

GM Innovation Showcase

Celebrating innovative businesses across Greater Manchester

 GM Business
Growth Hub

**GREATER
MANCHESTER**
DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY



Funded by
UK Government

GM Business Growth Hub's Innovation Service

Accelerating innovation growth across Greater Manchester

We're here to help you explore new ideas, connect with the right expertise, and access world-class facilities and funding – quickly, seamlessly, and at no cost.

Our specialist team helps pioneering companies navigate challenges across AI and advanced computing, diagnostics and genomics, and sustainable advanced materials.

But we also support businesses of all sectors to embrace innovation, helping them to break into new markets, adopt cutting-edge technology, launch greener products, and improve the eco-performance of their offer.



Contact us today

0161 359 3050 | bgh@growthco.uk

900

companies supported since 2023

400

collaborative R&D projects facilitated

£2m

grants awarded to 185 companies

With UK Shared Prosperity Fund Support 2023-2025

 **GM Business Growth Hub**

In cooperation with



A City-Region Built on Innovation

Greater Manchester has always been a place of pioneers, and today with over 42% of our businesses actively engaged in innovation¹ we continue to be a leading hub for research, development, and business innovation.

We are ranked as the second most innovative city in the UK after London² and the UK's Top Large City of the Future in international investment rankings³. Our strength in innovation is a key part of our growth success story, which has seen the Greater Manchester economy outperform London and the UK for the past decade⁴. This is set to continue with the city-region's trailblazing plan to kick-start a new decade of growth.

This recognition reflects the commitment that exists here to creating the right conditions for investment, productivity, skills, and business growth – underpinned by robust partnerships between business, academia, and the public sector. This spirit of collaboration and ambition recognises that innovation is the cornerstone of sustainable economic development, generating high-quality employment opportunities, advancing the transition to a net zero carbon economy, and addressing health disparities.

I'm proud of the role GM Business Growth Hub, as part of The Growth Company, plays in supporting businesses to maximise their potential, while strengthening connections between R&D bodies and industry, driving investment into R&D, and enabling the talent and skills needed to support business-led innovation. Crucially, the selection of Greater Manchester as one of three areas to pilot the Innovation Accelerator programme, supported by £100 million in government funding together with UK Shared Prosperity investment has accelerated



Mark Hughes
CEO of the Growth Company

our capacity to further drive innovation in sustainable advanced materials; diagnostics and genomics; and AI, data and advanced computing.

Our ecosystem is thriving, from MediaCity in Salford, home to the BBC's northern base and a multitude of creative, digital and tech companies, to the Oxford Road Corridor, hosting numerous health and life sciences businesses alongside our esteemed universities and research centres, as well as multiple major commitments to drive growth across the conurbation.

The Greater Manchester Investment Zone will play an important role in strengthening the advanced materials and manufacturing sector, aiming to attract over £1 billion in private sector investment and create more than 30,000 new jobs over the next decade. The Atom Valley development, encompassing the boroughs of Oldham, Rochdale and Bury, will support 20,000 jobs and house the new Sustainable Materials and Manufacturing Centre. A joint venture between The University of Manchester and Bruntwood SciTech, Sister (formerly ID Manchester) represents a £1.7 billion innovation district and global hub for science and technology.

Strategic initiatives like these build on our history as a centre of progress and set the stage for a prosperous and equitable future, increasing the finance and investment opportunities for businesses, helping to fill skills gaps, and making routes to commercialisation clearer and faster – with the whole city-region benefitting from inclusive growth as a result.

As we celebrate some of the remarkable achievements at the GM Innovation Showcase, I have no doubts that Greater Manchester is the place to innovate, the place to invest, and the place to be.

¹ UK Innovation Survey (UKIS) 2023 ² Innovation Cities™ Index 2022-2023 by 2THINKNOW ³ Financial Times' fDI European Cities and Regions of the Future 2023/24 report ⁴ GMCA report: Greater Manchester's Approach to Delivering our Growth Ambition, Jan 2025



The Power of Greater Manchester's Innovation Ecosystem

Greater Manchester is fortunate to be home to world-class universities and research institutions, dynamic public and private sector organisations, and many remarkable companies that are driving innovations forward.

