

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

A GUIDE TO BUSINESS SUPPORT IN THE SOUTH EAST

MARCH 2009

SEEDA, the South East England Development Agency, is responsible for the sustainable economic development and regeneration of the South East of England – the driving force of the UK's economy – and has introduced, with its partners, a range of measures to support small businesses through the downturn. The new measures amount to at least £15 million for small businesses across the South East, including the £10 million Rapid Rescue Response package announced by SEEDA in August 2008. SEEDA is also committed to paying all invoices within ten days to ease cash flow for its suppliers.

This is a summary of the support available from SEEDA, and its partners, for business:

For further information on the measures detailed in this booklet, please contact **Business Link** on 0845 600 9 006 or www.businesslink.gov.uk unless otherwise stated.

ENHANCED BUSINESS LINK

Business Link is the access channel for business support across the region

SEEDA is responsible for delivering the Business Link service in the South East and has refocused the Business Link offer to provide:

- Free Business Health Checks, which offer advice on how to maximise cashflow and improve marketing and business planning, debt management, new market and product development. Over 6,000 businesses have already benefited from this service since its launch in October 2008
- Access to finance advice, credit crunch presentations and finance clinics
- Guidance and events on how to survive and thrive in difficult times, including advice on reducing energy consumption and costs
- Access to the SEEDA-funded Resource Efficiency programme
- Access to a specialist skills assessment and the new, more flexible, Train to Gain service
- Analysis and information on new business opportunities and markets, including links to the Sector Consortia

South East Business Link Media Campaign

- As part of a national Business Link campaign to highlight the importance of sound business plans, Business Link South East is currently using print, radio and outdoor advertising to make sure businesses in our region are aware of the help and support on offer

For further information on the measures detailed in this booklet, please contact **Business Link** on 0845 600 9 006 or www.businesslink.gov.uk unless otherwise stated.

ENCOURAGING INVESTMENT

Grant for Business Investment (GBI)

- Capital grants under the GBI scheme have been extended to the entire South East for eligible SMEs with long-term viability whose capital investment plans are being held up by current economic conditions

ROBUST BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Immerse Programme

- SEEDA has introduced and provided funding for the Immerse programme, which provides intensive, extended design support to selected larger businesses. Immerse is part of the Designing Demand initiative

Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS)

- SEEDA has enabled the MAS to meet the increased demand for its lean innovation programmes. EEF, the MAS provider in the South East is surveying all previous beneficiaries to ascertain whether further support is needed

For more information on MAS please call the MAS helpline on 0845 609 2121 or www.mas.berr.gov.uk



For further information on the measures detailed in this booklet, please contact **Business Link** on 0845 600 9 006 or www.businesslink.gov.uk unless otherwise stated.

HELPING BUSINESSES TO ACCESS FINANCE

Finance South East is SEEDA's route to market for commercially based loans and equity investment, including the £20 million South East Funding Escalator

SEEDA's Transition Loan Fund

- SEEDA is providing up to £3 million in a new Bridging Mezzanine Debt Fund, directed at fully established, viable and growing businesses which are currently facing difficulties in obtaining credit through banks and other traditional routes
- Funding is provided at commercial rates for these unsecured loans, and interest is rolled up and paid at maturity, thereby making the Fund attractive to some businesses urgently needing to address liquidity problems

SEEDA's Commercialisation Fund

- This new fund of up to £3 million supports businesses with high growth potential to bring new products and services to market

For more information on the above schemes please contact Finance South East on 01276 608 510 or www.financesoutheast.com, or via Business Link

Businesses can also benefit from the Government's recently announced 'Real Help for Businesses Now', to which the RDAs have contributed £85 million. This new funding includes:

Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme

- Real help is available now for larger companies with an annual turnover of up to £25 million, looking for a loan of up to £1 million for a period of up to 10 years. It can also be used to convert an existing overdraft into a loan so that the overdraft facilities can be used to meet working capital demands

Businesses wishing to benefit from this scheme should apply directly for a loan from Barclays, Clydesdale/Yorkshire Bank, HBOS, HSBC, Lloyds TSB, RBS/Natwest and Northern Bank, quoting this scheme

