

## Marches Growth Hub Shropshire

### Update of ARG funded projects for Business Support

#### ARG Core

##### Description

To support business during the 'Restart and Recovery' phase of COVID 19 the programme helped start-ups, early stage and growth businesses to access general business advice and support through business 121 sessions and various topical business webinars and events.

##### Funding and Spend

- Allocated £35,600
- Spend £35,600
- **Still have 34 hours left to deliver from funding for 2022-2023 as 03 October.**
- All events now delivered for first quarter from funding.

##### Outputs/Outcomes so far

- Business 121 support – **132 businesses**
- Hours of support - **278 hours**
- Number of Conferences – **1 - International Women's Day (f2f)**
- Number of Attendees at Conference – **80**
- Number of events – **25 (of which 2 were f2f)**
- Number of attendees - **594**

##### Successes

- Geographical reach far wider due to webinars being more accessible
- The generalist 121 support acted as a filter for the 12 hours specialist support offering.
- Reached out and able to work with new trainers and deliver a more niche offering where appropriate.
- PR links below.
- [Internet council star Jackie Weaver set for Marches celebration of women in business](#)

##### Learns

- Deliver a suite of webinars/events rather than a one-off scattergun approach.



## ARG Core – Business Boost Programme

### Description

A suite of webinars has been developed to aid businesses with their learning and development which can be accessed offline through the Invest in Shropshire website. This follows feedback from Retail and Tourism sectors and will allow the businesses to access a series of webinars covering different business disciplines at the time and place of their choice and not when we are running them in real time. This was launched on 31 March 2022 and is a legacy for the SC Economic Recovery Funds. We currently have around 70 webinars available for access.

<https://www.investinshropshire.co.uk/expand-grow-in-shropshire/business-support/>

Interview launching it on SBLTV. View Link: <https://vimeo.com/694442415/caeaae92c5>

### Firms to be given Business Boost thanks to new online platform



### Funding and Spend

- Allocated £25,000
- Spend £25,000

### Outputs/Outcomes

- Created a Business Boost offline platform for learning and upskilling
- Over 70 webinars available, covering everything from Start-up to growth, health and wellbeing to sales and marketing.
- Covers 10 key discipline areas.
- Worked with over 20 local trainers and mentors to deliver this programme
- At the end of August 579 businesses has watched 1698 webinars.

### Successes

- The programme has been recognised and picked up by other LEPs and Growth Hubs, who are looking at something similar and talking with Yarrington.
- Launched live and interviewed on SBLTV.
- Integrated as part of Shropshire Council's Leap into Learning.
- Forms part of the SBLTV Knowledge Portal.
- Promoted widely by key stakeholders and intermediaries.

## ARG Specialist Support

### Description

Working with a team of 17 expert advisers and consultants to provide detailed free intensive 12 hours support to help our Shropshire businesses to grow and prosper as the county recovers from the impact of the Covid pandemic. The Hub offers unparalleled support and our advisers bring expertise and knowledge across the full range of business issues from access to finance, sales and marketing to HR and Health and Safety concerns and more.

### Funding and Spend

- Allocated £124,400
- Spend £124,400
- **Still have 36 hours left to deliver from funding for 2022-2023 as 03 October. This equates to 3 businesses that have been allocated but not finished.**

### Outputs/Outcomes

- Business 12 hours 121 support – **86 businesses**
- Hours of support - **1032 hours**
- **Final 3 businesses have been allocated**
- **Final hours to deliver - 36 hours**
- **Sales – 4 businesses**
- **Finance – 14 businesses**
- **Strategy and Growth – 15 businesses**
- **Marketing and digital marketing – 40 businesses**
- **HR – 6 businesses**
- **Social Enterprise support – 4 businesses**
- **Health and Safety – 3 businesses**
- **Final 3 allocated to Digital Marketing**
- Worked with **17** specialist advisers/mentors offering the specialist support

### Successes

- Reached more medium and large-scale businesses due to working with a variety of business advisers and consultants
- Reached businesses that had never engaged with the Growth Hub
- Supported businesses from the whole county and was able to address any cold spots we originally had
- Increased visibility and credibility of the Growth Hub due to the professional and comprehensive offering.
- Have numerous testimonials if required.
- The businesses supported also engaged in our events/webinar programme and accessed various ERDF funding.
- Also gained COVID 19 impact data for reporting.
- Gained extra funding due to success and demand.

### Learns

- Underestimated demand for the programme

## ARG Digital Hub

### Description

The Digital Hub hosted a range of programmes which were centred on the 'Digital Revolution' and adopting new technologies in response to COVID 19. This was through various webinar programmes, 15 hours specialist support for addressing cyber security and attaining Cyber Essentials certification, 12 hours specialist support on adopting digital technologies and improving your digital presence as a business. Also, the delivery of a highly successful Tech Severn two-day Conference in June and working with Media Insiders to include a Podcast opportunity for 10 businesses to be showcased and released in the media sphere. This was called **Marching On!** We looked at businesses that had either been 'Born out of COVID 19' or 'Grown your way out of COVID 19'.