It's an ecosystem to be proud of – one that is creating new investment opportunities, helping businesses access essential skills, streamlining the journey to commercialisation, and promoting inclusive growth across the city-region.

To maximise the potential of this vibrant and comprehensive ecosystem, companies need to be able to navigate it effectively and connect with the right resources at the right time. Which is where GM Business Growth Hub comes in. Sitting at the heart of Greater Manchester's innovation ecosystem, we have been here for 900 forward-looking businesses since 2023 alone, helping them access the right support to gain momentum, accelerate research and development, and bring products to market faster.

As one of our clients put it, we're their 'Google Maps', providing a clear route to success that might otherwise have taken much longer to discover. By making these vital connections, we shorten the time it takes businesses to commercialise their cutting-edge ideas and reduce costs along the way.

From talking with businesses every day we know accessing the full range of support available is not always straightforward for them. This isn't due to

a lack of resources, or a lack of awareness – business leaders often don't know where to look, who to approach, or even what to ask for and when. Running a business is demanding, and addressing innovation challenges can easily slip down the priority list. Yet tackling these challenges head-on is crucial for long-term success.

That's why GM Business Growth Hub is committed to ensuring that as many businesses as possible benefit from the wealth of support available at both local and national levels. Over the last two years, we've facilitated 400 collaborative R&D projects, awarded £2 million in grants to 185 businesses, and helped leverage private sector investment – efforts that are strengthening Greater Manchester's position as a leading hub for innovation and an attractive place to locate and do business.

Our team of experienced innovation specialists understands the landscape of support available and can quickly direct businesses to the most suitable facilities, networks, and programmes. By working closely with them, we help identify gaps in business and commercialisation plans – whether related to funding, knowledge, or internal resources – and provide the tailored support needed.

For those looking to innovate, the message is clear: you don't have to navigate the journey alone. Whether you need help overcoming a specific challenge, accessing funding, or connecting with the right expertise, Greater Manchester's innovation ecosystem is here for you.



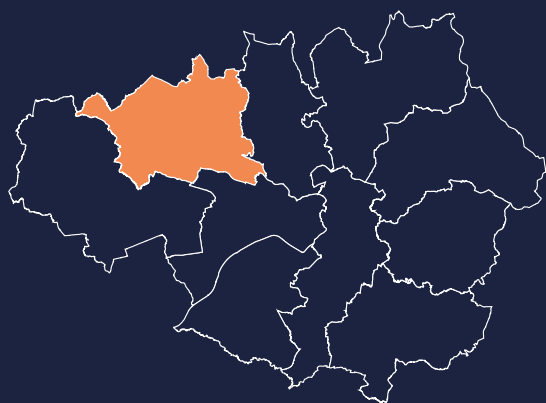
Yvonne Grady

Head of Innovation
GM Business Growth Hub

“

We have been here for 900 forward-looking businesses since 2023 alone, helping them access the right support to gain momentum.

With a dynamic business base, Bolton is further accelerating its growth around health innovation, digital and creative technology, and professional services, while maximising its manufacturing strengths.



Near-Life

Digital Training Solutions is adding AI-powered characters to its Near-Life platform, making it easier for users to create engaging, interactive training experiences.

£100k

funding from
GM ecosystem

84%

increase in turnover in
the next financial year

100%

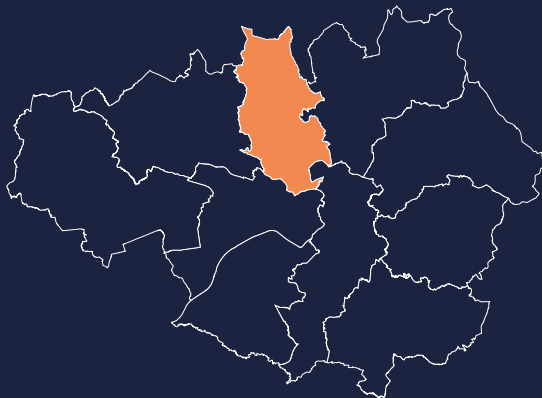
increase in
customers forecast

“

Thanks to GM Business Growth Hub, we're bringing exciting new AI-powered technology to Near-Life. Their support is helping us to improve user experience and attract new clients. This project will position Near-Life at the forefront of interactive content and give us the confidence to invest in sales and marketing to drive growth.