Capital for Enterprise Fund

- Viable small businesses with high levels of existing debt can get real help to raise long-term finance
- Professional fund managers will provide equity investment which can be used to pay off existing debt to free up capital for day to day cash flow and for investment for the future

Businesses wishing to benefit from this scheme should call the Capital for Enterprise Fund Registration Helpline on 0845 459 9780

Freeing up bank lending: action behind the scenes

- The Government is working with UK banks and the European Investment Bank to maintain existing lending and make more available to small and medium firms. This is happening under the Working Capital Scheme which will secure up to £20 billion of working capital credit lines for companies. It will also free up capital which the banks must use for new lending.
- With the European Investment Bank, the Government has helped UK banks to negotiate credit lines of more than £1 billion to provide loans to small and medium businesses.

Further information on all these national schemes can be found either at the www.businesslink.gov.uk/realhelp portal, or from your local Business Link adviser, on 0845 600 9 006

TACKLING REDUNDANCY

Continuing Employment Support Service (CESS)

- CESS, a joint SEEDA/Jobcentre Plus programme, works in partnership with main government agencies and offers a free, tailored, in-house package of support to all affected workers before they leave their employment, thus negating the need in many cases to access benefits

Support includes:

- Advice on pensions and state benefits, including preserving national insurance contributions
- Workshops and one to one careers advice detailing the varied options that are available
- CV writing and interview technique advice
- Support to retrain (includes financial, dependent on existing qualifications)
- Advice and potential financial support to set up owner-enterprises and self employment options
- Direct access to companies locally that are hiring

For more information on the service, please contact

Janine Hobbs at SEEDA on 01483 470 169; janinehobbs@seeda.co.uk,

or our CESS brokers:

Graeme Carey: 07876 790 918; graemecarey@seeda.co.uk

Maria Wright: 07919 413 921; maria.wright1@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk

Sarah Young: 07776 227 160; sarah.young1@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk

Jobcentre Plus Services

- Jobcentre Plus offers a comprehensive range of support to help you recruit the right people. With nothing to pay and no red tape, these services help make the difference to thousands of employers dealing with changes in the economic climate

Support includes:

- Professional, modern and free Vacancy Advertising Services to get jobs noticed by the right people
- Recruitment Advisory Services that offer wider support for filling vacancies and longer term partnership opportunities
- Local Employment Partnerships with employers and Jobcentre Plus working together to unlock the talent available in the local community

For more information visit: www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/employers

Train to Gain

- The Learning and Skills Council's Train to Gain Programme has been expanded to support those facing redundancy as well as those not facing redundancy
- The £350 million boost to national Train to Gain funds includes a more flexible training offer specifically for small and medium enterprises. This comprises 138 bite-sized units or qualifications in 10 business critical areas:
 - Business Improvement techniques
 - Business Systems/processes
 - Team working/communications
 - Customer service
 - New product design
 - Finance and credit
 - Cash flow and profit management
 - Risk management
 - Marketing and sales
 - IT user/IT support

For more information please contact a Train to Gain Skills Broker on 0845 751 2288 or www.traintogain.gov.uk



TRADING OVERSEAS

Passport to Export

- An enhanced 'Passport to Export' package, for innovative and R&D intensive businesses, includes help with securing overseas growth and additional training in exploiting intellectual property and open innovation
- The scheme offers an advanced package of support to all 1500 South East businesses which have graduated from Passport to Export

UKTI's International Trade Sector Advisers

- SEEDA has funded a new International Trade Sector Adviser to the existing UKTI team of 13 International Trade Sector Advisers to cover the defence sector, servicing the estimated 950 defence related companies in the South East

To contact UKTI directly please call the customer service team on 08452 789 600 or www.uktisoutheast.com

Research Initiative

- Extensive research is being carried out by the seven Sector Consortia to enable them to identify the global markets and sectors offering the best trading opportunities for their members. These seven consortia are:
 - Aerospace and Defence
 - Security
 - Construction
 - Marine
 - Environmental Technologies
 - Health Technologies
 - Digital Content

INWARD INVESTMENT

International Trade Mentor

- International Trade Mentors are allocated to every new or recent inward investor

For more information please contact UKTI South East on 01483 500 741

Soft Landing Programme

- The Soft Landing programme is currently being piloted through Locate in Kent

For more information please contact SEEDA's Inward Investment Team on 01483 484 200