



Starting, Growing, Thriving:

Inside Oxfordshire's Business Support Engine

ENTERPRISE OXFORDSHIRE IMPACT REPORT 2025/26





Foreword

On 1 April 2025, Enterprise Oxfordshire embarked on a new journey. The shift from OxLEP, the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, represented not just a change in name and leadership, but also the conclusion of a nationwide transformation in the approach to local economic development. In Oxfordshire, this transition resulted in Oxfordshire County Council becoming the sole shareholder of the organisation. This new structure offers a clear governance model while reinforcing the importance of business support within Oxfordshire's broader economic vision.

This report captures the first year of Enterprise Oxfordshire's operations under this new framework. It was a period marked by considerable change, both within the organisation and in the wider economic environment it serves. It also highlights the critical role of accessible, practical, and coordinated business support throughout the county.

Throughout this time, Enterprise Oxfordshire continued to assist businesses in starting, expanding, and prospering across all five districts. We also collaborated with partners to address local challenges, revitalise High Streets, broaden access to opportunities, and generate wider social benefits. The following report illustrates the scope of this work and, more importantly, the positive impact it has had on Oxfordshire's businesses, communities, and economy.

The report also reflects a significant period of leadership change. We bid farewell to Nigel Tipple, Chief Executive, and Lyn Davies, Finance Director, both of whom made substantial contributions over many years and helped lay the groundwork on which Enterprise Oxfordshire now builds. Their retirement marked the close of an important chapter in the organisation's history.

This year also brought a deeply personal loss with the passing of our colleague and friend, Richard Byard. Richard was a highly respected member of the leadership team and a familiar figure in Oxfordshire's economic development community. His expertise, kindness, humour, and strong dedication to supporting businesses and individuals left a lasting legacy both within the organisation and beyond. He is profoundly missed.

What is most evident in the following pages is the ongoing demand for business support and the importance of delivering it in a responsive, diagnostic-driven, and partnership-based manner. Enterprise Oxfordshire has assisted a diverse range of businesses and organisations, from start-ups and scale-ups to High Street retailers, charities, social enterprises, and cooperatives. Through this, it has helped create and protect jobs, boost confidence, enhance resilience, and foster conditions for inclusive economic growth.

At a time when Oxfordshire faces a changing economic landscape, devolution, and shifting local priorities, the necessity for trusted, coordinated business support remains clear. Enterprise Oxfordshire plays a vital role within the county's economic framework, connecting businesses to the support they require and providing insights that help guide local decision-making.

Therefore, this report is not only a record of achievements over the past year but also a declaration of future intent. It demonstrates what can be accomplished through strong partnerships, focused support, and a shared dedication to helping Oxfordshire's businesses, communities, and places flourish.

Helen Brind
Director of Business and Skills
Enterprise Oxfordshire





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1. Executive Summary

Enterprise Oxfordshire is an important part of Oxfordshire's economic infrastructure, helping businesses across the county to start, grow and thrive while strengthening local places, communities and supply chains. In 2025/26, 1710 businesses were supported, from sign-posting through to intense reviews of strategy. 796 of these businesses completed the Business Support Tool, creating a strong evidence base on business need and enabling tailored action plans that connected businesses to the right mix of workshops, one-to-one advice, mentoring, specialist programmes and wider referrals.

This demand came from across all five districts and from a wide range of business types, including start-ups, established SMEs, High Street businesses, charities, social enterprises and cooperatives. The businesses engaging with Enterprise Oxfordshire represent a significant part of the local economy. Collectively, they had a combined turnover of more than £415 million and employed more than 3,400 staff, underlining the economic importance of ensuring they remain resilient, productive and ready to grow. During the year, supported businesses created 211 jobs and safeguarded a further 878.

The report shows that effective business support delivers more than business-level outcomes alone. It helps founders build confidence, enables businesses to adopt new technologies, improve productivity, reach new markets and develop new products and services. It also strengthens High Streets, supports local supply chains, widens participation in entrepreneurship and provides valuable intelligence that can inform local policy, investment and partnership working across Oxfordshire.

This impact is visible in both county-wide and place-based delivery. Through programmes such as Helping High Streets and district partnerships in Cherwell and West Oxfordshire, Enterprise Oxfordshire has shown that a strong county-wide core offer can be enhanced by targeted local support that reflects the needs of particular places and communities. The evidence suggests that this combination of breadth, flexibility and local insight is one of the programme's key strengths.

The wider public value created is also substantial. Using the TOMS framework, the programme generated an estimated £45.7 million in social value, reflecting jobs created and retained, expert support provided to SMEs and wider benefits for Oxfordshire's economy and communities. Feedback and evaluation show that businesses consistently value the support as practical, trusted and confidence-building, with high levels of intention to apply learning and recommend the service to others.

The central message for stakeholders is clear. Sustained demand exists, and coordinated business support remains a worthwhile investment for Oxfordshire. The strongest outcomes come from a flexible, diagnostic-led model that combines triage, action planning, group learning, one-to-one support, mentoring, referrals and place-based collaboration to help businesses access the right support at the right time. As Oxfordshire's economy evolves, Enterprise Oxfordshire is well placed to align with emerging priorities and continue delivering economic, social and environmental value across the county.

2. Why Business Support Matters

Strong, accessible business support is fundamental to Oxfordshire's economic resilience and the wellbeing of its communities. It underpins business survival and growth, protects jobs, and strengthens founder confidence at every stage of the business journey. Enterprise Oxfordshire's support reaches a wide range of organisations, including SMEs, charities, social enterprises and cooperatives, recognising the vital role that different business models play in the local economy. From start-ups testing new ideas to established organisations navigating change, effective support enables businesses to adapt, invest and remain competitive in an evolving economic landscape.

This has a direct impact on local people and places. When businesses are supported to succeed, they sustain employment, create new opportunities and contribute to thriving high streets and local supply chains.

Key sectors such as tourism also continue to generate significant economic value and employment across the county, demonstrating how business activity supports both economic output and the vitality of Oxfordshire's communities.

Enterprise Oxfordshire is continually striving to simplify and strengthen the business support landscape. The ambition is to provide a clear single point of entry for SMEs seeking support, making it easier for businesses to navigate available services and connect into Oxfordshire's wider innovation community. This improves the experience for businesses and ensures that public investment delivers greater value through more coordinated and effective support.



Ultimately, business support is a key enabler of inclusive economic growth.

By strengthening businesses, it strengthens communities, supports employment and helps ensure Oxfordshire remains a dynamic and resilient economy.

