



Review of Expert Support Products

Final Report for Scottish Enterprise

November 2012

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Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Clearly define who the products are designed to

support/target: The products are targeted at NRM companies as per the original rationale and business case, but also extend to DRM companies on a commercial basis i.e. the number of days of specialist support is increased and the company make a financial contribution to the support.

Recommendation 2: Improve and refine the engagement process: SE should strengthen the current NRM engagement, the filtering and appraisal process and should work with partners/stakeholders to ensure that the ‘right’ type of companies are coming through the process and accessing the products.

Recommendation 3: Rationalise the number of products: It is recommended that SE rationalises the number of products available in order to simplify the process and target businesses better through a core offering of support – Innovation, ICT, Business Improvement, Offshore Wind, and Marketing.

Recommendation 4: Product assessment criteria: There should be no significant changes to the current assessment process for NRM and DRM companies.

Recommendation 5: How are the products promoted: It is recommended that SE consider how to best promote the products to maximise their potential impact.

Recommendation 6: Rationalise the Supplier Framework: The current Supplier Framework should be rationalised to ensure it is flexible and that both SE and their suppliers gain benefits from their engagement.

Recommendation 7: Follow up with supported companies: SE should consider the potential benefits and impacts of following up with supported NRM businesses.

Recommendation 8: Develop a web based engagement and follow up platform: SE should develop a multi function web based platform that can support their engagement/filtering, signposting, and NRM company aftercare processes.

Recommendation 9: Robust Monitoring Framework: In order to effectively monitor and capture the benefits generated through the support, SE needs to implement a more robust and flexible monitoring framework.

1. Introduction

This report has been prepared in response to an Invitation to Tender (ITT) issued by Scottish Enterprise (SE) to undertake a review of their Expert Support products.

Currently, SE delivers its business support through five key [Intervention Frameworks](#), and within this there are 10 expert support products that offer light touch assistance to primarily Non Relationship Managed (NRM) companies:

- ICT Expert Support - Feb 2010
- Business Improvement - April 2011
- Innovation Expert Support – Feb 2010
- Design Expert Support – June 2012
- Collaboration Expert Support – Feb 2012
- Consortium Expert Support – Apr 2012
- Employee Ownership Expert Support – Apr 2012
- Life Sciences Expert Support – Apr 2010
- Offshore Wind Expert Support – September 2010
- Marketing Expert Support – June 2012

In order to ensure SE is delivering the 'right' products targeted at the 'right' businesses and sectors it is important to review and evaluate the performance, demand and impact of the Expert Support products. This is particularly important during the current economic and financial climate when public sector spending is being reduced and/or rationalised and businesses may be experiencing greater levels of competition and fundamental changes in the markets in which they operate.

The key outcome of this review is to provide SE with recommendations regarding the future delivery of the Expert Support products.

1.1 Background

The original rationale and driver for the development of the Expert Support products was to provide light touch support and engagement with companies that did not have an ongoing relationship with SE i.e. those companies that were not Growth Pipeline or Direct Relationship Managed (DRM).

During the early stages the project was focused on delivering innovation support (through the Innovation product) which was at the time, and continues to be, a strategic priority for SE. However, as demand for different thematic support grew and SE's strategic and operational priorities shifted, a number of additional products were added.

The most significant change to have taken place is the addition of the Expert Support Products to the Development Project (DP) portfolio. This meant that account managers could offer product support on a discretionary basis for DRM companies, therefore representing a significant change in the targeting of the products.

1.2 Study Objectives

The objectives of the study as outlined in the ITT are considered below:

Engagement Process:

- examine the engagement processes to determine whether the products are being offered to the types of companies originally envisaged, i.e. has sufficient filtering of Non Relationship Managed Company proposals occurred at one end of the spectrum. At the other end of the spectrum examine whether sufficient appraisal of need has been done by Relationship Managers to determine whether these are the most effective interventions or whether they have been used as an alternative to more in-depth (but contributory) products; and
- examine the engagement process from the customers' perspective to determine whether it is the most appropriate and efficient method of accessing relatively light touch support and make recommendations for change if necessary.

Usage:

- analyse uptake by customer segment and sector and make recommendations on whether the current company eligibility criteria should be changed for each product and whether the support offered and suppliers' expertise is appropriate for SE's Key Sectors;
- analyse the types of activity being supported by these products to identify patterns of demand and make recommendations on either widening or being more prescriptive in regards to the types of eligible activity; and
- analyse other support offered to recipients of Expert Support:
 - to what extent participating companies are engaged in more intensive support via relevant Development Projects (DP) during or subsequent to using the Expert Support (EP)
 - make recommendations on whether the linkage between provision of EP and a related DP should be made compulsory for Direct Relationship Managed (DRM) companies.

Impact:

- analyse to what extent the products are being used to review the 'business readiness' and/or feasibility of a company project to minimise risk of project failure or as an aid to go/no go decisions prior to implementation;
- analyse impact on company performance by customer segment and sector; and
- analyse whether they are being used for the purpose they were designed for and if not why not.

The study will help inform the SE Product Team's decision making process with regards continued delivery, rationalisation and commercial potential of the existing portfolio of products (via charging for support).

2. Strategic Context and Market Efficiency

This section considers the policy and strategic environment in which the products are being delivered, and further, considers the ongoing market efficiency/equity rationale for their continued delivery.

2.1 Strategic Policy Review

SE Business Plan 2012 - 15

The most recent Business Plan (2012 – 15) outlines SE's strategic priorities for supporting growth and economic development in the current climate.

