



CHERWELL BUSINESS ADAPTATION FUND GRANT SCHEME SHOWCASE

**Business Support
Success Stories**

September 2024



ALP Synergy Ltd

What was the Cherwell Business Adaptation Fund Grant Scheme?



Councillor Lesley McLean, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, said: “We want to enable an enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres across north Oxfordshire. A key approach is to support business retention and growth, with this programme providing an excellent example of how joint intervention through the council and OxLEP can help our business community and the local economy thrive.

“The Cherwell Business Adaptation Fund Grant Scheme was designed to help business bounce back after the pandemic. Businesses were asked to propose projects which would accelerate investment, provide supply chain resilience, transition to net zero, drive technology and innovation, and increase sales and market share.

“£450,000 was distributed as grants of between £5,000 and £20,000. We received over 100 applications and after careful consideration by the grant panel, 30 grants were awarded.

“Varied support will continue to be available and we encourage all businesses to register with OxLEP to be kept in touch with opportunities”.

Welcome to OxLEP Business

"OxLEP Business is here to support every small and medium sized business in Oxfordshire to overcome challenges and achieve their ambitions. We support sole-traders, not for profits, social enterprises, charities, and limited companies with up to 249 staff. So, if you have a business based and trading in Oxfordshire, then the chances are that we can help you in one way or another."

Helen Brind, Growth Hub Manager at OxLEP Business.



We are delighted when we get the chance to work in partnership to support Oxfordshire businesses, and this grant scheme with Cherwell District Council was an exemplar project. A partnership that brings our unrivalled business connections and expertise together with the ambitions and funding of the District Council to help their local businesses to thrive.

The grant scheme was completed in 2023, so it is now a good time to look at the results that businesses have achieved. We are delighted to be celebrating these outcomes:

- 27 new jobs created
- 17 businesses have increased their research and development
- 22 businesses have entered new markets, and 15 businesses have increased their export activities
- 10 businesses have progressed towards Net Zero
- 5 businesses have helped the visitor economy to become more resilient

Above and beyond the numbers we can report, the quotes we have received from the supported businesses speak for themselves;

"We are working with two of our largest export clients designing new products which will be for export to Europe and the Middle East. We have grown our export business and are now exporting more to America and Asia as a result."

I am proud to introduce a selection of case studies from the businesses who have benefitted from the Cherwell Business Adaptation Fund Grant Scheme delivered through OxLEP Business.





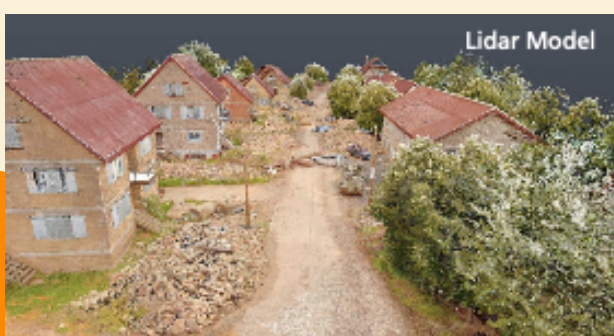
Simon.George@5Cconsulting.co.uk

5C Consulting deliver both pre-contract, business winning, consultancy support and post contract subject matter expertise in support of military training and experimentation programmes in the UK defence and security sector. More recently, 5C have diversified into the virtual world by providing services across the spectrum of capture and delivery activities needed to create and exploit digital twins in defence and construction sector procurement.

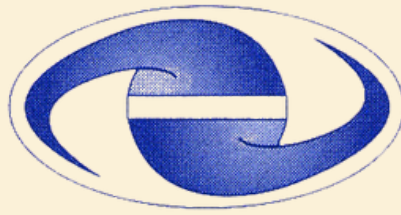
“I use a virtual office at Bloxham Mill and was chatting to other businesses about networking. I was introduced to OxLEP as a route for business support and funding. So, I applied for a Cherwell Business Adaptation Fund grant to help us grow our digital twinning capability and thankfully, we were successful. The grant provided us with two complete IT systems that we use for processing the huge amount of data we capture through our digital capture devices such as Lidar scanners. In addition, the funding was used for consultancy to upskill the team on the latest technologies and we now have three trained operators. Since then, we have won contracts totaling over half a million pounds for the delivery of our services – a route that would have been extremely difficult to pursue without the initial capital outlay that OxLEP were able to help with.”

“You can tell that OxLEP’s grant application is a really tried and tested procedure. I was very impressed. I’ve been in defence for many years and if the process of innovation funding for the military was as slick as OxLEP’s, many more contracts would get placed.

