

**OXFORD CITY COUNCIL
APPLICATION TO LGA ECONOMIC GROWTH ADVISER PROGRAMME**

1. PROJECT

Category	Business Engagement, Creation and Retention
Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish effective relationship account management with key businesses in growth sectors, working with the LEP and other agencies• Create a representative group for the business community in the city ('Oxford Voice') building an effective liaison with the wider business community.

This project comprises two key elements which are taken from the Oxford Strategic Partnership Economic Growth Strategy (2013). Both elements are vitally important aspects of the implementation of Oxford's Economic Growth Strategy and have the potential to deliver economic growth by supporting existing businesses. It will provide the opportunity for businesses within the city to speak with a single voice on the implementation of the Economic Growth Strategy. Where barriers to growth are identified, such as infrastructure, land and housing provision, the new group can speak from first-hand experience where the priorities for the City should lie and make their views known to the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Relationship Account Management Strategy and System

The project will establish an account management system and strategy to identify and manage relationships with the key businesses and their organisations in Oxford. This will also allow us to engage different businesses effectively using media, fora and bi-laterals tailored to engage a diverse business community. We can also target key sectors and clusters efficiently as well as ensuring individual concerns of companies are heard and positively responded to. This will be important in shaping policy, disseminating information and opportunities, and building support for investment and growth.

This process will help develop meaningful relationships between the City Council and the Directors / CEO's from the private sector and open new lines of communication between the public, private and third sectors. This project does offer a real opportunity to work with the business community in a positive way through effective dialogue. Importantly, it offers an opportunity to develop best practice for Councils which have a dynamic and diverse economy based on SMEs (Small and medium Sized Enterprises) which are often difficult to engage.

Creating a Representative Group for the Business Community (Oxford Voice)

Oxford has a diverse range of businesses ranging from international and FTSE organisations such as Centrica and BMW, to retailing and professional services and new businesses spinning out from our dynamic research. Whilst there are established business associations, such as the local Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses and professional services (Pro-Oxford), in practice they are relatively fragmented and weak. A practical consequence has been that it is difficult to get the business sector to engage effectively with the LEP, and articulate leadership. There are now also

emerging new business networks and fora, which are attracting the more dynamic businesses. This has direct linkages with the key account management framework.

We want to develop an effective framework which represents the business community, which is responsive and engaged, but also efficient and 'light touch'. We do not wish to duplicate or undermine existing institutions and representative networks. However, as currently constituted such organisations do not have widespread membership and their capacity is limited, when engaging in strategic, as well as practical issues.

2. CONTEXT

The Oxford Strategic Partnership appointed consultants, Shared Intelligence, to work with partners, key stakeholders and businesses to prepare an Economic Growth Strategy for Oxford and the local area. A narrative setting out the strengths and weaknesses of the local economy was developed with partners through workshops and discussion to provide the evidence base from which the strategy emerged. The economic vision for Oxford recognises its role as one of the most prosperous, resilient, diverse and globally competitive knowledge-based economies in the UK and its aim to attract and support investors serving global markets whilst promoting economic growth and establishing Oxford as a truly sustainable city.

There are 11 main elements of the economic growth strategy that need to be undertaken to realise this vision for Oxford. Oxford's stakeholders – working together through the Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP) with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Local Authorities Strategic Planning and Infrastructure (SPIP) will need to consider how best to undertake the actions necessary to deliver the strategy. The City Council as the lead authority within the OSP are committed to taking forward the implementation of these recommendations through the development of an Action Plan. The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, who is also the Leader of the City Council, Cllr. Bob Price, together with David Edwards Director of Housing and Regeneration identify the Economic Growth Strategy to be a corporate priority.

The second recommendation is as follows: *“Supporting the growth of existing employers including large, global companies, high value small and medium sized enterprise, the universities and the health care sector”*.

In seeking to support existing businesses within the City two key actions have been identified:

- Firstly the need to create a representative group from local businesses within the private sector to act as the 'voice for Oxford.'
- Secondly to set up an account management function for key business clients on business growth and retention of those businesses who are supportive and build an effective liaison with the wider business community using existing arrangements to avoid duplication.

3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES DELIVERED

Relationship Account Management Strategy and System

- To map business accommodation by type, sector, number of employees, turnover and importance to the Oxford economy to create a new list of the Top 100 companies in Oxford together with a key contacts in Senior Management for each company.