The Business Plan identifies five strategic priorities to support the over-arching aims and objectives of the Plan: [Renewables](#); [International Trade and Investment](#); [Growth Companies](#); [Innovation](#); and [Transition to a Low Carbon Economy](#).

The Expert Support products directly contribute to three of these priority areas, as considered below.

Under the [Company Growth](#) priority, SE has identified its key objective is to work with and support companies with the greatest growth potential, as it is these companies that will drive recovery and growth within the economy. Within this there are two key areas of intervention:

- increase the number of growth companies in the account management portfolio by up to 20%; and
- in the next year, help up to 400 companies secure growth finance.

One of the key objectives of the products is to act as a platform for early engagement and interaction with companies that do not currently have a relationship with SE. The products were designed to provide specialist light touch support for NRM companies to assist them in developing growth projects, but also effectively acting as a first step on the customer support journey.

The anticipated longer term outcome is that these companies (if their growth aspirations are realised) will become part of the wider SE support system in the future either as an account managed or growth pipeline company.

The products are therefore being used to firstly identify these potential high growth companies, secondly provide light touch project support, and thirdly act as a prospecting tool for the account management system i.e. supporting and developing the supply of the 'right' type of potential high growth companies.

In addition, some of the individual products, notably the Innovation and Offshore Wind products will contribute to SE's wider thematic priorities ([Innovation](#) and [Renewables](#)).

Government Economic Strategy 2011

The Government Economic Strategy (GES) outlines the Scottish Government's priorities for stimulating the Scottish economy within the context of the current economic downturn.

Within this there are five key strategic policy priorities: [Supportive Business Environment](#); [Transition to a Low Carbon Economy](#); [Learning, Skills and Well-being](#); [Infrastructure Development and Place](#); [Effective Government](#); and [Equity](#).

The Strategy recognises that economic recovery and growth is dependent on Scottish businesses remaining competitive, and that the public sector has a role to play in supporting this through creating a supportive environment that encourages entrepreneurship and innovation.

Aside from Business Gateway and some local level local authority delivered projects, there is a lack of wider business support products available to the wider business base.

The support products are therefore important for wider engagement and ensuring that those companies that are not currently engaging with SE have an opportunity to access specialist support, and that this will help them to remain competitive and will support economic recovery and growth.

In a climate where the private sector is more risk averse, it is important that SE (as the principal body responsible for supporting economic development in Scotland) is seen to be 'open for business'.

2.2 Market Efficiencies and Equity

Market efficiencies/failures occur when there is an imperfection in market mechanisms which prevents economic efficiency¹. Where there is clear evidence that markets cannot, or will not, provide the best outcomes, there is a strong justification for public sector intervention.

When assessing market failure and therefore the justification for intervention, it is important to identify the root cause of the market failure as opposed to the effect. In the context of our review, there are clear market efficiency/failure barriers around:

- market efficiencies:
 - information failures
 - externalities; and
- equity – SE as the principal body responsible for supporting economic development should be supporting the wider business base.

Market Efficiencies

Information Failures

Information failures arise where there is a lack of available market information, or there is an imbalance of available market information i.e. not all the players in the market have access to the same information.

The products are designed to provide light touch support and assist businesses with the development of a growth project through external specialist support, with the final outcome being an action plan.

Feedback identified that in the absence of the support products, these businesses would be unlikely to scope out and develop these projects on their own. This could be for a number of reasons including: lack of resources; lack of information; or experience/knowledge of developing action/business plans, etc. These businesses would therefore be at a disadvantage in terms of supporting their growth aspirations.

¹ Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/green_book_complete.pdf

In addition many businesses, particularly those that currently do not have an existing relationship with SE or lack a general awareness of wider public sector support, may not know either where to access support i.e. who is the appropriate organisation to approach or, in many cases, what support is available to their business.

While private sector consultancy support is available, businesses, and in particular SMEs, are unlikely to have the detailed knowledge of which organisation within the private sector is the most appropriate to seek support through. Some businesses, for example, those in their first few years of trading, may be incapable of distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' advice due to their relative lack of knowledge.

Finally, the costs (both financial and time) of learning new business skills or accessing commercial and market information may be seen to generate insufficient benefits (returns). This leads to a position where business owners under invest in the training and market information they require. Therefore, the two days free support can also help demonstrate the benefits and impacts of accessing external support providers.

Externalities

An externality is a cost or benefit, not considered through prices, incurred by a party who did not agree to the action causing the cost or benefit. A benefit in this case is called a positive externality, while a cost is called a negative externality.

One negative externality that is a by-product of the wider recession is that businesses are more risk averse, for example, investing in external support or a new growth project.

This often leads to a position of under investment and constrains growth within the wider economy. The (up to) two days of support helps to de-risk the project and encourages engagement with the private sector.

Equity

One final issue that should be considered relates to distributional objectives and equalities.

The economic recession has generated a number of negative knock-on impacts within the Scottish economy including constraining growth activity within the wider employment and business base.

Over the period 2008 - 2011, employment across Scotland has fallen by c. 130,000 jobs (representing a decrease of 5%) and the number of registered businesses has decreased by 1,200 (representing a decrease of 1%).

In addition, *The State of the Economy*, published by the Scottish Government (July 2012) provides information on Scotland's economic performance and highlights key global and Scottish level issues relevant to the economy during the economic recession²:

- recovery remains fragile with output falling 0.1% during Q1 and Q2 of 2012;
- economic output remains c. 3.9% below that of pre-recession levels;
- the construction sector is a key component of this decline in output, and has experienced a decline in output over the past two quarters;
- the production and service sectors (which account for 90% of the Scottish economy) grew during the first two quarters. The production and service sectors grew by 2.5% and 1% respectively over the first two quarters;
- unemployment is currently at 8%, this is comparable with the wider UK – 8.1%; and
- while business surveys remain mixed, the general message is one of continued recovery – although performance is still behind pre-recession levels.