Mike Todd
CEO, Near-Life

The first Greater Manchester Town of Culture in 2020, Bury is creating the conditions for business to prosper and accelerate the transition to a fairer, greener and more resilient economy.



Sustainable advanced materials



Vector Homes

Vector Homes is addressing inefficiencies in the construction sector with its innovative housing systems that use advanced materials like graphene to deliver high-quality, sustainable homes that can be quickly assembled and scaled – cutting costs, build time and carbon.

£285k

funding from
GM ecosystem

25%

turnover
increase forecast

33%

reduction in time
to commercialisation

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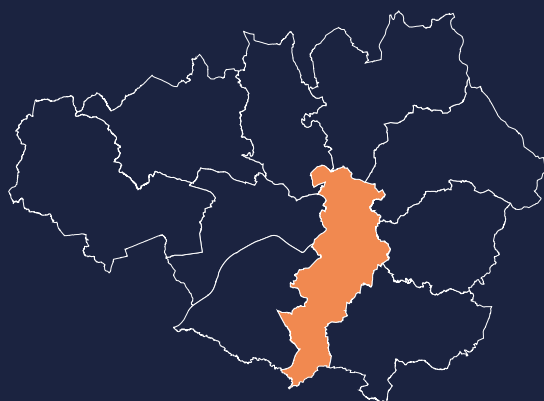
GM Business Growth Hub has been important in helping us move along our technology roadmap. From early business coaching to accessing Greater Manchester's rich innovation ecosystem, their guidance has been instrumental. Without the external support we've received, we wouldn't be here today.

Dr Liam Britnell

Chief Technology Officer, Vector Homes Ltd

MANCHESTER

Future-focused, Manchester is championing inclusive growth to create high-quality jobs and prosperity for all, with major regeneration projects and innovation hubs boosting AI, cybersecurity, fintech, and genomics.



AI / data / advanced computing



THE
INSIGHTS
FAMILY

The Insights Family

From ambitious start-up to a global leader that counts Amazon, Disney, Hasbro and Warner Bros amongst its clients, real-time market intelligence company The Insights Family's journey is a story of continuous and successful innovation and collaboration.

£6.3m

investment

2

Knowledge Transfer
Partnerships

60+

new jobs

“

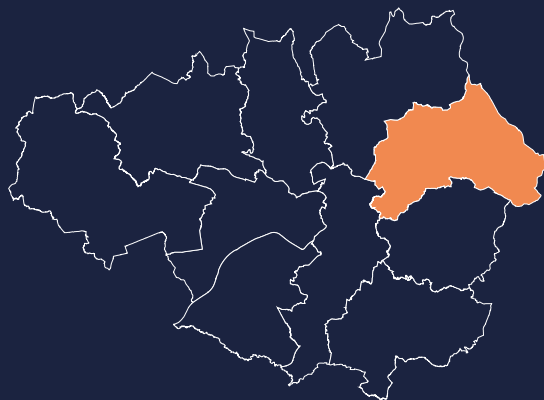
I don't think we could have launched our business in any other city than Manchester. There are world-leading universities here creating incredible graduates across a really wide range of skill sets and the whole ecosystem we have is very rare.

Nick Richardson

Founder, The Insights Family Ltd

OLDHAM

A green and growing borough, Oldham is actively developing key sectors including manufacturing, construction, digital and creative, and low carbon, while attracting skilled workers and creating a more vibrant local economy.