From the first webinars they give you all the information you need and are very clear on eligibility. I must admit, I was a little daunted at first, but as I stepped into the process the OxLEP team were on hand to help me and make it really straight forward. The team there were always available if I had any issues, they would help me. They were also flexible when things changed my end during the application. Compared to other organisations I have dealt with in the past they are a breath of fresh air”.



Advanced Witness Systems Ltd



For over 30 years, Advanced Witness Systems Ltd have been trading as a designer of torque calibration and verification equipment, instrumentation control systems and torque calibration and management software, as well as being a trusted consultant in the torque industry.

AWS' main product line is torque calibration machines, including the Universal Torque Screwdriver Calibration Machine, the only automated torque screwdriver calibrator to meet ISO 6789:2017 standards, allowing for much faster calibration times to the standard. AWS also produce the automated Universal Torque Wrench Calibration Machine, for the calibration of torque wrenches to ISO 6789:2017.

One challenge AWS has faced has been the ongoing electronic component supply chain issues and component redundancies. The supply chain for components and services has continued to be a challenge worldwide

Support given to us from OxLEP has enabled us to overcome sales and marketing weaknesses by the use of expert advice. This expert advice has resulted in an additional employee, better use of our sales pipeline software (CRM) and increased effective marketing deployment, both nationally and internationally. This continues to consolidate, expand our sales, marketing, and forecasting. It has also helped in the operation of local funding, enabling us to future proof some electronic instrumentation modules by the use of an external consultant.

Another development planned for the near future is an additional optional extra for the Universal Torque Screwdriver Calibration Machine, which will allow the operator to also calibrate small torque wrenches on the machine. The Universal Torque Calibration Machine will also receive further future updates and improvements to incorporate the newly developed PCBs and firmware, established with the assistance of the Cherwell Business Adaptation Fund Grant.



www.bhblackmore.co.uk

B H Blackmore Limited was founded in 2002, by Brendan Blackmore. It is now a nationally recognised development company supplying complex and innovative precision engineered components. It is strategically based in Oxfordshire to support the Formula One motorsport industry and the range of scientific companies based around the area. The Company has always focused on creating new processes to manufacture these complex components using five-axis machinery, which can be programmed to Machine solid cuboid material on all six sides allowing one hit manufacture.

As well as operating in the F1 motorsport sector, Blackmore also offers its state-of-the-art technology to develop products for automotive, scientific, medical, aerospace and the expanding renewable energy sector.

Last summer, we invested in a new DMG Mori DMU95 Monoblock 5 Axis Machining Centre to increase our sales capacity. To enhance the efficiency of this machine, we applied for a grant from the Cherwell Business Adaption Fund which allowed our business to fit out the new machine with a complete standardised tooling package and Lang Quick-Point adaptor system. This has saved us significant time on setting the machine up for each new project as well as enabling our business to take on projects to produce larger sized components which we could not fulfil in the past. The time saved and increased revenue has allowed us to take on more wide ranging Research & Development projects as well as employ an additional member of staff.

During the next 6 months, we hope to recruit another member of staff, and continue to diversify our customer base. We hope to increase the sales capacity of the business following the delivery of our new machines to allow us to take on more projects and new R & D opportunities.

annabel lee



www.annabelle.co.uk

Annabel Lee is a writer, consultant and speaker focusing on work and wellness, parenting and purpose driven businesses. Her work includes freelance journalism, writing and events as well as business consulting on communications.

“The wellness industry, where I do a lot of work, is growing hugely, but it remains hard to navigate it well and safely. I write about this space often, as well as working with people within in, and wanted to create a platform to talk about both the good and the bad sides of the industry. My ambition was to develop a podcast which explored with nuance, how to do wellness, well.”

“I received a grant as part of the Cherwell Business Adaptation Fund to support my podcast Wellness Questioned, which looks critically at the growing wellness space. This has allowed me to professional record the second and third season, as well as boost the audience with strategic marketing. The podcast allows me to offer a free B2C product (the podcast) to an engaged community and supports my work and positioning in this space, supplementing other activity like journalism, consulting and speaking.

To date the podcast has over 25,000 downloads, and a growing community of listeners. You can listen to the show anywhere you get your podcasts.”



WORKSHOP HEAVEN

Fine Tools

www.workshopheaven.com.

Established in 2005, Oxfordshire based Workshop Heaven Ltd are a niche retailer of high-end woodworking hand tools, supplying fine furniture makers in the UK and around the world. If you see an exquisite piece of award winning handcrafted furniture on the cover of a glossy magazine, there is a strong possibility that the person who made it, and potentially the furniture school that trained them, are among our regular customers.