Through its account management, growth pipeline systems and sector team support, SE supports around 9,000 businesses, representing c. 3% of the total business base in Scotland.

While there is a clear rationale for SE to focus its priorities and resources on those businesses that will support recovery and growth, it is recognised that there are a number of 'fringe' businesses that could benefit from increased access to support provision i.e. those businesses that currently do not meet the criteria for SE account management or Growth Pipeline support, but do however demonstrate growth potential.

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Economy/state-economy>

As highlighted above, SE is the principal body responsible for supporting economic development and growth within Scotland. There is therefore a strong equity argument for SE to provide support to the wider business base i.e. the distributional nature of the products is further justification for intervention.

2.3 Justification for Continued Intervention

As highlighted within this section, the Expert Support Products have a strong strategic fit and contribute to the objectives of national economic development policy (SE and Scottish Government). The products add another dimension to the existing portfolio of business support interventions, and are supporting Scottish businesses to realise their growth ambitions and potential.

The wider impacts of the recession have constrained growth and investment within the private sector and there is a need for public intervention to help remove these barriers – centred mainly on information failures, externalities and equity.

Anecdotal evidence received from stakeholders suggests that the products are already promoting some market adjustment through facilitating access to specialist support, and developing project growth plans. This is helping to remove the information barriers some companies face i.e. if we consider the counterfactual position; a number of these companies would be unlikely to have the experience or resources to develop project plans in the absence of the support.

3. Performance Review

3.1 Introduction

This section considers the monitoring and performance data for the project. In particular we have reviewed: project spend and project usage (broken down by type of company, individual product and successful/unsuccessful applications),

There are ten individual products available through the Expert Support Products. These include:

- ICT Expert Support;
- Business Improvement Expert Support;
- Innovation Expert Support;
- Offshore Wind Expert Support;
- Marketing/International Marketing Expert Support;
- Design Innovation Expert Support;
- Employee Ownership Expert Support;
- Life Science Expert Support;
- Collaboration Expert Support; and
- Consortium Expert Support.

The products are targeted at and used by both NRM and DRM companies, although are designed to be reactive and delivered on a discretionary basis.

Companies that are considered eligible and appropriate to support receive up to two days expert support with the exception of the Marketing Product where up to four days support is available. As most of these products are available to NRM companies, eligibility is determined by the quality of the project proposals. NRM companies are usually referred from Business Gateway Advisers or Relationship Managers and the project appraisal is undertaken by the relevant internal specialist in conjunction with the companies Relationship Manager (where appropriate).

The Marketing Product is restricted to DRM companies only because there is no internal specialist team to appraise any project being presented by NRM companies.

The process of engagement for both DRM and NRM companies is set out in SE's Company Growth Manual.

3.2 Product Usage

Project Status

Enquiries are recorded on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database upon application. SE specialists are responsible for the ongoing administration associated with each enquiry.

The four progress status options for recording enquiries are:

- **Close Won** – enquiry was successful, the business has received support and the project has been completed;
- **Open** - enquiry was successful, the business/project were eligible/appropriate to support and project is ongoing, please note there is no time limit on how long an enquiry can remain open; however operational staff are required to review their open leads and opportunities and close those that are no longer valid as part of the normal data integrity process;
- **Close Lost** - businesses have undertaken a one-to-one surgery meeting with a specialist, however the project/business was not eligible or appropriate to support. In most instances these are usually referred back to Business Gateway; and
- **Blank** – enquiry status has not been updated.

Table 3.1 overleaf breaks down individual products by the number of assists and their current status (as of September 2012).

It should be highlighted that due to the way monitoring data is captured via hard copy, this has led to gaps within the data, and therefore had a significant impact on our analysis. In total, there is no information available for 237 enquiries - 41%.

Please note that SE is currently updating their CRM system so that all data is captured and reported electronically, however at the time of this review it was unavailable.

Table 3.1: Product Usage and Assist Status 2010/11 – 2012/13

	Total		Close Won			Close Lost			Open			Blank		
	No.	% of total	No.	% of product	% of close won	No.	% of product	% of close lost	No.	% of product	% of open	No.	% of product	% of blank
ICT	191	33%	88	46%	52%	39	20%	55%	27	14%	28%	37	19%	16%
Business Improvement	155	27%	55	35%	33%	18	12%	25%	45	29%	46%	37	24%	16%
Innovation	115	20%	18	16%	11%	12	10%	17%	8	7%	8%	77	67%	32%
Offshore Wind	68	12%	8	12%	5%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%	60	88%	25%
Marketing	18	3%	0	0%	0%	1	6%	1%	15	83%	15%	2	11%	1%
Employee Ownership	13	2%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%	13	100%	5%
Design	9	2%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%	2	22%	2%	7	78%	3%
Life Sciences	3	1%	0	0%	0%	1	33%	1%	0	0%	0%	2	67%	1%
Collaboration	2	0.30%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%	2	100%	1%
Consortium	0	0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	574	100%	169	29%	100%	71	12%	100%	97	17%	100%	237	41%	100%

Source: Scottish Enterprise Monitoring Data, September, 2012

Note The highest proportion of 'Blanks' seem to occur against recently introduced products, those of a 'niche' nature, or when the capacity/skills of internal specialists to handle the numbers of enquiries themselves without the need to commission delivery of the products from external suppliers

