectors.

Business Link staff will work from a regional coordination centre in Barnsley supported by a network of local centres around the region.



**The management team for Business Link Yorkshire is led by Helen West, CEO. The team brings extensive knowledge of the industry and experience operating in a commercial environment, ensuring the continuous improvement of the service and helping to increase its value to businesses throughout the region.**



## BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

We fund business support in order to achieve a range of goals defined by public policy objectives, identified in the Yorkshire and Humber RES 2006-2015 and in the Yorkshire Forward Corporate Plan 2008/11.

However, we recognise that not all of these objectives are defined in terms businesses would recognise or value. It is our job to translate the policy into customer focussed support. For example, instead of 'innovation', businesses are focussed on improving their products, services or processes; instead of 'international trade', they will look to increase customer numbers and sell more products.

In line with national policy, Yorkshire Forward is simplifying the support it provides to business. Our role is to help businesses in Yorkshire and Humber gain clear and effective support which meets their needs. To this end we are organising our business support into six customer focussed areas of activity through which we can coordinate our activity with that of other public sector bodies;

- starting a business;
- improving business operations;
- developing new products and services;
- identifying and exploiting new markets;
- recruiting, managing and developing people; and
- accessing finance.

Each programme of activity is accessible through Business Link Yorkshire and targeted to deliver against local needs. Business support offered by the service will:

- stimulate and encourage businesses to grow within the context of their own plans, whilst at the same time achieving our policy objectives;
- identify market failures in the supply of business services and seek to correct these in the most appropriate and sustainable way.

The programmes are managed regionally but targeted to deliver against local needs. We will be looking to local partners to help identify each programme's priorities and evaluate the impact for their area.

### European Funding

The six business support programmes link directly to the new Yorkshire and Humber ERDF Programme 2007-13 and will align with activity commissioned under the Priority Prospectuses, particularly:

- Priority 1 – To promote innovation and research and development
- Priority 2 – To stimulate and support successful enterprise.

### The Technology Behind Yorkshire's Business Support

The Regional Knowledge System (RKS) is a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system with a difference. RKS joins together a range of tried and tested specialist systems including CRM, supplier matching, events, marketing and information systems.

Yorkshire Forward owns and manages the system which is already used by Business Link Yorkshire, Learning and Skills Council's Train to Gain brokers, UK Trade & Investment and several local authorities. It is hoped to expand the use of the system across the business support network.

By bringing the activities of these business support providers together, we have improved the way the business support network manages its relationships with businesses in Yorkshire and Humber.

The relationships between businesses and support providers generate lots of information and intelligence. RKS will organise this intelligence so we can use it to inform the future development of Business Support – from targeting a particular event at a specific audience to identifying a gap in business support provision.

RKS will operate in a highly secure environment ensuring client confidentiality is maintained at all times.



## PRIORITY SECTORS

In order to maximise the impact we have on the growth of the regional economy it is important that Yorkshire Forward works closely with the region's growth sectors.

Well connected and engaged sector networks are used to bring companies together to share best practice and develop common approaches, to define and exploit opportunities and meet challenges facing the sector. The networks also provide essential feedback and intelligence, which is used to continuously improve the business support provided through the six programmes and accessed through Business Link Yorkshire.

## CONTACT US

For further information  
please contact:

### **Business Link Yorkshire**

Tel: 0845 6 048048

Email: [info@businesslinkyorkshire.co.uk](mailto:info@businesslinkyorkshire.co.uk)

[www.businesslinkyorkshire.co.uk](http://www.businesslinkyorkshire.co.uk)

### **Yorkshire Forward**

Mike Pitts

Head of Business Link Services

Tel: 0113 394 9867

Email: [business.support@yorkshire-forward.com](mailto:business.support@yorkshire-forward.com)