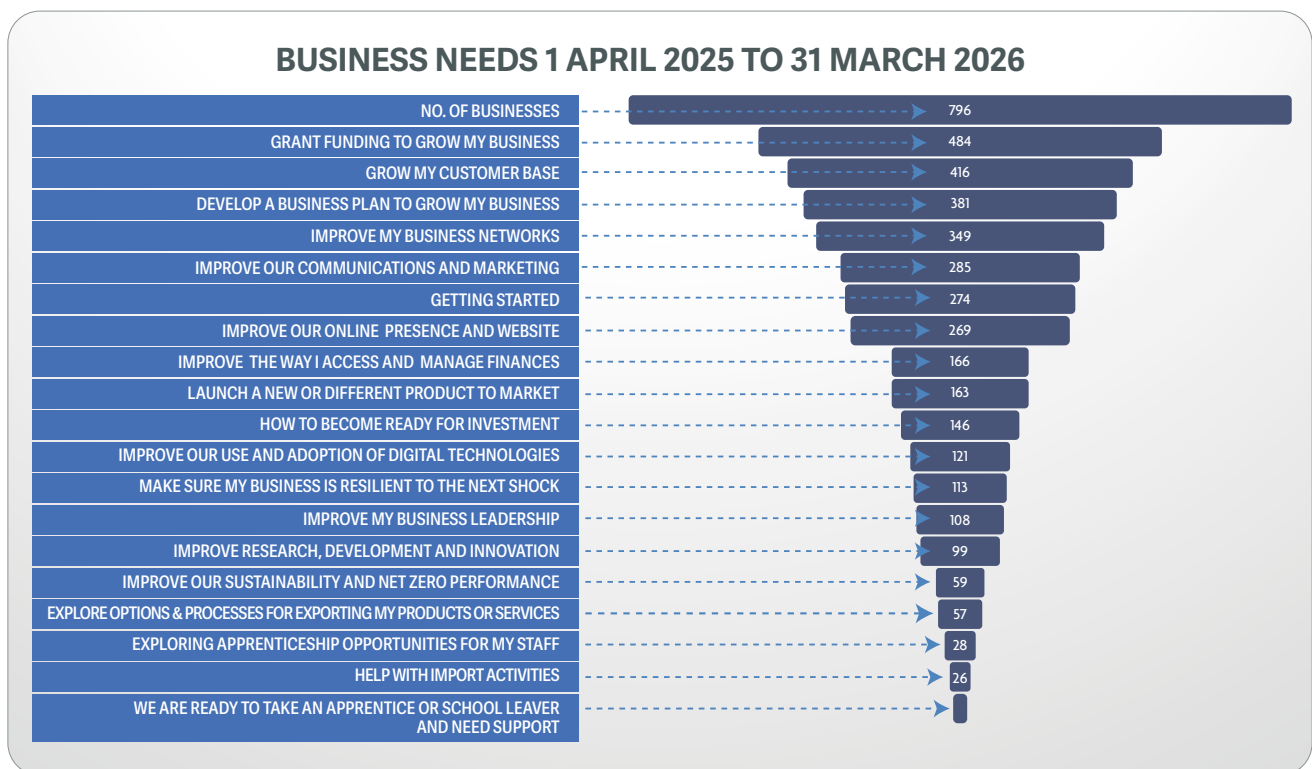




3. The Oxfordshire Business Picture

During the year (April 2025 – March 2026), 1710 businesses were supported with everything from sign-posting to grants or investors, through to intense reviews of their business strategy. 796 of these businesses completed Enterprise Oxfordshire’s Business Support Tool, giving the team a strong evidence base on the issues businesses are facing and the practical help they are seeking. The tool is designed to generate a personalised action plan for each business, including signposting to the most appropriate Enterprise Oxfordshire support, business recovery information, the Business Growth Service and other national programmes, grant schemes, and relevant District Council support.

The data on business needs is illustrated through our ‘Triage Triangle’



This intelligence provides a useful picture of business need across Oxfordshire. More than half of the businesses engaging through the tool identified access to grant funding and support to grow their customer base as leading priorities, with other common needs including planning for growth, improving business networks, and strengthening communications and marketing. Taken together, these findings show that many businesses are looking for practical help to move forward, not abstract advice, and that Enterprise Oxfordshire’s support must continue to be responsive to live trading conditions and founder demand.

Most businesses supported are either at an early start-up stage or at a key point of growth, when the need for timely and practical support is especially acute. The most common requests cluster around funding and financial support, marketing and customer acquisition, start-up basics, growth planning, and access to mentoring and networks. There is also continuing demand around operations, premises, innovation, intellectual property, social enterprise support, and accessibility needs, reflecting the breadth of Oxfordshire’s business base and the variety of barriers that can affect progress.

The pattern behind these requests points to a wider economic climate that remains challenging. Many businesses report cost pressures linked to energy, materials, wages, rent and taxation, while also facing softer customer demand as households and organisations become more cautious in their spending.

The dominant needs described by businesses are summarised in the following table

Theme (merged)	Typical requests	Relative volume
Funding & financial support	Grants, loans, investment, working capital, cash flow, R&D funding	Very high
Marketing & customer acquisition	First customers, websites, social media, SEO, PR, visibility	Very high
Start up basics & legal structure	Registration, tax, bookkeeping, compliance, benefits interactions	High
Growth & strategy / scaling	Business plans, scaling models, new markets, hiring, franchising, systems	High
Mentoring, networks & advisory support	1:1 mentoring, peer networks, sector specific advisors, non execs	Medium high
Operations, systems, premises & kit	Equipment, premises, IT/systems, manufacturing, logistics	Medium
Innovation, R&D, IP & tech	Innovate UK, PoC funding, IP, AI products, medical devices, lab access	Medium
Social/charity, net zero & community	CICs/charities, net zero projects, community and cultural enterprises	Medium
Personal barriers & accessibility needs	Neurodivergence, disability, accessible support, confidence, caring role, benefits	Lower in count but high impact

Access to finance remains a recurring concern. Founders continue to describe a difficult environment for grants, investment and borrowing, which can slow down hiring, product development and wider business expansion. At the same time, regulatory demands, policy change and wider market uncertainty are increasing the administrative burden on many organisations, particularly those already operating with limited capacity.



For Enterprise Oxfordshire, this real-time feedback is valuable not only as a diagnostic tool but as a guide for service design. It helps ensure that business support is shaped around the needs businesses are reporting, whether that is finance, customers, planning, networks or confidence to take the next step. In this way, the Business Support Tool does more than triage need. It provides live insight into the pressures affecting Oxfordshire's business community and helps target support where it can create the greatest practical value.