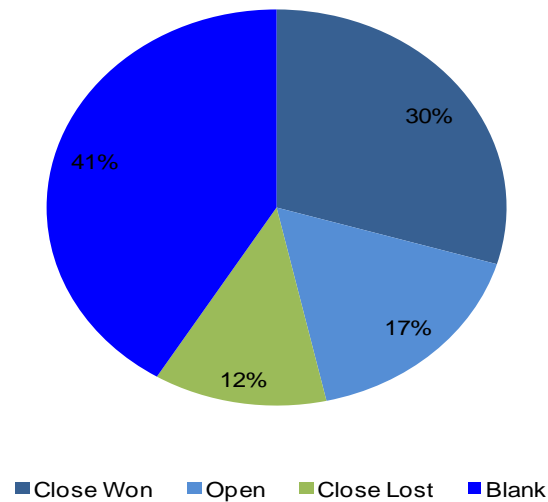
The key points to note from the table above are:

- of the 574 individual instances where a business enquired about support, just less than half (46%) have received support – completed or ongoing project;
- three products (ICT, Business Improvement, and Innovation and Offshore Wind) account for 80% of all enquiries;
- across all the products, the proportion of successful enquiries is 46% however, there are varying rates of success across all the individual products, ranging from 0% - 83%;
- the Marketing product, although it only accounts for a small proportion of all enquiries has the highest percentage of successful applications (83%) -significantly higher than any other Expert Support product – this is unsurprising since it is targeted at DRM companies; and
- the Employee Ownership, Design, Life Sciences and Collaboration products combined account for a small number of enquiries (5%, 27), of which the majority of data is missing (there is no status information available for 24 out of 27 projects).

It is important to note that monitoring data for four in every ten enquiries was not available/not completed i.e. recorded as blank, see [Figure 3.1](#). Feedback would suggest this is both an operational and management issue – staff not fully completing the required paperwork, and the monitoring system in place is not sufficiently robust enough to capture/identify this missing data. This is considered further in the Recommendations.

The monitoring information and the figures should therefore be treated with caution.

Figure 3.1: Total Project Status 2010/11 – 2012/13



n=574

Service Level Enquiries

Tables 3.2a – 3.2b detail the breakdown of enquiries by service level i.e. whether the enquiry was from a DRM or NRM company.

Table 3.2a: Total Enquiries by Service Level 2010/11 – 2012/13

	Number	%
DRM	273	48%
NRM	217	38%
Blank	84	15%
Total	574	100%

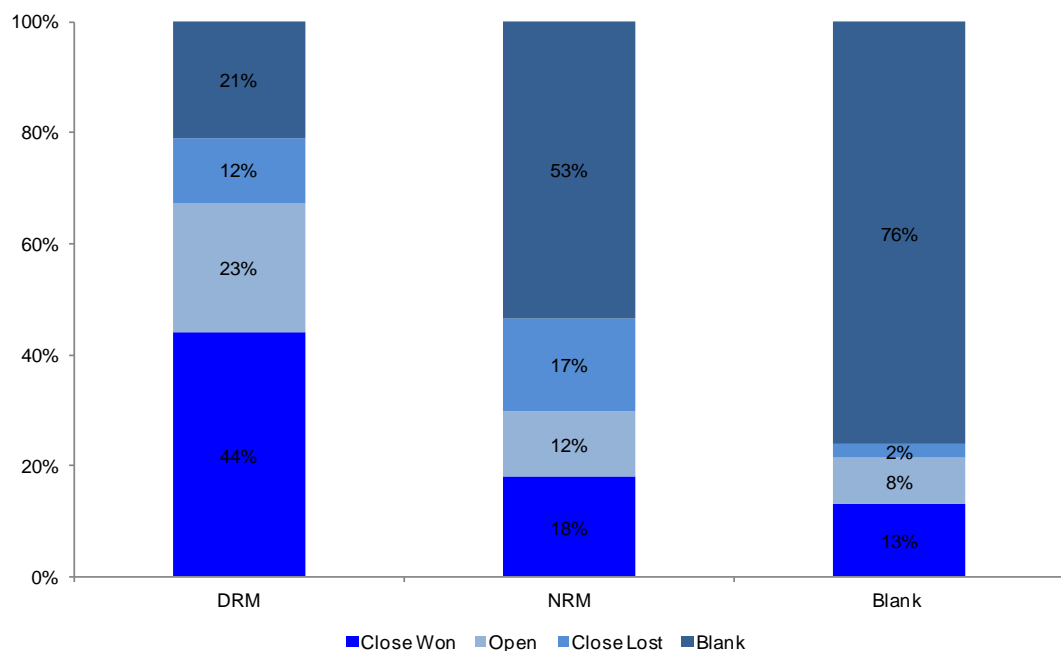
Table 3.2b: Total Enquiries by Service Level 2010/11 – 2012/13

	DRM		NRM		Blank		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2010	33	39%	42	50%	9	11%	84	100%
2011	106	51%	79	38%	24	11%	209	100%
2012	134	48%	96	34%	51	18%	281	100%
Total	273		217		84		574	

The data shows that over the period 2010/11 – 2012/13 most enquiries came from DRM companies (48%). If we look at the data broken down by years, in the first year of implementation (2010/11) the most number of enquiries came from NRM companies, this has however gradually declined over the subsequent years.

This helps show the shift within the project as originally the products were designed/intended to support NRM companies, but could be offered to DRM companies on a discretionary basis. Figure 3.2 reviews the service level data in more detail.

