



Innovation Navigator

Specialist support for businesses investing in:
AI, data and advanced computing
Diagnostics and genomics
Sustainable advanced materials





Greater Manchester is a special place. Our region's legacy is one of trailblazing success. Of industrial, scientific and creative excellence. Of timeless innovation and invention within businesses of all shapes and sizes.

It is in that pioneering spirit we have founded our new Innovation Navigator programme. Part of GM Business Growth Hub's innovation offering, working alongside key players in the ecosystem, Innovation Navigator is set to unleash a new wave of innovation.

This programme is funded by the UK government and is specially designed to support businesses developing products or services within three technology clusters: AI, data and advanced computing, diagnostics and genomics, and sustainable advanced materials. By forging connections between these forward-thinking companies and handpicked local innovation specialists and enablers, we navigate businesses, enabling them to overcome barriers, seek out new opportunities and take critical innovation projects to commercialisation faster.

By helping local businesses achieve more, we are also creating the perfect economic conditions for Greater Manchester not just to grow, but thrive.

**Yvonne Grady, Head of Innovation,
Greater Manchester Business Growth Hub**

“Our region has a rich history of innovation. Let's forge an even richer future.”

Accelerating innovation projects towards successful market delivery and commercialisation.

Innovation Navigator is a new kind of business programme, meticulously designed to provide tailored support that propels your innovation forward.

Connecting ambitious Greater Manchester businesses like yours, with local innovation specialists, researchers and enablers, we'll steer your project to market – quickly, seamlessly and at no charge.

We work hand-in-hand with your team to scale your ambitions at pace and enable access to the right resources, expertise and support. Working in partnership with four local universities, alongside, research technology organisations, local government, and industry associations, we offer:



ACCESS TO EXPERTISE AND RESOURCES

- Dedicated innovation specialist
- Collaborative solutions from universities, knowledge partners and private sector specialists
- Maximising value from IP
- Funding and investment solutions for innovation
- Bespoke commercialisation planning



SUPPORT TO SCALE

- Faster commercial returns and value
- Increased visibility and credibility for your innovations
- New process and technology adoption
- Help with creating resilient, scalable supply chains
- New market identification

Our Innovation Navigator team

Want to get your innovation project moving in the right direction? Speak to a Local Innovation Connector (LICs) in your area to get things started.

To deliver this programme, we have recruited a unique and specialist team of Local Innovation Connectors. Located within the ten local authorities of Greater Manchester, they provide knowledge, strategic guidance and make the industry connections you need to get the most out of the region's innovation ecosystem.

Our team of LICs will then connect you with an expert Commercialisation Specialist (CS). Our CS team offers a wealth of experience in developing, commercialising and accelerating products and services. It is their role to advise on overcoming barriers, unlocking new opportunities, accessing appropriate funding and guiding you through your innovation journey, all the way to commercialisation - as efficiently as possible.

Nick Richardson is our Innovation Ambassador and Mentor, working with our team to join the dots across Greater Manchester's innovation ecosystem.

Nick is the founder of The Insights Family, and brings extensive senior marketing and commercial experience to our team - acting as the ideal 'critical friend' for businesses on the programme.

With expertise in product development, Nick excels in analysing market trends, understanding competitors, and delivering tailored solutions. Following a successful corporate career, he founded The Insights Family in 2016, developing it into a multi-million pound business within five years.

Recognised for his skill and business acumen, Nick received an Honorary Doctorate for Innovation from the University of Bolton in 2022 and was a finalist for the EY Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 2024.

Nick commented, "GM Business Growth Hub has been a huge part of my journey from day one. Without their support, guidance, counsel and introductions, there is no way my team would have achieved what we have. My journey has now come full circle as the new innovation ambassador and mentor for this fantastic programme, and I'm looking forward to helping other entrepreneurs succeed.

"My advice to businesses in Greater Manchester is simple: never stand still in this market environment. Instead use the opportunities you have to innovate, and you'll create successes beyond your wildest dreams."



OUR LOCAL INNOVATION CONNECTORS



Stephen Slater, Salford

Stephen leverages his expertise in innovation lifecycle and product development to provide novel, scalable solutions. With broad experience spanning various industries from toys to military and aviation, he excels in design, advanced manufacturing, compliance, testing, validation, certification, and commercialisation.