- To develop an engagement strategy, which may be tailored to key sectors, businesses and organisations.
- To support this with regular dialogue through a range of media as well as meetings with key businesses, individuals and clusters. This would be supported by a pool of senior managers as relationship managers.
- To establish an active engagement with the business community and provide an important two-way channel of communication between the public and the private sector.
- To identify, recruit and build relationships with business champions to provide informed knowledge and intelligence on key sectors in Oxford.
- To provide an opportunity for the City Council to work with business leaders to understand their future needs and to seek wherever possible to meet them.

Creating a Representative Group for the Business Community (Oxford Voice)

- To use the knowledge and commercial intelligence of the Oxford businesses community to create an 'Oxford Voice'. This group would be used as a principal channel of communication between the public sector and business. The group will include the Leader of the Council together with the Director of Housing and Regeneration; the Head of City Development together with a selection of key members of the business community who are willing to engage on key issues around Oxford's Economic Growth Strategy and in particular the delivery of actions to implement the strategy.
- The City would benefit from the creation of a group of leaders and experts in the business community which could provide a single business voice for Oxford.
- Promote greater open active engagement with the wider business community in Oxford and help to foster more partnership working between the City and business.
- The Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP) which has a good range of key stakeholders and local organisations, but lacks significant representation from the business community. The addition of more representatives from existing companies based in or adjacent to the city, through the creation of an 'Oxford Voice' will offer the opportunity of recruiting some new people to the OSP. Additional representatives from SME's in Oxford would be welcome.
- The City Council has established a group of key stakeholders to oversee the implementation of the Economic Growth Strategy. This group provides limited business representation, and needs to be developed into an 'Oxford Voice'.
- Oxford, with Bicester and Science Vale, is one of the three principal areas of economic growth within the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The other two locations have a strong business voice representing their interests and lobbying for funding and support. The City needs a similar strong representation if it is to drive forward the economic growth, which it has shown it can generate.

4. ADDED VALUE

- The project would benefit significantly from the advisors' knowledge and intelligence on best practice and advice on Local Authorities developing key account management and engagement strategies for economic growth and working with local businesses
- The Council wishes to benefit from the latest practice and developments in engagement strategies for a diverse range of businesses and sectors.
- The Council wishes to benefit from best practice and success in establishing business sector representation and managing relationships with the business community.
- The Council wishes to understand how successful LEPs are identifying and developing business champions, and how representatives of the business community are encouraged and supported to become active partners with local government and LEPs.

- The advisors could use their independent role to help broker relationships with the business community to form the 'Oxford Voice'

5. TIMESCALE AND DELIVERY

- The City Council is working with the Oxford Strategic Partnership to take forward the implementation of the Economic Growth Strategy, so would wish to meet and work with the Panel of Advisors at the earliest opportunity;
- It would be useful at the outset to set up an inception meeting with the Panel of Advisors together with the Director of Housing and Regeneration; Head of City Development; Spatial Planning and Economic Development Manager; and the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development Cllr. Bob Price, who is also the Leader of the Council to explain the background to the project. This will provide an opportunity to set out the information already available, progress made so far and the tools at our disposal. This will ensure that the time spent by the Advisors can focus on adding real value through their expertise and knowledge to add value to this project.
- From this inception meeting the Panel and the City Council can work up a project plan for the allocation of the 14 days that will make the best use of the time available. Whether, subject to the availability of the Panel, time is concentrated say in the form of blocks of continuous time /days to realise the greatest benefits.
- The City Council would make Senior Managers, the Economic Development Portfolio Holder and members of the Economic Development Team available on a regular basis ideally at the beginning and end of each session. This will allow any actions that need to be taken forward by the Team to be carried out and reported back to the Panel.
- The Economic Development Team would make arrangements for any workshops; 'brainstorming groups' and or meetings with particular companies and organisations that the Panel felt would be helpful in taking the two elements of the project forward. For example the City Council together with the County Council regularly hold Business Breakfast events, and have two planned for later in the year in September and November, which could provide an opportunity to engage with the business community and put forward ideas for discussion.

6. LEARNING TRANSFER

The City Council would be willing to:

- Prepare a summary best practise advice note on the development of the Oxford's Economic Growth Strategy and its practical implementation. Then to explain in detail this particular project and the benefits derived from the Advisors support and how with their assistance given to the project it's successful completion was ensured;
- Provide a presentation to a national LGA organised event on Oxford's Economic Growth Strategy and in particular the implementation of this action;
- Disseminate information to research organisations, such as the newly formed 'What works centre for Local Economic Growth'. Funded by Economic Social Research Council; BIS and DCLG. The Centre is a collaboration between LSE, the Centre for Cities and Arup.
- Provide a presentation to Planning Advisory Service (PAS) about the overall important relationship between planning and economic development in driving economic growth and in particular the role of this project in implementing a key element of Oxford EGS.