Figure 3.2: Service Level by Status 2010/11 – 2012/13



n=574

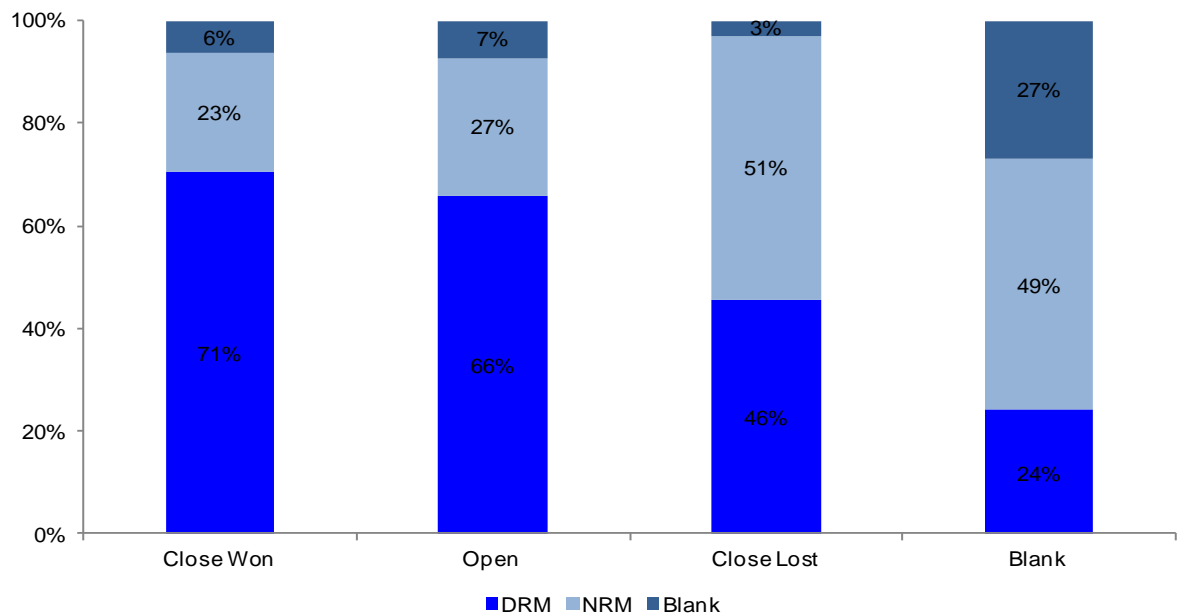
Across all the products, DRM companies were more successful in accessing support. Of the 273 recorded DRM enquiries - two thirds (67%) were successful in accessing support (23% of which are still open).

In contrast, less than one third (30%) of NRM companies were successful in accessing support. Of particular note is that the project status of over half of all the NRM enquires have not been recorded.

Again the issue of inconsistent monitoring will have skewed our results as there is no information whatsoever on 64 enquiries.

Figure 3.3 presents the data broken down by enquiry status and helps demonstrate the disparity that exists between DRM and NRM enquiries i.e. a significantly higher proportion of DRM enquiries are progressing to the next stage and accessing support.

Figure 3.3: Enquiry Status by Service Level 2010/11 – 2012/13



n=574

The (marginal) majority of all enquiries not progressing (closed lost enquires) are from NRM companies – this may be lower/higher but gaps in the monitoring data mean it is difficult to assess.

This suggests that a large proportion of projects being proposed by these NRM companies are not eligible or appropriate to support, and therefore there is a need for improvements to the upfront engagement and filtering process to ensure that the ‘right’ type of enquiries are coming through from these businesses. This is considered further in [Section 5](#).

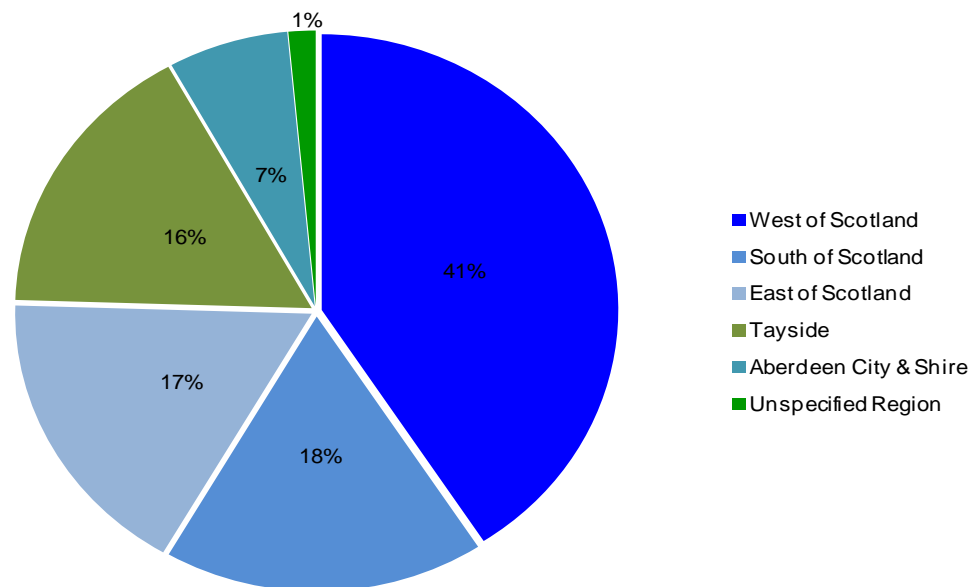
Based on the above, the data would suggest two key things:

1. the products are not targeting the ‘right’ NRM companies; and
2. the products are open to misuse i.e. they are not being used on a discretionary basis by account managers as was originally intended.

Enquiries by Region

There was varying usage across the five SE regions, however, this is unsurprising given the size of the business base and the number of specialists based within the regions, see [Figure 3.4](#).