### Funding and Spend

- Allocated – £180,000
- Spend - £180,000

### Outputs/Outcomes

- **809** businesses logged onto Tech Severn Conference over the two days in June 2021.
- **16** businesses attained the Cyber Essentials and **1** business the Cyber Essentials Plus as part of the programme.
- **10** businesses benefitted from the podcast programme.
- The podcasts are now all live on the MGH website at <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/growth-hub-podcasts/>
- Business 12/15 hours 121 support – **109 businesses**
- Hours of support - **1560 hours**
- **Finance** – **1** business
- **Marketing and digital marketing** – **78** businesses
- **HR** – **3** businesses
- **Social Enterprise support** – **2** businesses
- **Health and Safety** – **2** businesses
- **Cyber Security and GDPR** – **23** businesses
- Worked with **17** specialist advisers/mentors offering the specialist support
- Number of Conferences – **1** – **Tech Severn (2 days)**
- Number of Attendees at 2 day virtual Conference – **809**
- Number of events – **88 (of which 27 f2f)**
- Number of attendees – **1645 (of which 317 attended f2f)**

### Successes

- Reached more medium and large-scale businesses due to working with a variety of business advisers and consultants
- Reached businesses that had never engaged with the Growth Hub
- Supported businesses from the whole county and was able to address any cold spots we originally had
- Increased visibility and credibility of the Growth Hub due to the professional and comprehensive offering.

- Have numerous testimonials if required.
- The businesses supported also engaged in our events/webinar programme and accessed various ERDF funding.
- Also gained COVID 19 impact data for reporting.
- The Marching On Podcast series is a great legacy from ARG funds and opportunity to share our Shropshire successes across all media channels.
- 17 businesses were able to attain their Cyber Essentials accreditation strengthening their business and credibility.
- Received extra funding due to demand and success of the project.
- [Friday Hub takes to the road as success grows](#)
- [Back by popular demand! Free business-boosting webinars will help you hit new heights](#)
- [Tech Severn 2021 to focus on how technology can help tackle climate change](#)
- [Supercharge your business with free digital webinars](#)
- <https://www.shropshirelive.com/business/2021/06/25/shropshire-climate-conference-hailed-a-huge-success/>
- [Back by popular demand! Free business-boosting webinars will help you hit new heights](#)

### Learns

- Underestimated demand for the programme
- Deliver a suite of webinars/events rather than a one-off scattergun approach.

## ARG Silverpreneurs

### Description

The Silverpreneurs® programme has been exclusively created to inspire and empower the over 50's, who are wanting to start up their own business or grow their micro or small business as part of a fun and collaborative business community. Silverpreneurs® is more than just a place to find business support, it's a space for like-minded people who want to show just how good life is after 50! The programme includes three months of support delivered through a combination of 1-2-1 and group sessions where you can learn, grow and share your unique skills and experience with the group. The Silver Experts will share their business knowledge, experience and networks with you, whilst the community of Silverpreneurs® will be there to share the highs and lows of running a business, supporting and celebrating with each other along the way.

### Funding and Spend

- Allocated - £71,000
- Spend - £71,000

### Outputs/Outcomes

- Delivered **three** cohorts
- 45 registered for the programme –**42** completed the programme which was **100%** target achieved.
- Businesses came from **24 different sectors**
- **40% male, 60% female**
- All businesses were from a **15 mile radius** of Shrewsbury Town Centre as the central point.
- **1 Alumni event = 29** businesses

- 4 virtual webinars = 49 businesses
- 1 Networking event and Expo (face 2 face) = 30 businesses.

### Successes

- Due to demand a third cohort was added to the programme
- Created a Silverpreneurs Alumni so the group keep in touch and the first Alumni Networking Event took place in Oswestry on 30 March with further ones arranged.
- <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/business/2021/10/08/silverpreneurs-set-up-new-businesses/>
- <https://vimeo.com/yarrington/download/639482057/9073ec185c> Media interview re Silverpreneurs programme (SBLTV)
- [Shropshire's silver entrepreneurs offered exclusive business support programme](#)
- Evaluation Report completed.

### Learns

- Develop a digitalised registration process to streamline the process and reduce admin
- Strengthen the criteria for the enrolment process
- Greater opportunities for interaction and sharing amongst the Silverpreneurs. COVID restrictions made this difficult.
- Build a larger 'Silver experts' team to support businesses.
- Further development of the Silverpreneur Alumni.



### ARG Spark Social

#### Description

Developed and delivered a Social Enterprise Conference for 2022. The Conference was centred on celebrating everything Social in Shropshire, especially given we have Social Enterprise Place status, and CSR amongst the private sector 'Purpose to Profit' and how we build that bridge between the Private Sector and Social Enterprises. This was followed up with a series of workshops to underpin the learning from the conference.