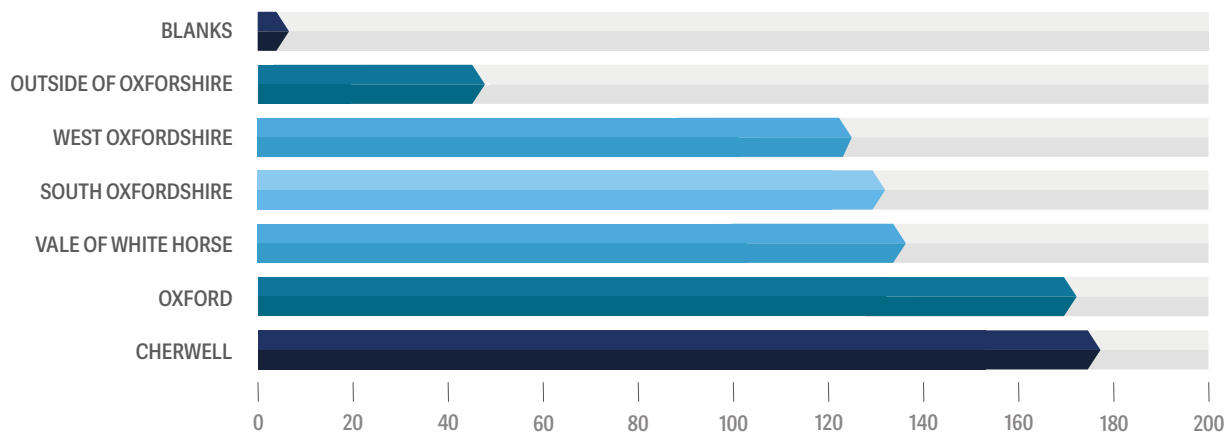


4. Reach Across Oxfordshire

Enterprise Oxfordshire takes a proactive approach to engaging businesses across the whole county, recognising the diversity of Oxfordshire's economic landscape. This includes working with businesses in market towns and villages such as Watlington, alongside those in the City of Oxford, the rural economies of the Cotswolds, and the high-performance engineering cluster in Banbury. This place-based approach ensures that support is accessible, relevant and responsive to different local contexts.

Demand for support is spread across all parts of the county, rather than concentrated in a single area.

NUMBER OF BUSINESSES BY DISTRICT - 1 APRIL 2025 TO 31 MARCH 2026



This reach is also reflected in engagement from High Street businesses in every district, demonstrating that support is connecting with both urban centres and smaller market towns.

A small number of businesses based outside Oxfordshire also engage with Enterprise Oxfordshire, but their access is limited to networking activity so that funded support remains focused on Oxfordshire's economy. Within the county, Enterprise Oxfordshire shares data with local authority economic development teams, where businesses have given permission to do so, and holds monthly liaison meetings to share learning and discuss emerging priorities.

This regular flow of information and insight helps align local and county-wide interventions and ensures that business support is joined up rather than operating in isolation.

STAGE OF BUSINESS based on completions of the Business Support Tool



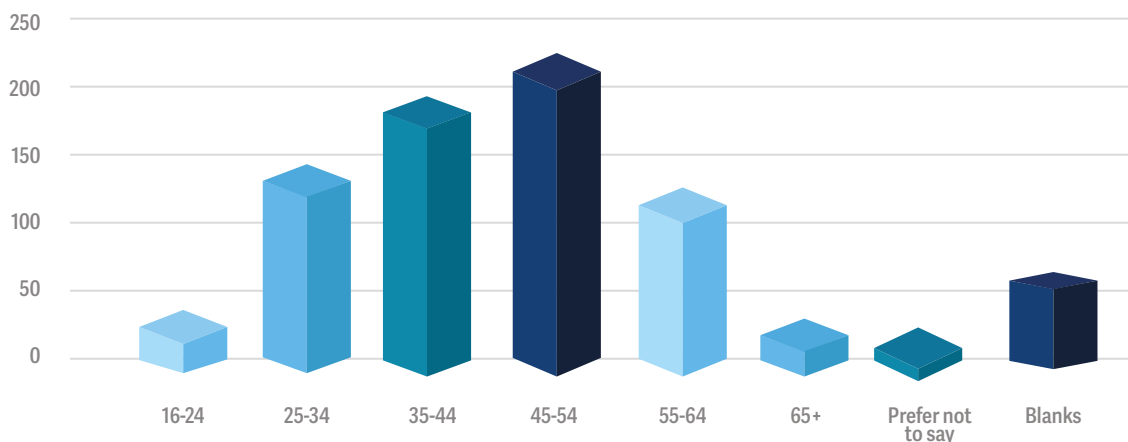
Pre-Start Businesses	258	32.4%
Start-Up Businesses	187	23.5%
Established Businesses	172	21.6%
Growing Businesses	78	9.8%
Scale-Up Businesses	38	4.8%
Outside Of County	63	7.9%
Total	796	

5. Who Was Supported

Enterprise Oxfordshire's support offer is reaching a broad and diverse range of founders and organisations. At least 52% of participants identify as women, indicating that support is being accessed by female founders at meaningful scale rather than being dominated by male-led businesses. More than 13% of respondents declared a disability, which suggests that people with additional access needs are engaging with the service and that inclusive approaches to delivery are important in maintaining this reach.

Ethnicity data provides further insight into who is being supported. The majority of participating businesses identify as White (564), with additional representation from Asian or Asian British founders (55), Black, African, Caribbean or Black British founders (46), founders from Mixed or multiple ethnic groups (24), and other ethnic groups (12). A further 35 respondents chose not to disclose their ethnicity, and 59 records were incomplete, which is a reminder that headline figures will understate the true level of diversity among participants. Based on the available data, at least 17% of engaged clients identify as belonging to ethnic minority groups. This demonstrates that Enterprise Oxfordshire is supporting a significant number of founders from under-represented backgrounds, alongside those from more typical demographic profiles. There is also a diverse age range of business owners.

AGE OF THE BUSINESS OWNER WHO HAS COMPLETED THE BST



Taken together, the gender, disability, ethnicity and age figures, point to a support offer that is accessible to a wide range of people and business models, rather than serving a narrow segment of the business community.



95%





6. How Support Was Structured

Support is structured as a coherent pathway rather than a collection of standalone offers. It begins with clear calls to action that guide businesses to an enhanced triage tool, which diagnoses their needs and generates a tailored Business Support Action Plan. From there, businesses move into a blend of group learning, one-to-one advice and specialist programmes that match their stage of development and ambition.

Outreach and engagement activities feed businesses into this system in a consistent way. Monthly OxBOoSt networking webinars introduce new clients, create peer connections and prompt referrals, while communications make clear that support is available to owners, senior managers and wider team members. Business Showcase reports use case studies and outcomes to encourage businesses to enter the triage process.



Click the image or scan the QR code to visit this page

The triage tool, hosted on the Enterprise Oxfordshire website, is the core entry point into support. By capturing information on business stage, challenges and goals, it enables the team to recommend next steps, from webinars and workshops to start-up and growth programmes or one-to-one advice and mentoring.

Once needs are understood, support is delivered through a tiered offer aligned to different points in the business journey. Entry-level webinars and workshops provide accessible learning on topics such as finance, customers, marketing, public sector contracts, innovation funding and the practical use of AI. These short, focused sessions give many businesses a way to build skills quickly and often act as a stepping stone into more intensive support.

For businesses needing deeper input, the model offers structured one-to-one support, mentoring and Strategic Business Reviews. More intensive interventions are reserved for growing firms that meet clear criteria around size, turnover and job creation potential, ensuring that resources are targeted where they can have the greatest impact. Alongside this, specialist programmes such as the AI Accelerator and Peer Networks respond to emerging themes and provide space for action learning and implementation.