Figure 3.4: Product Usage by Region 2010/11 – 2012/13



n=491 data taken from August 2012 and excludes the new Products - Marketing, Collaboration and Consortium Expert Support

3.3 Project Spend

The monitoring data identifies levels of project expenditure for the past three years; however please note there is no spend data available for the Consortium and Offshore wind products.

The expenditure data is based on SE spend, primarily made up of external consultants/suppliers fees and administration costs. The sunk costs to SE i.e. the time spent by specialists appraising projects through surgeries or one-to-one meetings is not considered within the spend data. This, therefore, underestimates the wider resource costs associated with the products.

Total Project Expenditure 2010/11 – 2012/13

Over the period 2010/11 – 2012/13 the project has drawn down £863,385 across eight Products, see [Table 3.3](#).

Table 3.3: Total Spend 2010/11 - 2012/13

Year	Spend	% of Total Spend
2010/11	£265,523	31%
2011/12	£334,656	39%
2012/13 (YTD)	£263,207	30%
Total	£863,385	100%

Note: Data does not include spend for the Consortium or Offshore Wind Products.

Average Cost per Enquiry

Based on the data available, the average cost per enquiry is £1,706. Please note that as no spend data is available for the Consortium and Offshore Wind Products, we have removed these enquiries from our calculation.

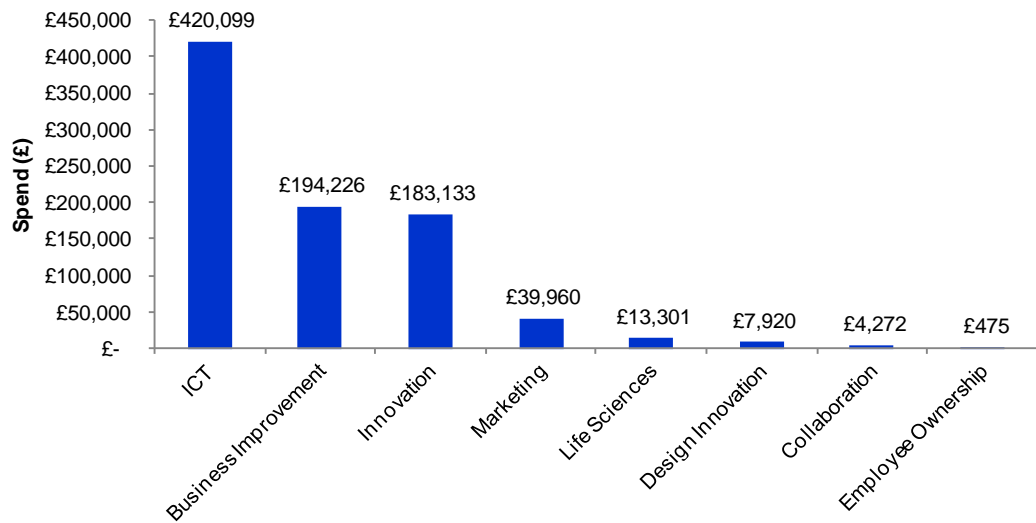
Total spend (not including Offshore Wind and Consortium) divided by **Total enquiries** (not including Offshore wind and Consortium).

$$\text{£}863,385 / 506 = \text{£}1,706$$

Expenditure per Product

Looking in more depth at the expenditure per product data, [Figures 3.5](#) and [3.6](#) and [Table 3.4](#) provide a more detailed breakdown.

Figure 3.5: Total Expenditure by Product 2010/11 – 2012/13



As the most popular products in terms of the number of enquiries, ICT, Business Improvement and Innovation account for the largest proportion of the total spend – 92%.

This is disproportionately higher than the proportion of enquiries (80%) for the same products, which suggests that it costs more per enquiry for these three products. In particular, the ICT product represents 33% of all enquiries but 49% of total expenditure.

Figure 3.6: Total Proportionate Expenditure by Product 2010/11 – 2012/13

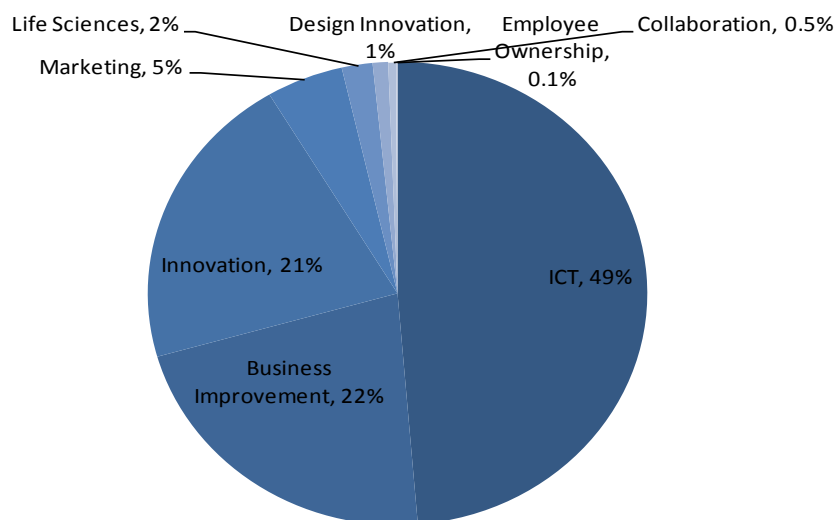


Table 3.4: Spend per Product between 2010/11 - 2012/13

Product	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Total	% of Total
ICT	£107,541	£180,135	£132,423	£420,099	49%
Business Improvement	£67,522	£72,875	£53,828	£194,226	22%
Innovation Services	£83,689	£72,144	£27,300	£183,133	21%
Marketing	£-	£-	£39,960	£39,960	5%
Life Sciences	£6,771	£6,530	£-	£13,301	2%
Design Innovation	£-	£-	£7,920	£7,920	1%
Collaboration	£-	£2,972	£1,300	£4,272	0.5%
Employee Ownership	£-	£-	£475	£475	0.1%
Total	£265,523	£334,656	£263,207	£863,385	100%

Note: Data does not include spend for the Consortium Support which has been primarily delivered by internal staff or Offshore Wind Products which is financed from a project budget. Life Sciences spend is usually concentrated in the last financial quarter due to the typical length of lead time for relevant projects

Spend per product based on successful enquiries has been reported in [Table 3.5](#).