Sustainable advanced materials



Future Safety

Future Safety partnered with an internationally renowned helmet design company to develop a new-to-market, high-performance product, and received CapEx funding to purchase bespoke machinery.

£45k

innovation
grant funding

10%

increase in
turnover forecast

33%

new jobs
forecast

“

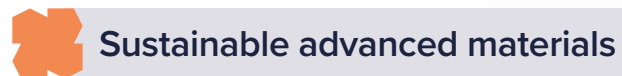
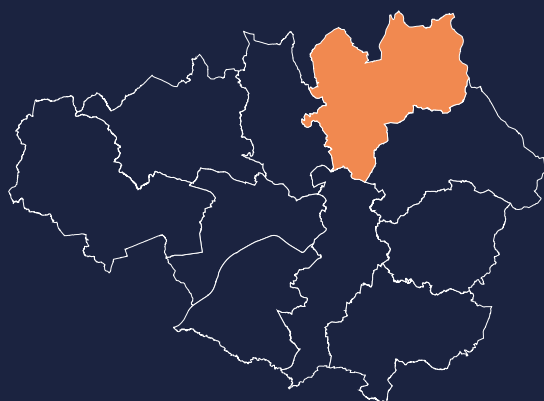
I was surprised at how simple and quick the process was. We had to put the work in, but it wasn't a long process at all. The funding gave us the confidence to take on the project and to move it forward, it was a big undertaking for us, and to know we had that support and backing was a massive factor in undertaking it.

Colin Holmes

Managing Director, Future Safety Ltd

ROCHDALE

Committed to improving its socio-economic strength through collaboration and innovation, Rochdale is attracting advanced manufacturing, technology and other high-growth sectors, while supporting decarbonisation, renewable energy, and environmental resilience.



Heatsense Cables

Heatsense Cables, a manufacturer of specialist high-performance thermocouple and signal cables designed for extreme environments, has developed a unique manufacturing process that significantly reduces costs and improves throughput.

£38k

Innovation Navigator
grant funding towards
a £100k project

£600k

turnover increase
forecast within
12 months

60+

new jobs forecast
within 12 months

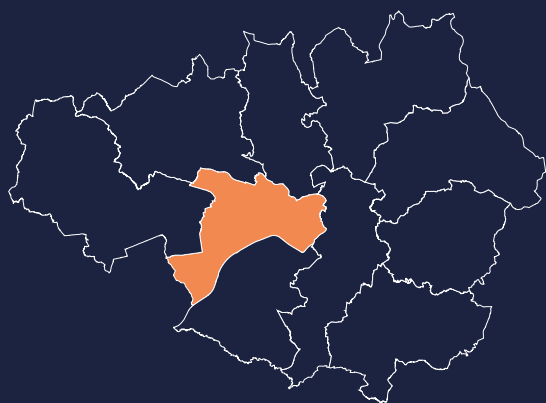
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The entire Innovation Navigator programme ran seamlessly. This was down to the extremely professional manner in which the GM Business Growth Hub team coordinated and worked together, taking time to understand our requirements and work through our grant application, resulting in a successful outcome. We simply would not have got there without their attention to detail and professional approach.

Jeremy Kemsley-Pein
Director, Heatsense Cables Ltd

SALFORD

Recognised as a place of opportunity, Salford's economy has experienced significant growth, with the number of businesses increasing by 85% since 2010 and employment expected to increase by a further 25,000 jobs by 2040.



AI / data / advanced computing

i2i PIPELINES
Simplifying Pipeline Inspection

i2i Pipelines

An R&D project is helping sensor technology company i2i Pipelines to potentially transform pipeline monitoring for the oil, gas and water industries, by collecting and analysing big data to assess pipeline integrity and predict failures before they occur.