Taken together, this creates an integrated, diagnostic-led system in which outreach brings businesses in, triage and action plans direct them to the right mix of support, and a combination of group and individual interventions helps them to start, grow and thrive.



7. Supporting Start-Up and Early-Stage Businesses

Start-ups and early-stage businesses are a vital part of a thriving local economy, creating new jobs, diversifying local high streets and giving residents practical routes into self-employment. Early intervention helps more people move from ideas to trading activity, with better planning, stronger financial foundations and greater confidence. Across 2025–26, 224 people were supported to start their own business, demonstrating the scale of demand for structured help at this stage.

Support for new entrepreneurs begins with accessible entry routes. A further 48 people attended “So You Want to Start a Business” webinars, and 47 engaged in pre-start one-to-one support to test ideas, understand viability and plan first steps. These light-touch offers give residents a low-risk way to explore entrepreneurship, build basic knowledge and decide whether and how to move forward.

For those ready to commit, the Start-Up Club provides a more structured foundation. 75 People from across Oxfordshire took part, working through three expert-led sessions focused on the fundamentals of developing a successful business. Participants leave with a clear plan to start or grow their business, greater confidence in their idea and direct links into wider Enterprise Oxfordshire support. The club is designed to work for sole traders, early-stage limited companies and businesses looking to pivot or reset their plans.

Targeted local programmes extend this approach into specific places and communities. The Business Spark programme, funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund by West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District Councils, helped residents in those areas explore and start businesses, with a particular focus on retail, the rural and visitor economies and other local SMEs. By December 2025, 42 entrepreneurs had taken part, receiving more than 350 hours of support. Feedback highlights increased confidence, removal of perceived barriers to entrepreneurship and the value of practical marketing and sales advice alongside a supportive peer network.

To reach under-represented groups, the Pathways to Start programme was developed as a bespoke route into entrepreneurship. Over 6 weeks, 12 participants received 88 hours of structured support, combining group learning and one-to-one coaching to build clarity, confidence and capability. The programme created a safe environment for testing ideas, refining next steps and sustaining motivation, with participants reporting greater resilience and momentum in progressing their business journeys.

Taken together, these interventions form a coherent start-up pathway. Residents can test the idea of self-employment, build skills and confidence, and then access deeper support as they move toward trading.

This early stage focus not only increases the chances that new businesses will survive and grow, it also helps widen participation in enterprise, ensuring that more people across Oxfordshire can contribute to and benefit from the local economy.





FLUX PHYSIOTHERAPY

Case Study



Flux Physiotherapy

Flux Physiotherapy is a specialist musculoskeletal clinic based in central Bicester, where I provide expert care for a wide range of conditions. While I specialise in complex presentations, I also treat all types of sports injuries, aches, and pains. My strong links with surrounding orthopaedic hospitals and consultants allow me to offer a comprehensive service, ensuring patients receive the highest standard of care. Additionally, I have specialist training in imagery interpretation, Pilates, steroid injections, and orthopaedic consultancy, equipping me with a broad skill set to support my patients effectively.

Setting up my own practice has come with its challenges, with finding an appropriate and affordable venue being one of the most difficult aspects. I have received valuable advice from my accountant and other small business owners, which has helped me navigate this process.

The Enterprise Oxfordshire business course was also incredibly helpful and reassuring, giving me the confidence to take this step. From December, I am officially a full-time sole trader, and I am excited to be my own boss, making independent business decisions that align with my values. I take great satisfaction in setting patient-specific goals and delivering effective treatment without the constraints of restrictive guidelines or cost-cutting agendas imposed by previous employers. While I recognise that promoting and advertising my business is an area I need to develop; I am optimistic. So far, my business has grown organically, largely through positive word of mouth, and I look forward to expanding my reach while continuing to provide exceptional care to my patients.

Callum Edens BSc MCSP

fluxphysiotherapy.com

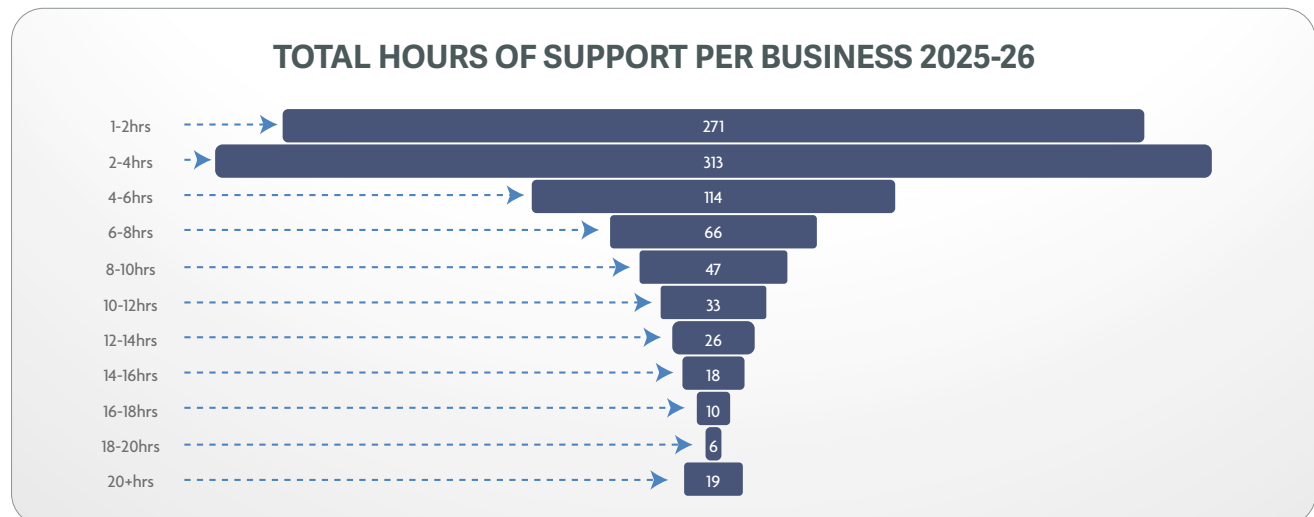


SCAN ME



8. Helping Established Businesses to Grow

Enterprise Oxfordshire provides a structured offer for established, growing and scale-up businesses, with support focused on unlocking growth, protecting jobs and improving productivity. Nearly 500 businesses engaged with between 2 and 8 hours of support, while 79 businesses engaged with more than 12 hours. The combined turnover for these businesses was over £415 million and they employ more than 3,400 staff, underlining the economic weight of the businesses supported.



Support is built around tailored, 1:1 packages, Strategic Business Reviews and targeted programmes on finance, marketing, net zero and AI-enabled productivity. In total, 485.5 hours of expert one-to-one support were delivered across advice sessions, mentoring and strategic reviews. Time-limited offers, such as three-hour expert sessions, were rapidly taken up, showing strong demand for focused, bespoke input. Strategic Business Reviews and mentoring were reserved for growing and scale-up firms with clear potential to create or safeguard jobs, ensuring that intensive support was directed where it could have the greatest impact.