Table 3.5: Spend per Product by Successful Enquiry 2010/11 – 2012/13

Support	Successful enquiries	Spend	Average Spend per Project
ICT	115	£420,099	£3,653
Business Improvements	100	£194,226	£1,942
Innovation	26	£183,133	£7,043
Offshore Wind	8	-	-
Marketing	15	£39,960	£2,664
Employee Ownership	0	£475	-
Design	2	£7,920	£3,960
Life Sciences	0	£13,301	-
Collaboration	0	£4,272	-
Consortium	0	-	-
Total	266	£863,385	£3,245

The spend per successful enquiry further helps demonstrates the disparity between different products. For those products where there are less successful engagements (enquiries not progressing), this will increase the overall cost of successful enquiries.

For example, even though the Marketing product is generally a longer intervention and therefore more expensive in terms of supplier fees (up to four days) the cost per successful enquiry is less than a number of other products – this is primarily due to a higher conversion rate (more enquiries successfully moving forward).

The Innovation product in particular appears to deliver a high cost per successful assist. Without the complete monitoring data it is hard to draw firm conclusions, however, based on available data this would suggest that there are issues with the value for money delivered by the products.

3.4 Summary

Overall, inconsistencies within the monitoring data have meant a robust analysis of performance and usage has not been possible. That being said, the key findings from a review of available monitoring data would suggest that:

- the products are not being targeted (and accessed) at the 'right' type of NRM companies as originally envisaged;
- the high number of DRM enquiries would suggest that the products are possibly not being used on a needs only discretionary basis;
- there are three key products in terms of number of enquiries – ICT, Business Improvement, and Innovation;
- overall, the conversion rate from enquiry to project is less than half – 46% (not including blanks), although it varies significantly across different products;
- DRM companies have a higher proportion of successful enquiries. This is most likely due to the fact that SE has a more intensive appraisal and long term relationship with the company wherein these interventions are more likely to be linked to a project that SE is involved in from inception to conclusion; and
- the average cost per enquiry is £1,706; and the average cost per successful enquiry is £3,245 – Cost per engagement varies between suppliers; no analysis was carried out on cost per supplier/product. However, this does raise questions about the current value for money of the products. This is particularly true in respect of DRM companies wherein it could be argued that more impact could be generated from longer term interventions in support of strategically important projects on a shared risk basis including initial early stage feasibility studies and project planning.

4. Stakeholder Feedback

A key part of the review process was engaging with internal SE stakeholders to gather feedback on the engagement, usage and impact of the products.

The stakeholder consultations were undertaken in two ways:

- two focus groups with SE staff – specialists and account managers. The two focus groups were broken down by:
 - focus group 1 - engagement and usage
 - focus group 2 - usage and impact; and
- strategic consultations with senior management.

The topic guides and details of attendees can be found in [Appendix B](#).

4.1 Focus Group Feedback

Below we have provided a summary of the key discussion points fed back through the two focus groups.

Focus Group 1

The first focus group was undertaken with SE specialists and account managers and focussed on the engagement process and usage of the products.

Referral Process:

- Business Gateway are a key partner for NRM referrals, however the quality of projects and leads coming through is very mixed. As a result, there is often a significant amount of the specialists' time spent on [a\)](#) assessing whether the company is eligible for support or [b\)](#) scoping out a project; and
- Business Gateway and SE are structured differently and have different objectives which can lead to some disparity between the two organisations' understanding of their roles and responsibilities with regards to the products.

Further, there are incentives for Business Gateway to refer on businesses to the Growth Pipeline system which again highlights the potential for misalignment between the two organisations;

- it was highlighted that more needs to be done in terms of communicating with Business Gateway so that both have a clearer and shared understanding of what the products are designed to do and ensure that the 'right' type of companies are coming through the initial filtering process;
- the product should continue to be reactive and discretionary – this will help increase its perceived value but also will not raise expectations that all businesses are eligible for support or funding;
- in terms of internal referrals for DRM companies, there was a mixed response in how account managers use and perceive what the products are to be used for. For example some identified the products as being a useful tool in scoping out wider DP projects while others reported they use it as an introduction for new companies within their portfolio; and
- feedback and a review of the usage statistics suggests that a minority of account managers used the products on a discretionary basis (where needed) while others are using the products as part of their normal process of engagement with clients. The monitoring data shows a gradual increase in the number of DRM referrals – suggesting the products are being used more widely.

Early Engagement and Filtering:

- to date the current NRM project identification and referral processes in place have not been successful in targeting the wider base of NRM companies that it was intended to target – there are a number of reasons for this;
- there should be more in-depth/robust processes in place for screening enquiries. Consideration should be given to scoping an upfront screening tool e.g. the website (which is in place, but not well used) for companies to register. Thereafter, there is a helpline for SE to assess projects in more detail and decide whether the company meets the criteria for a consultation with a specialist;

- improvements to the screening process would help ensure that only the 'right' companies were coming through and that clients would get the full complement of support, as opposed to specialists spending time assessing eligibility and project basics;
- engagements with DRM companies are undertaken on an informal basis with the account managers usually approaching the specialist, however there are instances when account managers approach suppliers directly; and
- feedback from both specialists and account managers identified that there is a lack of internal resources. So for specialists in particular, a robust filtering tool would help to free up some of their time and resources.