#### Funding and Spend

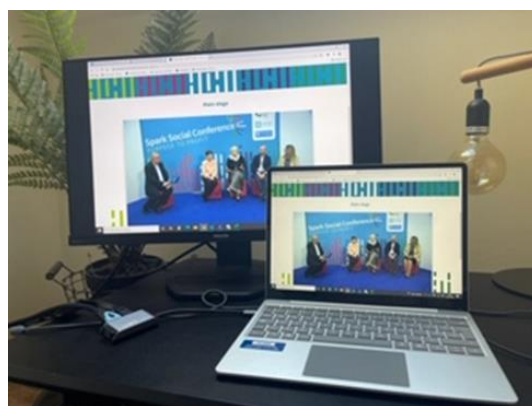
- Allocated - £20,000
- Spend - £20,000

## Outputs/Outcomes

- The conference took place on **17 February from 10 – 1.30p.m.** and was delivered virtually through Yarrington who had a purpose-built studio and virtual platform to host the event, with Spark Social branding.
- **The Spark Social Conference was a great success and 148 businesses and individuals joined us virtually on the day.**
- Delivered **3** follow on webinars to support the conference, appetite and momentum gained.
- **45 businesses** attended the follow-on webinars centred on CSR, collaboration and partnerships.
- **Worked with many businesses and social enterprises across the county whom took part in the Conference.**
- The Conference will be available to watch offline for 1 year.

## Successes

- Testimonials and feedback available.
- AICO are working with two social enterprises since the Conference
- PEGS have also had meetings with two other social enterprises to share best practise.
- Social Telecoms have awarded Social Heart CIC a £20k.
- Created a noise in the social enterprise 'space'.
- Created a benchmark and platform to develop a social enterprise programme for submission for UKSPF.
- Large amount of PR – see links below.
- [Spark Social Conference is almost here](#)
- [Former Shropshire business of the year added to Spark Social line-up](#)
- [UK Social Enterprise expert to open Shropshire conference - Marches Growth Hub](#)
- [Prioritising social and environmental value key to business success in 2022](#)
- How to boost your business's CSR & social value  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/how-to-boost-your-businesss-csr-social-value-tickets-256896734047>
- Promoting your CSR activities – marketing with purpose  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/promoting-your-csr-activities-marketing-with-purpose-tickets-256938298367>
- Building mutually beneficial partnerships between SMEs & social enterprises  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/building-mutually-beneficial-partnerships-between-smes-social-enterprises-tickets-257849222967>



## ARG Start Up Shropshire

### Description

Providing fully funded help and mentoring for anyone in Shropshire who is starting or planning to start a new business.

The programme consists of 8 weekly masterclasses and includes mentoring meetings to meet individual needs. Seasoned, expert coaches are in place who have trodden the same path and will also introduce you to wider offerings as part of the programme.

The 8 modules cover every aspect of starting a business: Setting goals & milestones - Understanding your customers - Marketing Strategy - Creating demand - Pricing Strategy - Finance & accounting - Time management – Good relationships - Legal obligations – Creating resilience & sustainability – Structure

### Funding and Spend

- Allocated - £50,000
- Spend - £50,000
- Programme will finish in December 2022

### Outputs/Outcomes

- **76 individuals will be supported to start a new venture**
- **48** currently registered
- **31 of the 48** completed the programme

### Successes

- This funding was made available as Shropshire achieved the existing ERDF Step up to Start programme 18 months early due to demand and the vibrancy of start-ups in Shropshire.
- This programme has helped feed into an application for UKSPF and also a Start Up Grant element.
- **More to report on as the programme progresses.**
- SHROP COUNCIL – Book place <https://bit.ly/ShropStartUpMarketing>

## ARG Oswestry Business Support Programme

### Description

This business support programme will help businesses that are co-working and hot desking in the Co-Working Centre, Hadleigh Works', in the Memorial Hall in Oswestry. 21 businesses will be supported with 12 hours specialist support and a Networking group will be formed to support Oswestry and surrounding areas. A 'wrap around' business support programme.

### Funding and Spend

- Allocated - £25,000
- Spend - £25,000
- Programme will finish in December 2022



## Outputs/Outcomes

- **21 businesses will receive 12 hours specialist support - all 21 have either finished or been allocated as at 03 October 2022**
- 4 business completed
- 48 hours completed
- **Further 17** businesses have been allocated
- **204 hours** allocated
- **Met with Vernon and Ruth in August to gain update on new 'Collaborative Corner/Network Group for launching 5 October 2022.**

## Successes

- **To report back at a later date.**
- <https://www.shropshirelive.com/business/2021/10/20/pioneering-co-working-project-brings-new-use-to-oswestrys-memorial-hall/>

Prepared by Emma Chapman

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