The impact on growth and employment is clear. Across 68 businesses that reported growth, 211 jobs were created. Established businesses produced the highest number of jobs overall (69), reflecting their scale and capacity to expand, while scale-ups generated 65 jobs at an average of 5.9 per business, highlighting the value of targeted high-growth support. Growing and start-up businesses each created 36 jobs, and pre-start businesses generated 5 jobs as they moved into trading, demonstrating impact across all stages of the business lifecycle.

Wider outcomes show a strong contribution to resilience as well as growth. Across the programme, 878 roles were safeguarded as a direct result of targeted support. Since April 2025, more than 3,700 hours of support have been delivered, with a 97.5% recommendation rate and an estimated social value of over £45 million. Alongside this, Enterprise Oxfordshire has made 2,356 intelligent referrals into wider local, regional and national support, drawing on deep knowledge of the business support landscape in Oxfordshire and strong partnerships with District Councils and sector programmes, including the visitor economy.

Taken together, this mix of diagnostic-led one-to-one work, strategic reviews and specialist programmes on topics such as AI and growth forms a coherent growth pathway for established businesses. It enables firms to tackle immediate challenges, invest in productivity and innovation, and create and safeguard jobs, helping to strengthen the county's economic base and long-term resilience.



Recycle Lab

At RecycleLab, we are committed to transforming the way single-use plastics from the science and healthcare industries are managed. By collecting and recycling these materials into high-quality recycled polymers, we help our customers reduce their environmental footprint while working towards a circular economy for plastic laboratory consumables.

Like many growing businesses, we face key challenges in scaling our operations and increasing brand awareness. Expanding our customer base is crucial to our long-term success, but it must be balanced with maintaining financial stability. We are actively engaged in several innovative projects that will enhance our recycling services and improve the quality of our recycled plastic materials, ensuring they meet the stringent demands of scientific and healthcare applications.

One of the most valuable steps we have taken is participating in the West Oxfordshire Business Accelerator. The expert-led masterclasses have provided us with essential insights on planning for growth and driving innovation in a small business. The practical strategies and tools we have gained have already enabled us to implement meaningful changes, helping us refine our approach to overcoming business challenges.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the upcoming projects that will further improve our recycling processes and strengthen our impact. By developing a high quality recycled plastic specifically for laboratory use, we are not only enhancing our own growth but also supporting our customers in their sustainability efforts.

With each step forward, we are building a more sustainable future for plastic laboratory consumables and reinforcing our commitment to environmental responsibility.





Decode Logistics Limited

At Decode Logistics, we provide a range of supply chain and fulfilment services for product-based SMEs. We specialise in stock storage, pick and pack, delivery, and returns management, with a strong focus on handling complex product requirements with accuracy and care. Our experience comes from decades in logistics and building successful businesses ourselves. Clients often see us as an extension of their senior management team, as we bring commercial insight, entrepreneurial thinking, and hands-on expertise in areas such as inventory optimisation, global freight, and customs processes. We're also highly tech-enabled, integrating seamlessly with client systems.

As a growing business, one of our key challenges has been scaling effectively in a fast-changing technological landscape. We want to continue improving efficiency while maintaining high service levels. Many of our clients operate in the cosmetics and wellness sectors, where demand can fluctuate rapidly due to influencer activity. A key ambition has been finding ways to anticipate these spikes and respond quickly, ensuring we continue to deliver a reliable and proactive service.

Support from Enterprise Oxfordshire Business

We took part in the Generative AI Accelerator Programme for Business with Grae Laws, which has had a significant impact on how we operate. The programme helped us adopt AI tools to monitor when our clients' brands are mentioned online, giving both us and our clients real-time insight into influencer activity. What initially felt daunting quickly became a valuable learning experience. We've gone from having no AI capability to using it daily, from monitoring trends to analysing data and identifying patterns that support better planning and decision-making.

Next steps

Over the next six months, we'll continue embedding AI into our operations while refining our service offering. We've also started attending OxBOoSt networking sessions, which have already delivered tangible business benefits and helped us strengthen our local connections. We're now planning to update our website and ensure consistent messaging across all channels. With a strong foundation and a focus on innovation, we're excited about the next phase of growth for Decode Logistics.



I went from fear of AI to excitement about the possibilities for using it to grow our business in 4 weeks. I'm not naturally techie but found the course pace, content and level of challenge exactly what I needed.

decodelogistics.co.uk



The Employment Group Ltd

The Employment Group Ltd is a specialist recruitment agency providing temporary and permanent staffing solutions across Oxfordshire and beyond. We support a wide range of clients from local SMEs to national organisations across the industrial, logistics, and commercial sectors. Our focus is on building long-term partnerships by matching reliable, skilled people with businesses that value quality and consistency.

We faced significant challenges following the pandemic. The market became increasingly competitive, candidate availability fluctuated, and employment legislation evolved rapidly. Our current goal is to achieve a £5.5–6 million turnover in 2025/26. Our strongest performance since before the pandemic while continuing to be recognised as Oxfordshire's most reliable and ethical recruitment partner.

Support from Enterprise Oxfordshire Business

We accessed invaluable peer-to-peer networking, mentoring, and marketing support. The networking sessions allowed us to share insights and challenges with other local businesses, strengthening our leadership and strategic thinking. One-to-one mentoring sessions provided targeted guidance on our growth strategy, while the marketing mentoring programme with Jane Abbott helped us refine our messaging, enhance our online presence, and better communicate what makes us unique. This support gave us renewed confidence, sharper focus, and practical tools to attract new clients and strengthen our reputation for quality and compliance.

Next steps

We're entering an exciting new phase of growth. Over the next six months, we'll continue investing in technology, compliance, and team development to improve efficiency and transparency for our clients and candidates. We're also exploring expansion into new sectors and regions while nurturing our existing relationships. With a strong, dedicated team and the continued support of Enterprise Oxfordshire, we feel energised and confident about the future.

“

Enterprise Oxfordshire has been an invaluable partner in our growth journey. The mentoring, peer networks, and one-to-one support have given us fresh perspective, practical tools, and renewed confidence to take The Employment Group to the next level.

www.theemploymentgroup.co.uk





Clarity Video

Enterprise Oxfordshire offers an amazing level of support for new and well-established businesses. At Clarity Video, we produce corporate marketing video content designed to deliver real results for businesses. I started the business in 2002 while working in marketing and brand management, after recognising a gap in the market for a video producer who truly understood the needs of marketing professionals. My background gives me a strong understanding of client objectives and the role video plays within wider marketing strategies. Alongside this, my experience across theatre, radio, television, film, and publishing has shaped my approach to storytelling, ensuring every piece of content is both engaging and purposeful.

One of my main challenges has been clearly identifying and reaching my target market. Like many small businesses, refining the offer and ensuring it resonates with the right audience has been a key focus. The main ambition for Clarity Video is to grow our customer base.