Paul Halliday, Tameside

Paul has over 20 years of experience supporting over 500 businesses across diverse sectors, solving barriers to R&D processes and market entry. He advises at board level in advanced manufacturing, digital, green tech, and life sciences, conducting comprehensive reviews to identify valuable improvement opportunities.



Karen Fitzpatrick, Oldham

Karen is embedded in Oldham's business community and boasts over two decades of experience helping enterprises of all sizes. Her expertise spans various industries including manufacturing, healthcare, and digital. She works closely with businesses to foster innovation in product, process, and service development.



Mark Tibbenham CEng, Rochdale

Mark, a Queen's Award-winning leader, has chaired and managed a Rochdale manufacturing company, doubling its turnover in only six years. Specialising in innovative product design, he takes projects from inception to commercialisation.



Matt Walsh, Stockport

Matt uses his entrepreneurial expertise to help companies overcome R&D hurdles and access new commercial avenues. He has held strategic positions in construction, distribution, pharmaceuticals, and creative sectors, with a focus on leveraging technology to create streamlined processes.



Mike Naughton, Bury

Mike is a business development specialist with almost two decades of experience in both business growth consultancy and business banking. He has held several senior positions in high-performing organisations, championing sustainable growth and facilitating strategic partnerships to accelerate commercialisation and access to investment.



Adrian Roscoe, Wigan

With almost thirty years experience collaborating with Greater Manchester businesses, Adrian most recently supported innovative start-ups through the University of Salford. His experience spans micros, SMEs and large organisations, adept at helping innovators access finance, skills and knowledge to successfully progress their initiatives.



Oliver Witty, Bolton

Embedded within Bolton's innovation ecosystem, Oliver can facilitate collaborations with research institutions, local authorities and contractors across Greater Manchester. His rich experience of listening to and understanding business needs across multiple sectors means he can find the right resources to address innovation challenges.



Helen Fish, Manchester

Helen is an accomplished entrepreneur, having co-founded Beatstream Media, a pioneering music streaming tech firm in Manchester. With valuable experience of overcoming business obstacles, she has an acute skill in convincing investors of her product value and potential.



Gary Lovatt, Trafford

As well as creating his own ventures, Gary has supported over 200 small and medium-sized enterprises to grow, along with 50-plus government-led organisations.

“With guidance from your LIC, you can access and explore the full force of Greater Manchester's innovation ecosystem and accelerate your journey together.”

**Yvonne Grady, Head of Innovation,
Greater Manchester Business Growth Hub**

OUR COMMERCIALISATION SPECIALISTS



Russell Mansfield

Russell's expertise lies in diagnosing the needs of those wishing to scale and grow their business. He uses his position at the heart of Greater Manchester's innovation ecosystem to identify collaboration, R&D and investment opportunities that will accelerate commercialisation.

He has a background in ecological consultancy and project management across various industries. This includes working on prominent large-scale development projects, and has taken products from initial concept through to market launch, increasing revenue by over £2 million inside two-and-a-half years.

Drawing on his in-depth innovation funding knowledge and key connections, Russell has helped over 100 companies to develop eco innovations and, harnessing a passion for addressing natural world and ecological issues, he also co-designed and delivered the GM Business Growth Hub's successful Eco-FORCE workshops.

Russell says:

"My goal is to drive projects to successful fruition, from the prototype trials stage right through to the marketplace. I want to help those that need knowledge transfer and investment partners to get their project moving quickly."



Karen Dudley

Karen has supported businesses of all sizes throughout Greater Manchester for 30 years, an invaluable asset to organisations across numerous sectors and at all stages of their innovation journey.

Empowering businesses to tap into a wealth of innovation assets, Karen not only connects them to the right solution to accelerate their journey to market, but also shoulders much of the time and resource burden: from analysing R&D needs, to developing and distributing a technical project brief, to finding the right facilities and expertise.

Amongst Karen's many successes was her support of a Salford shoe business, which went on to increase sales by £300,000, receive £50,000 investment from one of the BBC's 'dragons' and was awarded first prize at The European Awards for its trail-blazing approach to sustainability and innovation in the fashion sector.

Karen says:

"I want to help innovative companies to advance their projects, using the tools, techniques and experience at my disposal, to create commercial success."

COMMERCIALISATION SPECIALIST OVERVIEW

Our commercialisation specialists (CS) will be at the heart of your Innovation Navigator journey. They'll leverage their deep experience to help accelerate your innovative products from prototype to commercialisation, supporting you to overcome barriers, unlock new market opportunities, and make your innovative products and services a reality.

