

AT A GLANCE

| **Business Support across the WMCA Region**
(28th February 2024, in-person SWEDA Sandwell)

Please see below the one-page summary of notes from the February 2024 Social Economy FORUM meeting focused on Accessing Business Support in the WMCA Region.

1. **Navigating business support** in the West Midlands is complex and requires a deep understanding of direct business support programmes available and indirect through specialist agencies. It also requires the social economy organisation to understand what they need and what stage they are in their development.
2. **Statistics** – what does the social economy look like in the WMCA.
 - 11,000 organisations (WM Region*).
 - 30,000 employees.
 - 70,000 volunteers.
 - 150,000 beneficiaries (quarter of a million people).
 - £3.5 billion GVA p.a.
 - Birmingham has the most SE's per head of population followed by Wolverhampton, Coventry, Sandwell and Walsall (broadly the same) and finally Dudley.
 - Education and health and social care are the largest sectors for social economy organisations.
 - The majority of social economy organisations in the region have a turnover of less than £250,000, however, there is a substantial number turning over more than £1 million per year.
 - Data shows that the largest number of SE businesses are between 1 year and 5 years old, however, again there is a substantial number that is more than 10 years old.

*Source SEUK - WM geographic region. * c7,395 in WMCA area. (CLES)*

3. **Business support contracts with WMCA** (recently commissioned):
 - **Start** £15,000 to £50,000 p.a. Grant of £2000 per participant. Delivered by Enterprise Nation in partnership with BECleaps (aka Birmingham Enterprise Community) x 42 organisations.
 - **Build** £50,000 to £100,000 p.a. Grant of up to £5,000 per participant. Delivered by Locality x 20 organisations.
 - **Grow** £100,000 to £500,000. Grant of up to £10,000 per participant. Delivered by Aston University/Business School x 42 organisations.
 - **Accelerate** £500,000+ p.a. Grant of up to £20,000 per participant. Delivered by Aston University/Business School.

All of the above get one-to-one coaching, mentoring and support from the School for Social Entrepreneurs x 15 organisations.

Plus investment and procurement readiness programme. Delivered by Enterprise Nation in partnership with BECleaps (aka Birmingham Enterprise Community). Recruitment for this begins in March 2024. In total 160 organisations will be supported.

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Other new WMCA social economy growth activities include:

- Procurement Workshops & Process Changes,
- Social Value policy & application,
- Building a WM Social Investment Fund,
- Sector Data & Mapping,
- Online SE Directory,
- Ongoing business (training) support,
- Good Business Conference (Autumn 2024),
- Social Economy Drive 2024,
- School & College Career Sessions,
- More place-based investments.

There are also a series of mainstream business support programmes which welcome trading social economy organisations eg. net zero, investment programmes, incubator support and premises, Local Authority support and national government programmes, Universities and national support organisations eg Locality or SEUK. Government grant finder website - [Find a grant](#).

4. Place based 'clusters'

7 locations have been funded by WMCA plus 2 funded by Power to Change.

The locations are: Birmingham (x3), Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Each Cluster has had an investment of £50,000 to support its development and forming of their local network. A lead organisation in each cluster will bring together social economy, citizens and other stakeholders to develop an [Action for Growth & Investment Plan](#) to create circular, sustainable local economies.

5. **Mapping business support in the region:** those attending the Social Economy FORUM spent a very productive time considering their perspectives from both using business support and delivering business support.

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Gaps in current provision were identified as:

- High quality governance support and access to a bank of possible directors.
- Access to support post start up to take an organisation to the next stage.
- A map to help navigate what's available.
- Access to procurement support and Meet The Buyer especially for new starts.
- Access to a skilled workforce or shared staff.
- Support for relationship building.
- Understanding social investment.

NEXT: Social Economy FORUM for March 2024 as follows...

- **FORUM 6: People and skills to support of the growth of the social economy |**
20th March 2024, 11.00am to 1.00pm (in-person, Solihull)

[REGISTER TO ATTEND HERE](#) – Book me to attend the March FORUM session please!