Support from Enterprise Oxfordshire Business

Through Enterprise Oxfordshire, I accessed a range of in-person and online workshops, along with one-to-one mentoring from industry professionals. This support helped me better structure my business, refine my service offering, and understand how to attract the right clients. The mentoring was particularly valuable, giving me clear direction on how to position my services and bring them effectively to market. It has given me greater confidence and clarity in how I present and grow the business.

Next steps

Over the next six months, I'll be focusing on developing Clarity Video into a full video marketing agency.

We've introduced a new, comprehensive service that covers content strategy, production, distribution, and reporting for marketing campaigns. It's an exciting next step, and I'm looking forward to growing the business and supporting more clients with impactful video content.



Enterprise Oxfordshire offers an amazing level of support for new and well-established businesses.

clarityvideo.co.uk



SCAN ME



EL Healthcare Education

EL Healthcare Education designs and delivers innovative digital learning solutions for healthcare professionals and support staff. Founded in 2022 by a pharmacist and a learning technologist, the business combines clinical expertise, educational design and digital innovation to create engaging, evidence-based learning for NHS organisations, universities, professional bodies, charities and pharmaceutical companies.

Rapid growth has led to increasing demand and a growing portfolio of projects. As a small, founder-led business, balancing client delivery with strategic activities such as business development, marketing and product innovation has been a key challenge. The ambition is to grow sustainably by expanding the team, strengthening a network of specialist freelancers and creating greater capacity to develop new partnerships and commercialise digital learning products.

Support from Enterprise Oxfordshire Business

Participation in the Foundations to Growth Programme provided valuable time to step back from day-to-day operations and focus on the future of the business. The peer learning environment and expert facilitation helped identify barriers to growth, refine priorities and develop a clear, achievable action plan. This has given the business greater confidence and focus as it plans its next phase of growth.

Next steps

Over the next six months, EL Healthcare Education will continue expanding our client base while developing new digital learning products, including a mobile learning app to support workforce development in community pharmacy, with potential for wider use across healthcare. Alongside product development, the business will focus on protecting its intellectual property, growing its team and building the capacity needed to deliver long-term, sustainable growth.



The Foundations to Growth Programme gave me the opportunity to step away from the day-to-day demands of running a business and think more strategically. The combination of expert facilitation and learning alongside other business owners was incredibly valuable. The Monday morning sessions helped me start each week with a clear focus on my goals and gave me the confidence to turn ideas into a practical action plan for growth.

www.elhealthcareeducation.com



9. Skills, Leadership and Practical Change

Skills, leadership and practical change sit at the heart of Enterprise Oxfordshire's support model. Tailored advice, workshops and programmes are designed not just to inform, but to help founders and teams apply what they learn in ways that launch new products and services, adopt technologies, reach new markets and improve productivity. By the end of the year, 72% of businesses completing evaluation reported significant outcomes, including launching new offers, modernising systems and increasing efficiency.

A clear example of this practical focus is the response to sustainability and Net Zero. Triage data showed that nearly a third of engaged businesses did not have a sustainability policy or did not know where to start, exposing a major gap in an area that is strategically important for Oxfordshire and the UK. In response, Enterprise Oxfordshire delivered a series of webinars and workshops to help businesses understand carbon reduction, compliance and opportunity, including sessions that framed Net Zero as both a risk and a potential source of competitive advantage. Events were supported by local business leaders sharing real examples of how taking Net Zero seriously has improved their operations and long-term prospects.

Evaluation data shows how this kind of targeted support translates into change. Among the businesses that completed end-of-year surveys, 27% reported launching new products or services, 38% had adopted new technologies, systems or processes, and 32% had engaged with new markets or opportunities. A smaller but important proportion, 3%, improved their export capabilities, while almost half, 47%, reported gains in productivity or efficiency, indicating that support is helping firms to work smarter as well as grow.

Feedback from nearly 400 businesses reinforces this picture. Participants describe the support as practical, confidence-building and community-focused, with expert facilitators and advisers who make complex topics manageable and provide clear, actionable next steps. Businesses regularly say they intend to apply what they have learned, with 95% confirming they will put insights into practice and 97.5% stating they would recommend the support to others.

36



**BUSINESSES ADOPTED NEW
technologies, systems or processes**

97.5%



**STATED THEY WOULD RECOMMEND
THE SUPPORT TO OTHERS**

Many highlight the value of peer connections and a sense of not being “on their own”, alongside tailored one-to-one guidance that clarifies strategy, unlocks opportunities and strengthens belief that they can grow and thrive.



10. Connection, Confidence and Networks

Networking, peer support and group learning are central to Enterprise Oxfordshire's role in building a confident, connected business community. They help founders and teams access practical advice, share experience and reduce the isolation that many small businesses face. These activities act as economic enablers, creating the relationships, trust and visibility that underpin collaboration, resilience and growth.

OxBOoSt, the monthly Oxfordshire Business Opportunities and Support Network, remains a core part of this offer. Open to all Enterprise Oxfordshire clients, it provides regular opportunities to connect, collaborate and exchange ideas, mostly online with periodic in-person meetings. In 2025-26, 181 businesses took part, receiving – that often lead to referrals, partnerships and peer problem-solving.

Targeted networks extend this impact for specific groups. The Women in Business Gathering series has continued to thrive, offering an inspiring environment for female founders, leaders and entrepreneurs to build meaningful connections and hear from guest speakers. Over the year, five in-person events attracted 154 attendees in total, and a sold-out International Women's Day gathering in March 2026 brought together 95 businesses, delivered in partnership with local organisations. Feedback shows that participants value the mix of practical insight, role models and a supportive, women-led space.



Group learning programmes add further depth. The Foundations to Growth programme brings together start-up and early growth businesses to explore the fundamentals of scaling, gain new perspectives and change their way of thinking. In 2025–26, 21 businesses received 173.5 hours of support through this route, reporting new ideas, increased confidence and job creation. For more established firms, two Business Growth Peer Networks provided 151 hours of structured action learning to 20 businesses, helping safeguard 14 jobs by giving leaders time and space to tackle shared challenges with skilled facilitation.

Enterprise Oxfordshire also uses flagship events to showcase and strengthen the business community. The Marketplace and Celebration 2025 brought together more than 180 SMEs, with over 40 businesses exhibiting in a lively marketplace and an awards evening recognising outstanding achievements. This kind of celebration reinforces local pride, visibility and connection, while highlighting the diversity and strength of Oxfordshire's SME base.

Underlying all of this, regular communications help keep businesses informed and prepared. Between April 2025 and March 2026, around 13,000 text messages were sent to SMEs across the county, signposting support from Enterprise Oxfordshire and other sources on topics such as cyber threats, useful resources, events and severe weather. This consistent, practical contact supports resilience as well as connection, ensuring that businesses are not only linked into networks but also better equipped to respond to shocks.