Our specialists will help you to develop a plan of action, and connect you to the right expertise and resources, that will drive growth for your business.



OUR COMMERCIALISATION SPECIALISTS



Jeremy Goodwin

With a robust background in research and development, and product and development expertise from conception to commercialisation, Jeremy is primed to meet the needs of Greater Manchester businesses wishing to scale and grow.

Holding a PhD in Chemistry, he has over 20 years of experience in consumer-centric innovation and new product development, previously working within the R&D team at PZ Cussons (UK) Ltd. Amongst his many achievements there, Jeremy advanced the knowledge of skin-cleansing formulations upon skin health, hygiene and the microbiome – identifying opportunities to turn scientific understanding into category-leading claims that resonated with customers.

He also possesses extensive experience in collaborative endeavours with research institutions, including the University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Liverpool, as well as with consumer product and microbiology contract services throughout the UK.

Jeremy says:

“Operating at the intersection between technological innovation and problem-solving, I’m committed to empowering businesses in eligible sectors to grow and thrive.”



Paul O’Kell

Paul boasts a distinguished career nurturing commercial growth across multiple industries. His broad skillset includes business innovation, R&D, creating strategic partnerships, developing effective channels to market, and building and managing sales teams.

Manchester born and bred, his leadership roles in prominent telecommunications and information technology companies have honed his skills in collaborating with diverse commercial organisations and funding partners to support clients’ R&D goals.

As one of our commercialisation specialists, he is primed to keep businesses on track with their plans, ensuring any support is focussed on achieving faster commercial returns and value.

His wealth of experience and commitment to fostering business growth will be vital for driving success for innovations in sustainable advanced manufacturing, AI, data and advanced computing, and diagnostics and genomics.

Paul says:

“Innovation Navigator isn’t something that simply offers general business support. It’s a unique programme that’s been crafted solely for those working in specific technology clusters, so the value to relevant businesses will be transformational.”

“Our Commercialisation Specialists are your personal innovation navigators. They bring a wealth of business and product development experience, and know exactly how to steer you to your goals. Not only will they pinpoint the resources that are right for you, but they’ll take away much of the legwork too – from helping with funding applications to connecting you with collaboration and R&D opportunities that will get your project moving quickly.”

Yvonne Grady,

Head of Innovation, Greater Manchester Business Growth Hub



Driving your innovation journey forward

From prototype to commercialisation, our team provides targeted, tangible support to enable you to overcome barriers, drive value and accelerate your innovation journey.

The innovation journey

Stage 1: Ideation & Problem solving

You work through the challenges you want to solve with your innovation



Stage 2: Concept generation

You identified the core principles of your concept



Stage 3: Concept feasibility

You are carrying out research to develop the solution needed to refine your idea into a proof of concept



Stage 4: Proof of concept prototype

You create a prototype of your product or service



Innovation Navigator can accelerate these stages

Stage 5: Rough working prototype

You test your prototype in the intended environment



Stage 6: Field trials

You test and adapt your innovation in its intended environment, bringing it close to its expected performance and establishing quality thresholds



Stage 7: Pre-launch prototype

Your prototype now works in its operational environment, and is at a pre-commercial scale where processes are being refined, and supply chains are being tested and trialled



Stage 8: Initial product/Service launch

You can begin the soft launch of your product or service and resolve any issues. You'll be able to prove which processes work best, which technologies or materials are appropriate and what quality characteristics your product or service has



Stage 9: Commercialisations

Your new product or service is made available for customers. At this stage, you'll make continuous improvements to processes, systems, technologies and materials



Empowering innovation in key technology clusters

From technology gaps and integration challenges to navigating regulatory requirements, we'll provide the support you need. Whether you're the CEO, Finance Director, Head of Innovation or R&D, our team have the strategic abilities and technical know-how to help you navigate your innovation journey.

Our targeted support is available for businesses of all sizes and will be particularly beneficial to those operating within health innovation, clean growth, advanced materials and manufacturing, as well as the digital, creative and media sectors.

The projects we are looking to support must fall into one of the following three technology clusters:



1) AI, DATA AND ADVANCED COMPUTING

Innovation Navigator is your gateway to navigating the complexities of the AI, data, and advanced computing landscape. From addressing data quality, privacy and security concerns to overcoming technical complexities and integration challenges, our dedicated team provides tailored support. With us, you can unlock funding, expertise, and resources to propel your innovations forward, empowering you to create transformative solutions that create data-driven businesses and solve tomorrow's challenges.

