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Northumbria secures funding worth up to £1.9 million to help SMEs and graduate start-ups

Northumbria University has launched a project that offers a package of financial support and expert advice to SMEs and graduate start-ups, thanks to funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The Northumbria Enterprise and Business Support 2 ([NEBS2](#)) also includes a financial contribution to help small businesses employ up to two graduates,

typically on 6-month internships programmes.

With ERDF funding the support will run until June 2023 and is available to businesses in Tyne and Wear and Northumberland. The aim is to provide a coherent package of services to enhance the competitiveness and growth of SMEs, and to support the creation of new graduate enterprises. Businesses who are looking at ways to respond more effectively to the challenges of Covid-19, or recruit highly talented student interns, are encouraged to apply.

NEBS2 follows the success of a previous project which ran from 2015 to 2018 and benefited more than 150 businesses in the region. Overall, this latest project is expected to support 230 new and existing SMEs and provide internship opportunities to 120 graduates.

Launching the project now will also complement a wider regional response to Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown which has hit the North East economy harder than most. Northumbria has already engaged with the Regional Covid-19 Economic Response Group, which includes the North East LEP, regional CBI, North of Tyne and North East Combined Authorities, other regional universities and transport providers. A plan set out by the group sets out several steps to recovery, such as start-up programmes for newly redundant employees, graduates and previous business owners, alongside employment support and skills initiatives for those who have lost jobs as a result of the pandemic.

Northumbria is also working nationally with The Department for Business Energy Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to provide direct support to 180 SMEs in the region through the [Small Business Leadership Programme](#).

NEBS2 supports this regional response through three key strands. These strands are based on part-financing internships to help SMEs grow and provide long-term employment opportunities for graduates, mentoring support for new graduate enterprises, and finally free expert advice and guidance for businesses provided by leading academics at Northumbria.

Lucy Winskell OBE, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Employability and Partnerships) at Northumbria, believes NEBS2 will provide support where it is most needed. She explains: "Whether you are an SME, a new graduate enterprise or a student looking for an internship opportunity, the package of help on offer can make a significant and positive impact on your plans. Many of the

internships we have secured in previous programmes have not only helped businesses, but have also resulted in permanent and rewarding employment for students. The benefits are considerable and wide-ranging.

“Regionally there is a focused and determined effort to ensure the North East economy remains resilient during Covid-19, and can prosper and compete with other regions in the future. The Regional Covid-19 Economic Response Group and initiatives like the Northern Powerhouse are driving this agenda and pushing to level up the productivity gap in the North. NEBS2 is part of this combined strategic approach and I strongly encourage SMEs in Tyne and Wear and Northumberland to talk with us about the help available.”

For all three strands the SMEs will be from the local authority areas of Tyne & Wear or Northumberland. To apply or find out more information please visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/business

----- Ends

Notes to editor

European Regional Development Fund

The project is receiving up to £954k of funding from the England European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020. The Department for Communities and Local Government is the Managing Authority for ERDF. Established by the European Union ERDF funds help local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support innovation, businesses, create jobs and local community regenerations. For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding>

Northern Powerhouse

The Northern Powerhouse is a key aspect of this Government’s approach to addressing the productivity gap in the North and ensuring a stronger, more sustainable economy for all parts of the UK. Alongside over €1.5 billion of European Regional Development Fund support for businesses and communities across the North, the government has awarded £3.4 billion in

three rounds of Growth Deals across the Northern Powerhouse.

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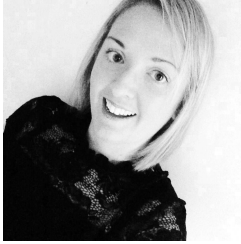


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