11. Place Based High Street Support

The Oxfordshire High Street Support Programme, Helping High Streets, showed how place-based intelligence can inform both business support and public policy. It focused on businesses trading in traditional High Street locations across the county, from rural market towns to Oxford's city centre, combining expert local support in each district with webinars and online resources on themes such as innovation, diversification, digital skills, customer experience and business resilience.

Over the delivery period, 115 eligible Oxfordshire businesses registered for the programme, with 79 actively engaging and 59 completing a diagnostic. The innovative diagnostic tool gathered detailed insight into each business's strengths and priority areas for improvement. Results showed strong scores for Innovation and Diversification, with most businesses rating themselves highly for trying new ideas and reviewing what works, but lower scores for Business Resilience, where many did not yet have continuity plans or sufficient cash reserves. Each business completing the diagnostic received a tailored Boost Plan based on this analysis, helping them focus on the most important next steps.

Businesses accessing the programme came from all five districts, demonstrating both Enterprise Oxfordshire's reach and the value of a consistent county-wide offer.

Hundreds of hours of direct support were delivered, ranging from one-to-one advice to group sessions and self-guided materials that businesses could work through in their own time.

District Council	Number of Businesses participating
South Oxfordshire	32
Vale of White Horse	27
Oxford City	24
West Oxfordshire	18
Cherwell	14



Helping more high street businesses in Oxfordshire ...

@enterpriseoxfordshirebusiness

The programme culminated in a High Street Summit at Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot, where High Street businesses and partners from across Oxfordshire came together to share insight, identify opportunities and agree actions to strengthen High Streets over the longer term.

Taken together, Helping High Streets has shown that Oxfordshire's High Street businesses are innovative, values-driven and willing to invest in their places when given the right support, and that structured, place-based insight can help shape both frontline business support and wider policy decisions about town centres and local economies.



12. What High Streets Are Telling Us

Oxfordshire's High Streets painted a surprisingly consistent picture: strong innovation and customer experience, with structural vulnerabilities around resilience, place branding and trading conditions.



Helping the high streets of Oxfordshire



Key strengths we heard and saw:

- **Innovation and diversification:** This was the standout strength. Across 59 businesses, Innovation & Diversification scored an average of 4.3 out of 5, with 92% rating themselves 4 or 5 for trying new ideas and reviewing what works.
- **Customer experience:** Ninety per cent reported that they "mostly" or "always" offer something unique that attracts repeat customers, and 71% rated their premises as accessible and welcoming.
- **Digital basics:** Eighty three per cent reported an up to date website or social media presence, and 88% felt confident using basic digital tools such as email, spreadsheets and online forms.
- **Sustainability and community engagement:** Many businesses are already reducing waste, promoting local suppliers and taking part in community events, with some scoring at the very top of the scale for these actions.

However, there were shared vulnerabilities that individual shops simply cannot solve alone:

- **Business resilience:** Average resilience scored 3.3 out of 5; 44% of businesses scored 3 or below for having a simple continuity plan or being able to cover three months of costs if income drops.
- **Place branding and partnerships:** Only 20% felt part of wider High Street promotions or joint branding efforts, meaning strong individual stories are not yet amplified at town centre level.
- **Trading conditions:** Businesses most often cited rising running costs (47%), footfall, demand and customer spend (39%), parking/access/location issues (24%), competition from online and out of town centres (19%) and staffing/capacity (24%) as their key challenges.

13. Targeted District Programmes

Enterprise Oxfordshire's county-wide model is strengthened by targeted place-based partnerships that respond to local priorities while maintaining consistency of offer. West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District Councils chose to invest part of their UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocations in Enterprise Oxfordshire to deliver a dedicated start-up programme and a business accelerator, aligning national funding with local delivery and county-wide expertise. This approach has enabled more tailored support for residents and businesses in these districts, while still connecting them into the wider Oxfordshire ecosystem.

The Business Spark programme helped residents in West Oxfordshire and Cherwell to start successful businesses and move closer to self-employment. It supported people who were not in work to explore whether starting a business was right for them, residents with a strong idea or passion they wanted to turn into a venture, and very early-stage businesses that were not yet trading. The programme was deliberately designed to be engaging and encouraging as well as challenging, giving participants the information, guidance and confidence they needed to test ideas, secure first customers and plan for growth.

Feedback from participants highlights the value of this approach, with people reporting that the programme removed barriers to entrepreneurship, built belief that they could succeed and created a supportive peer network. Many described the advice as highly practical, especially around marketing and sales, and said they would recommend the programme to others considering starting a business. In total, Business Spark supported 42 entrepreneurs, exceeding its target of 30 and demonstrating strong local demand.

Complementing this early-stage focus, the **Business Accelerator Programme** concentrated expertise and support on small businesses with significant growth potential. It provided account management and advice to connect each business with the right mix of support, alongside workshops and masterclasses on business, innovation and growth topics. A leadership development strand for senior managers, facilitated peer-to-peer learning and expert one-to-one support on productivity, innovation and growth helped participating businesses tackle strategic and operational challenges.

Through this combination of structured and bespoke support, businesses received between 6 and 20 hours of targeted help, focused on improving productivity, driving innovation and creating jobs. The programme also connected participants to funding routes and wider networking opportunities, helping to unlock growth that might otherwise have been constrained. The Business Accelerator supported 72 businesses against a target of 50, again surpassing expectations and underlining the benefits of aligning local SPF investment with Enterprise Oxfordshire's established growth support model.



How connections and meeting likeminded people is key to starting or growing your business

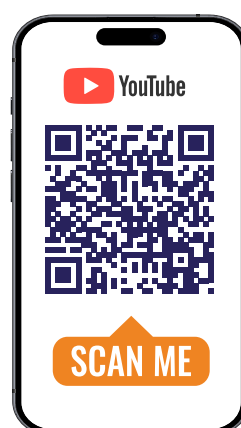
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14. Social Value and Economic Impact

Enterprise Oxfordshire's business support programme is delivering measurable economic outcomes for Oxfordshire, while also creating wider social and environmental value. In 2025/26, supported businesses reported 211 jobs created and 878 jobs safeguarded, reflecting both new opportunities and protection of existing livelihoods. Alongside this, 591 business recovery plans were developed, and 2,356 referrals were made into wider local, regional and national support, ensuring that businesses could access the full range of help available rather than working in isolation.

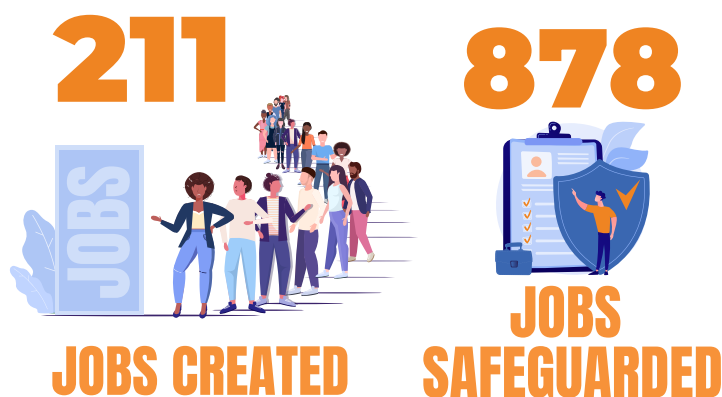
These hard outcomes sit within a broader vision: to secure social, economic and environmental benefits by supporting Oxfordshire SMEs to thrive and grow. Social value in this context means the positive impact created beyond core service delivery. It includes increasing access to support for entrepreneurs and under-represented groups, helping SMEs to provide good-quality local jobs, and enabling businesses to adopt more sustainable and innovative practices. The programme's strategy ensures that social value is embedded across all facets of delivery so that economic, social and environmental outcomes are pursued together rather than in isolation.