As importers we are already accustomed to relatively long forecasting windows, which with a little adaptation translates into flexible, low to medium volume production work. This makes ideal non-urgent background tasks for the specialist engineering companies clustered around the motorsport industry in the Thames Valley area – contributing to their income and making them more efficient. Combine that with the heavier hot metal working capacity around Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country and we have all the ingredients we need.

With the help of a match funded Cherwell Business Adaptation Fund grant from OxLEP, Workshop Heaven have established and equipped an R&D workshop to develop locally sourced alternatives to imported tools with correspondingly shorter and tighter supply chains.

As a complete newcomer to the process of external funding I cannot recommend our Local Enterprise Partnership team highly enough. From the perspective of being a taxpayer, the process has been reassuringly rigorous and diligent but not daunting. As new applicants, the OxLEP team have carefully guided us through, step by step, to ensure that all the relevant considerations and criteria are addressed and met.

If you have an idea or a project that is likely to bring positive externalities and outcomes for society, then asking what help is available should be part of your plan. As well as direct financial assistance, OxLEP can also put you in contact with experienced business advisors who may be able to further increase the probability of a successful outcome.



Supporting the apprentice and employer through the whole journey from recruitment to the successful completion, Engineering Trust Training, have built a reputation for promoting and delivering high quality apprenticeships and training on behalf of their partner businesses.

The business goes back about thirty years and was started by several engineering companies as a membership organisation. Over the years it transitioned into a charity and training company. The Engineering Trust, which is the charity, works in schools to promote engineering as a career and apprenticeships as a pathway. Then, Engineering Trust Training (ETT), is an apprenticeship training provider. We have about 180 apprentices working in engineering, manufacturing and maintenance, in Oxfordshire and the surrounding counties. It's been an exciting time for us, as we have recently opened a new training academy in Bicester, called The Engineering Skills Academy (TESA). This is where we deliver all the apprentice training ourselves and also plan to offer training courses for local businesses. We are in a really exciting phase in the business and OxLEP Business have played a key role in getting us here.

"As soon as I started my role here I wanted to get more involved in the work OxLEP does. They were really appealing because, not only do they offer business support and funding, but they have a skills team which works with a lot of schools in terms of their career provision. The first OxLEP programme I got involved with was during lockdown, taking advantage of the one-to-one business coaching.

ETT recently opened a 7000sqft training facility in Bicester, renovating an existing property and turning it into TESA.

With the support of Cherwell District Council's Business Adaptation Fund (CBAF) delivered by OxLEP Business, they were able to implement a brand new IT suite. OxLEP were great throughout the process, always responsive and helpful if I had any questions. The financial support massively accelerated the development of a new IT suite at TESA, which has allowed us deliver CAD training to our apprentices and will allow us to run short courses and training.





www.mrne.co.uk

Banbury based business, MRN Engineering, is a high-tech design, engineering and manufacturing company specialising in multidisciplinary engineering design development and manufacturing. Working with high spec CNC machining they conceptualise products to suit their clients needs and produce low volume prototyping through to medium volume production.

Matt had reached a stage in the business where he needed external support to help guide him in the right direction to achieve business growth and further success. He explains why he connected with OxLEP Business.

“I was very much trading as a one- man band, doing both the design and manufacturing myself. I was focusing so much on delivery and getting things out the door, I wasn’t concentrating on business growth. My monthly outgoings are really high, what with my business unit and all the equipment I need. And I just got to a point where I knew external business help would be beneficial to me.”

“I was searching for support and potential grant funding and found OxLEP on LinkedIn. So got in touch with them straight away. Firstly, I did a couple of Power Hours with their advisors, one on marketing and one on business fundamentals. I might be a good engineer, but things that are less analytical don’t come naturally to me, so these sessions were really helpful.

Alongside the one-to-one support and peer group sessions, MRN were awarded a grant through Cherwell District Council’s Business Adaptation Fund (CBAF) delivered by OxLEP Business. “I received an email about the CBAF grant opportunity and immediately expressed interest. I was invited to join the webinar where the OxLEP team talked about eligibility and the application process. I listened to all the advice and completed the forms and was awarded the funding. I could now purchase a new part for one of my machines, which means the functionality is far more advanced. I don’t think I’d have been able to afford this part for another few years probably. So, this grant has put me in a position where I can now offer my clients more complex and accurate solutions, and all in a shorter timeframe. I’m also able to employ someone to help me with production, which a big step for me and something I just wouldn’t have been able to do before the grant. It’s been a game changer.”