£12k

Innovation Navigator
grant funding towards
a £25k project

£830k

projected future sales
in the next financial year

3

new jobs forecast
by the end of 2025

“

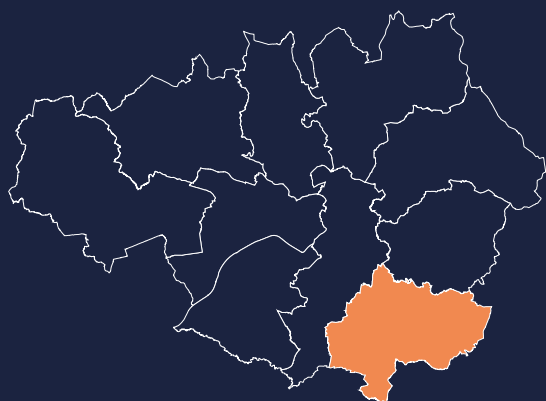
The support from GM Business Growth Hub is helping us to overcome technical and commercialisation barriers. Addressing these challenges will enable the production of a reliable and scalable product that will not only drive our international sales but prevent potential environmental disasters.

Anthony Hodson

Chief Product Officer, i2i Pipelines Ltd

STOCKPORT

One of the fastest-growing economies in the north-west, Stockport is in the UK top 20 for productivity growth, expanding its digital and technology sectors, driving health innovation, and accelerating its commitment to net zero.



Diagnostics and genomics



ALDERLEY
LIGHTHOUSE
LABS

Alderley Lighthouse Labs

Alderley Lighthouse Labs supports the latest innovations in pharmacogenomics, pathology services and diagnostic testing, and recently collaborated with global technology specialists to commercialise a transformative approach to personalised medicine.

£47k

Innovation Navigator
grant funding towards
£122k project

590%

turnover increase
forecast by 2026

3

new jobs
forecast

“

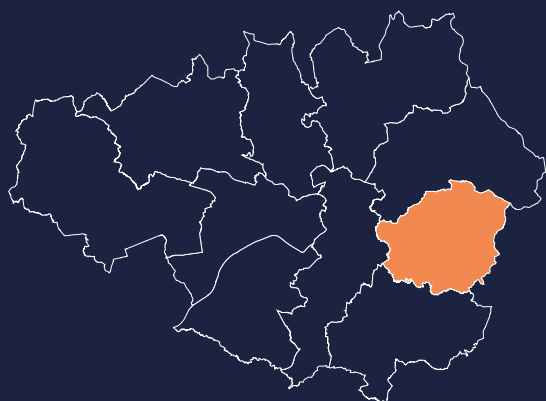
We've a real opportunity to establish a leading position in pharmacogenomics in the UK and have moved our diagnostic laboratory facilities to the Royal Cheadle Business Park in order to be able to access Greater Manchester's innovation ecosystem, which can support us on our journey.

Mark Wigglesworth

CEO, Director and Co-Founder, Alderley Lighthouse Labs Ltd

TAMESIDE

With a rich history of innovation, Tameside is developing a successful, clean, modern, digitally driven economy, leveraging strengths in advanced manufacturing and health, while building on existing infrastructure to grow digital tech and creative businesses.



AI / data / advanced computing



EcoBelt

Conveyor belt company EcoBelt is developing an industry-first AI-enabled software package that will help users to reduce waste and maximise the repurposing of existing conveyor belts.

£57k

funding from
GM ecosystem

£2.5m

projected sales increase
in the next financial year

30

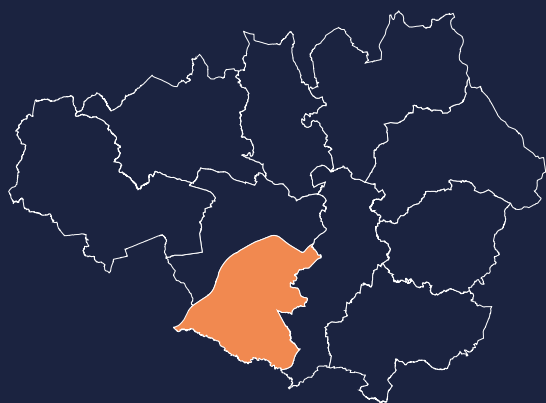
new jobs forecast
by the end of 2025

“

Thanks to this project, we'll be able to supply clients with a more comprehensive review of their onsite conveyor belts, reducing the wastage of belts which can then be reused. The result is that we'll be able to increase the profitability of our existing operations as well as open new revenue streams, through both consultancy and product sales.