Using the TOMS framework, the total estimated social value generated through the programme is £45,672,739.51.

This estimate captures the wider public benefit of activities such as helping local people into employment or to retain good jobs, enabling SMEs to invest in productivity and innovation, and providing thousands of hours of expert support that most small businesses could not otherwise afford. The value of strengthened local supply chains, increased leadership capacity within SMEs and the contribution of digital and blended delivery models that reduce travel, save time and cut carbon, would all be in addition to this figure.



Measure	No delivered	Proxy Value	Social Value
Local people employed or retained	1089	£41,528.75	£45,224,808.75
Expert support to SME's (hours)	3761.5	£106.34	£399,997.91
Spend with local SME's	£60,000	£0.80	£47,932.85
Total Social Value delivered			£45,672,739.51



Taken together, these results show that Enterprise Oxfordshire's support is delivering significant value for the county. Businesses are more resilient, more productive and better connected; residents have improved access to enterprise opportunities and quality employment; and the local economy is better placed to adapt to social, technological and environmental change. This combination of hard economic outcomes and wider social value makes a strong case for continued investment in coordinated, county-wide business support.

15. What Stakeholders Should Take From This

Several strategic messages emerge for Oxfordshire County Council, district councils, government and delivery partners.

First, demand for business support is sustained and county-wide, with 1710 businesses engaged from across all districts during the year. This shows that coordinated support remains necessary across Oxfordshire's economy, not only for start-ups or particular sectors, but for businesses of different sizes, stages and models.

Second, support works best when it remains diagnostic-led, flexible and grounded in the real conditions businesses are facing. SMEs need practical help that responds to live issues such as customers, finance, resilience, leadership, technology and regulation, rather than fixed or overly standardised offers. That applies equally to profit-driven SMEs, social enterprises, charities, cooperatives and other not-for-profit models, all of which contribute to jobs, local spending, stronger communities and wider public value. Social value should not be treated as something delivered only by specialist mission-led organisations. It is also created every day by commercial SMEs that employ local people, trade responsibly, strengthen supply chains and reinvest in Oxfordshire's economy.

Third, place matters. The Helping High Streets programme shows that Oxfordshire's High Street businesses have strong capacity and appetite to innovate, diversify and contribute to their places, but it also highlights shared vulnerabilities around resilience, branding, footfall and the wider conditions that shape trading performance. These are not issues that individual businesses can solve alone. They require coordinated action between business support providers, councils and other partners, with business insight feeding more directly into decisions about transport, planning, town-centre management and public realm.



Finally, the evidence suggests that relatively modest, well-targeted investment can unlock wider economic and social benefit. The strongest results come from combining triage, one-to-one support, group learning, mentoring, referrals and place-based collaboration into a connected system that helps businesses navigate the right route at the right time. For stakeholders, the implication is clear: maintain a county-wide core offer, strengthen local partnerships where tailored delivery adds value, and continue to invest in support that is inclusive, practical and adaptable. This is how Oxfordshire can back the full breadth of its business base, from High Street independents to innovation-led SMEs, and from profit-making firms to purpose-driven enterprises, so that all can thrive and contribute to shared prosperity.



16 Looking Ahead

For 2026/27 we have introduced our new **Growth Pathways programme**, a refreshed approach to business support that has been designed to provide targeted, proportionate, and impactful support for businesses across Oxfordshire. The new framework creates clear and accessible pathways for businesses at different stages of growth, combining scalable one-to-many support with tailored specialist guidance, sector-focused interventions, and expert 1:1 support.

The programme has been developed to improve business productivity, resilience, and long-term sustainability while delivering against Enterprise Oxfordshire and Department for Business and Trade (DBT) priorities. Central to the model is a relationship-led approach, ensuring businesses are supported by advisers who understand their challenges, ambitions, and opportunities for growth.

The Pathways model supports businesses at every stage of development, from early-stage start-ups requiring core business guidance through to established businesses seeking support with leadership, innovation, investment readiness, AI and digital adoption, exporting, and access to finance.



The 'Helping High Streets' support has been extended to provide a bespoke offer for this priority client base. The programme also includes dedicated cross-pathway support for social enterprises, CICs, cooperatives, and mutuals, supporting ambitions to strengthen community wealth and inclusive economic growth.

When established, growing and scale up businesses complete the Business Support Tool, they are being given the option to also complete a short, but powerful diagnostic which provides a more detailed insight to inform their 'Unlocking Growth Support Plan'. The Unlocking Growth Support Plan's are very specific to their business and circumstances, so they are an even more powerful tool to help them to achieve their business ambitions.

We are also creating a new interactive "Landscape of Business Support" for Oxfordshire, embedded into the Enterprise Oxfordshire website, which will show major public and private support offers and can be embedded via iFrame on partner websites. 38% of clients find Enterprise Oxfordshire support through browser search. This new tool will increase that and act as a lead magnet, highlighting the Growth Hub whenever businesses search for help.



Enterprise Oxfordshire is an important part of Oxfordshire's economic infrastructure, helping businesses across the county to start, grow and thrive while strengthening local places, communities and supply chains. Through the Growth Pathways programme and wider delivery, this work continues to generate measurable economic impact while maintaining a personalised, relationship-led approach to business support.



Why engaging Enterprise Oxfordshire support is critical to your business journey



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Early engagement in 2026/27 is already showing increased demand for support, reinforcing the essential role Enterprise Oxfordshire plays in connecting businesses to the guidance, expertise and opportunities they need to succeed. As this demand grows, Enterprise Oxfordshire will continue to evolve its offer, ensuring it remains responsive, accessible and aligned to the county's economic priorities, and able to support businesses to navigate change, unlock growth and contribute to a more resilient and inclusive Oxfordshire economy.

Authors:

Ant Parsons
Liz O'Hara
Lesley Parsons

Enterprise Oxfordshire

Enterprise Oxfordshire, County Hall,
New Road, Oxford, OX1 1AY

business@enterpriseoxfordshire.com
0345 241 1196

enterpriseoxfordshirebusiness.com



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Enterprise Oxfordshire

Enterprise Oxfordshire, County Hall,
New Road, Oxford, OX1 1AY

business@enterpriseoxfordshire.com

0345 241 1196

enterpriseoxfordshirebusiness.com