2) DIAGNOSTICS AND GENOMICS

We're your strategic partner in advancing genomics and diagnostics. From securing vital funding to navigating the complex regulatory landscapes, or ensuring your products and services are representative of the communities they serve, our specialised team provides comprehensive support. Whether you're striving for large-scale sequencing affordability or addressing ethical considerations, we give you the tools to focus on developing groundbreaking healthcare solutions that impact lives worldwide.



3) SUSTAINABLE ADVANCED MATERIALS

In light of growing concern for the environment, manufacturers are propelling sustainable innovations forward. But this can be challenging in such a rapidly evolving landscape. From facilitating funding to streamlining regulatory compliance, our dedicated team provides bespoke support to overcome common barriers. Whether you're navigating complex New Product Introduction (NPI) processes or scaling production sustainably, we empower you to focus on creating environmentally conscious solutions that drive positive change for the future.

Our impact

Here are just some examples of existing business innovations we've supported across Greater Manchester.



LUCID GROUP

Lucid specialises in medical device development and product design for wellness and scientific systems. The team are experts in user experience and industrial design, electronics, software, human factors, and regulation. Lucid's innovation specialists are partnering with our innovation team to supercharge their projects.

"At Lucid, our focus is on developing exceptional product experiences that comply with complex regulatory constraints. The support, advice, and guidance from the team at the GM Business Growth Hub accelerates our innovation journey.

"All businesses will face challenges and hurdles when they are trying to take their ideas from blueprints to reality - especially those that have an innovation that tests the bounds of the industry. It's crucial that you have the right expertise around you to help you navigate the challenges that you'll face, every step of the way."

Alistair Williamson,
Managing Director at Lucid



VECTOR HOMES

After working with our Innovation Specialists, clean-tech start-up Vector Homes forecasted year one sales of £80,000 and created two new jobs. The business is catalysing a revolutionary shift in sustainable housing by creating smart, affordable, and eco-friendly housing solutions that are a game-changer in the industry.

"Perseverance and getting the right support have been critical. As a start-up, there's a lot of work to be done across a broad range of activities, and as well as the accomplishments we've had a lot of knockbacks too. One of the things that's enabled us to keep going is that we simply haven't been prepared to give up. And, alongside this, we've really put ourselves out there in terms of accessing business support services, like that at the GM Business Growth Hub which I think is something every SME should do."

Dr Liam Britnell,
Chief Technology Officer
at Vector Homes.



BEER PIPER

Founded in 1988, Beer Piper was purchased in 2018 by Chemisphere Holdings Ltd. The business grew into a market leader, engineering and manufacturing the most technologically advanced beer line cleaning systems in the UK, with a long list of clients that includes BrewDog and Seven Brothers. But the company was clear that it wanted to become more innovative and successful. Beer Piper came across GM Business Growth Hub, and worked with Local Innovation Connector, Stephen Slater, who gave them support to secure investment, access IP advice, and scale the business.

"[The team] helped us bring in the correct people, in the right timeframe to enable further funding, and has turned what was our pipe dream into a reality. It's true Greater Manchester innovation at play."

Jeff Singer, Commercial
Director, Beer Piper



EVIDENTIAL FORENSICS

Based at The Sharp Project in Manchester, Evidential Forensics provides acclaimed expert witnesses and is a pioneer in the electronic presentation of evidence in court. Its work has assisted in many high-profile criminal and civil court cases both in the UK and internationally and the team pride themselves in adopting the latest emerging technologies. They have partnered with the Business Growth Hub to ensure they stay at the forefront of innovation.

"In our field of work, it is essential that we continue to stay ahead of the curve and harness the newest technologies where possible. We have a long history of collaborating with the Greater Manchester Business Growth Hub's Innovation Team and they are intrinsic in our plans ensuring that we remain connected to the innovation ecosystem, helping us push the boundaries and provide the best possible service for both our customers and the courts."

Sean Murphy, Managing
Director at Evidential Ltd.



Innovation Navigator

Accelerating your innovation journey

Speak to one of our experts today and start navigating your journey to commercialisation faster.

BGHinnovation@growthco.uk

www.businessgrowthhub.com/programmes/innovation-navigator/