THE OXFORD HEALTH COMPANY

tohc.co.uk

The Oxford Health Company (TOHC) is located in Bicester, Oxfordshire and is the proud owner of the brands Oxford Vitality and Oxford Contract Manufacturing. They specialise in the manufacture and supply of consumer ready vitamins and food supplements which are distributed worldwide.

TOHC have received a raft of business support from OxLEP Business, going back to 2020. “You get a point where you need that outside help and assistance, it’s an outside insight that don’t really get, especially if you’ve never really worked for anyone else.

OxLEP’s support has helped us reach a point where our future is looking really positive. They not only helped on that initial phase of growth, but it’s the knock-on effects for our next phases as well.

Alongside the one-to-one mentoring, the team at TOHC engaged with OxLEP’s Peer Networks and were also successful in receiving a grant from Cherwell District Council’s Business Adaptation Fund (CBAF) delivered by OxLEP Business. We were eligible for the CBAF grant and applied. It was a good process to go through as it makes you think what you are trying to achieve and why you are trying to achieve it. I actually found it quite therapeutic completing the application, because it makes you put down an external facing business plan, so you question yourself on your own aims and goals which is a good path to go down.

We were successful with our application and with this funding we built a new mezzanine floor in the factory and bought some new specialist manufacturing equipment. This has allowed us to grow quite quickly off the back of that. If we had to find that money on our own it would have taken us another two years. These grants have enabled us to speed up getting the projects we want and have massively increased the capacity of products we are producing. Plus, we can now do it all in house, under one roof. This speedy growth has allowed us to create more jobs as well which is great. 5 years ago we only had 12 staff and now we are over 60 members of staff.”



EMBS Community College



<http://www.embs.ac.uk>

At EMBS Community College we seek to provide young people and adults with the education and skills needed to achieve qualifications, progress into employment and enhance their wellbeing.

Our ambition is to continue to grow our young people (16-19) provision with a special focus on our specialist area of supporting those with high needs, EHCPs, 14-16s, to improve their confidence, wellbeing, sense of community and belonging and to enable them to progress into further education and/or the workplace.

The support from the Cherwell Business Adaptation fund has enabled the successful refurbishment of our East Street, Banbury, site, creating ongoing opportunities for adults from all backgrounds to access English and maths skills, essential to work and life, as well as the creation of a brand new sixth form provision, supporting local young people to continue or re-engage in education, build their confidence, sense of community and wellbeing and to enable them to progress into further education and the workplace.



<https://www.flashbuzz.co.uk>

Flashbuzz is one of Oxfordshires most exciting video production companies.

Since 2018 Flashbuzz has been partnering with ambitious brands to create stunning video content. They have now taken the plunge into writing their own screenplay which is gaining interest from major broadcasters and film festivals around the world.

"I've always loved films and I studied filmmaking and video production in college. It wasn't however, until I won a film bursary and a large innovation competition whilst working in the public sector that I realised I could do this for a living"

We received an email from OxLEP with regards to the Cherwell Business Adaption Fund, which they delivered that we are eligible to apply for. So, I applied for the grant to allow me to purchase a Netflix approved camera and some cinema lenses.

We've entered some film festivals and we're winning awards for the film that was shot on the Netflix approved camera that OxLEP helped us to purchase. It's been shown at film festivals in Amsterdam, California, Los Angeles, Sydney Australia and India, to name a few.

OxLEP played a big part in Rob's success story. The short film really is capturing people's imagination. I've had hundreds of tapes from actors in London wanting to be part of it. One of them was like 'I'm currently filming with Idris Elba at the moment'. How brilliant is that?

This really has kicked off a whole new opportunity for the company on an international scale. We've been able to use industry leading equipment, which we wouldn't have if it wasn't for OxLEP's funding support. They personally reached out to me & highlighted the funding thats available which is amazing. We had one to one support & they were genuinely interested in the short film & wanted to watch the trailer. I would say to anyone with a business in Oxfordshire, get in touch with OxLEP and see what support opportunities there are for you. It might change everything for you. It has for me. I can now say I am an international award winning film director. Wow!





Could your business overcome challenges or achieve more with fully funded support from OxLEP?

Engage with OxLEP's Support by completing the Business Support Tool.

You will then receive your fully funded Business Support Action Plan.

Click here: <https://oxlepbusiness.co.uk/business-support-tool/>

Scan here:



Delivery of the Cherwell Business Adaptation Fund Grant Scheme was supported through OxLEP Business by ALP Synergy Ltd. ALP Synergy Ltd is on a mission to support 10,000 small UK businesses to start, grow and thrive by 2030 as part of a sustainable and fair economy.



ALP Synergy Ltd