David Waite
CEO, EcoBelt Ltd

Through major regeneration in town centres and beyond, Trafford is committed to creating an economically thriving borough driven by local, national, and international investment, enabling opportunities for new industries and addressing the climate crisis.



Red Ocelot

A collaborative partnership with the University of Salford has helped consulting and software product development business Red Ocelot develop an AI machine learning model 'code tuner' that leads to faster end-to-end software development times.

£12k

Innovation Navigator
grant funding covering
100% of project cost

240%

projected annual
sales increases

3

new jobs
forecast

“

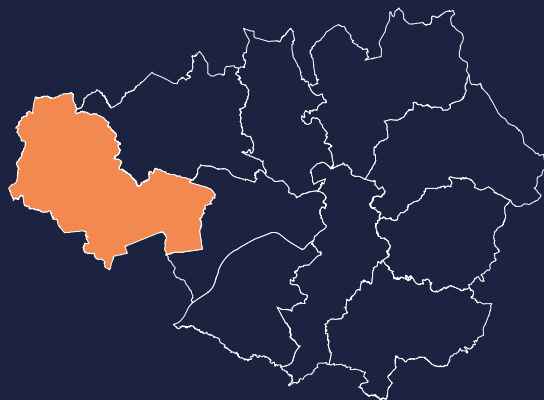
Our new AI capability for software source code smell detection enhances our Code Tuner product's capabilities and will be critical for delivering greater value to our clients. The University of Salford contributed knowledge and expertise that played a vital role in making this innovation possible, which will significantly strengthen our product's impact and further our commitment to excellence in software development.

Julian Bass

Senior Partner, Red Ocelot Ltd

WIGAN

Home to many successful global companies, Wigan's strong economy is based on a high number of flourishing SMEs, with a strong food and drink manufacturing sector, and rapid growth in new environmental technologies.



Sustainable advanced materials

CPL Puragen
Activated Carbons

CPL Activated Carbons

Thanks to a capital expenditure grant, CPL Activated Carbons was able to purchase the machinery it needed to test and launch innovative activated carbon products, as it looks to expand in both the olive oil and drinking water industries.

£17k

Innovation Navigator
grant funding towards
a £34k project

£30m

projected turnover
increase by 2027

2

new jobs
forecast

“

The ability to be able to test the activated carbons on site as opposed to outsourcing this service will massively improve CPL's productivity.

Andy Leatt

Technical and Development Director, CPL Activated Carbons Ltd

Here For Business

Helping you to realise your potential in 2025

GM Business Growth Hub is Greater Manchester's business support organisation. We're the key to unlocking opportunities for your business to grow. That means helping you to think differently, attract new investment, reach new markets, upskill staff, and improve your environmental impact.

We'll get under the skin of your business to really understand your vision. Then we'll work with you to produce tangible outcomes – guiding, prompting, and doing some of the heavy lifting along the way. Making your ambitions become reality.

Our services:



FUNDING



INNOVATION



PEOPLE



SALES



SUSTAINABILITY



Janine Smith

Director

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It's so exciting to see the creativity and ambition of Greater Manchester businesses that are driving real change, not just in technology but across multiple sectors. We're proud to have been supporting innovation since the formation of GM Business Growth Hub in 2011, as well as helping businesses of all shapes and sizes to build resilience, unlock opportunities, and achieve long-term success. Whatever the challenge – whether it's scaling up, accessing finance, expanding internationally, or developing a sustainable growth strategy – our experts are here to plot your route to success.



Contact us today

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Greater Manchester is a city-region
with innovation in its DNA – where
businesses, universities, and funders
collaborate to drive real economic impact.

GM Business Growth Hub

T 0161 359 3050

E bgh@growthco.uk

businessgrowthhub.com