Usage:

- NRM companies are using the products to scope out a growth project and develop an action plan with a specialist supplier;
- feedback from account managers identifies that they are using the products in a number of ways, including helping to scope out a larger project, as a quick introduction to new companies within the account management system, and for supporting companies that may only require or be available for light touch engagement/support;
- there has been a definite shift in more DRM companies accessing the products due to a number of key factors including: the products being used by account managers as part of their normal client engagement process, and as a tool to address capacity issues with specialists;
- if DRM companies were to continue to access the support, is there a need for a similar appraisal process if the company is already known to SE?; and
- resource issues across Business Gateway, specialists, and account managers means the products are an easy sell to clients, quick wins, although no real concept of added value.

Suppliers:

- the supplier Framework is viewed as a blunt tool and is not well used – specialists tend to have a core group of suppliers that they trust to deliver quality work and will likely recommend them on this basis, and not on a project lead assessment;
- there are too many individual consultants/suppliers on the Framework. This should be amended to provide a core group of suppliers with flexible scope to access niche suppliers;
- generally speaking, the suppliers within the Framework possess the key skills required for providing support;
- there is no system to monitor or capture the performance of the suppliers – particularly for NRM companies. With DRM companies this is slightly different as the account managers have long standing relationships and feedback is gathered on a more ad hoc basis. However, there is no formal structure to relay performance or discuss issues; and
- there is no mechanism for specialists and suppliers to meet and engage e.g. through supplier days. It is therefore potentially quite difficult for some suppliers to access and engage with SE.

Focus Group 2

The second focus group was undertaken with SE specialists and account managers and focussed on the usage and impact of the products.

Usage of Support:

- the vast majority of engagements for ICT specialists are for DRM companies, however, NRM companies are more in need of the ICT support as the DRM tend to be larger companies with a structure and history of IT;
- NRM companies need more basic support and “hand holding” as the products are often their first engagement with public sector support;

- NRM companies that come through are generally at an early stage in project development – referred straight from Business Gateway. With DRM companies, most have a project in mind and are further on with regards to its development and scoping;
- some products, for example innovation, are seen as a ‘catch all’ service and therefore there is less scoping or appraisal undertaken at the initial engagement stage – lots of ineligible or inappropriate companies coming through;
- key in terms of how the product is used is that it needs to be effectively scoped out by the specialist, who needs to dig down and identify the key issues; and
- NRM, companies are using the products for project development/delivery of action plans. DRM companies use the products for scoping out larger projects, quick wins for new companies and validation of project ideas/plans.

Commercialisation:

- DRM companies would likely not pay for the support if it costs them both time and money based on the current two days light touch support;
- NRM companies are typically smaller and less likely to invest in these types of external support products;
- there was no real feedback on whether the recession has made DRM companies more risk averse and therefore reluctant to invest in external support;
- commercialisation of the products for NRM companies would add additional layers of bureaucracy and paperwork for an intervention that is designed to be light touch;
- it would be hard to demonstrate the value and impact to companies of the support – particularly NRM and therefore less scope to charge commercial rates;
- impact is often generated through companies making contact with SE from a networking perspective, but also sometimes the product support identifies where projects are not viable and therefore not progressed – would companies pay for this; and

- there is an expectation from both NRM and DRM companies that SE will provide free support, and should share or take all the risk.

Impacts:

- it is hard to measure the impact for both NRM and DRM companies;
- it is hard to identify where the added value is for DRM companies from two days of support, particularly if this is part of a wider project;
- the number of successful NRM engagements coming from Business Gateway is probably small, although they do have better engagement rates with Growth Pipeline companies;
- there is no system to capture whether companies supported through the products are companies to be considered later for potential account management – it is hard to see the linkages as no follow up or monitoring is undertaken;
- there are wider benefits to the Scottish economy through supporting both NRM and DRM companies e.g. generating GVA, new employment, etc;
- there is a short term revenue impact for suppliers;
- SE benefits through better understanding of its business base and engagement with potential future growth companies;
- measuring the outcome of an NRM support is meaningless (action plan delivered) - it is the application of action plans that generates impacts – this is not being captured;
- support is usually a stepping stone to further project work, therefore there are no/little tangible outputs to capture; and
- there is a timing issue as real outputs have a lag time of at least 6/12 months and are not recorded/difficult to measure.

Follow Up:

- there is real value in following up with NRM companies that go on to successfully implement projects, however, currently there is a significant constraint on resources and there is no available capacity; and

- Business Gateway should have a larger role in following up with supported companies.

Products and Suppliers:

- there are too many expert support products - the most important aspect is identifying a brief with the client that then dictates the support product being accessed. It should not be compartmentalised until a project has been scoped effectively;
- there are also too many consultants on the Framework, many of which have received no or very little work through the process; and
- the Framework needs to be improved as currently it does work - specialists just use a core group of suppliers and there is no 'fair' system for engagement with suppliers.

Improvements to the Products:

- there needs to be greater flexibility on the number of days of support available;
- the project needs a stronger definition and this needs to be communicated effectively to all stakeholders; and
- changes require to be made to the supplier Framework to make it more interactive and engage with suppliers more often.

4.2 Strategic Consultees

Consultations were undertaken with three strategic stakeholders to identify issues relating to the project delivery and how it fits with wider SE objectives. A list of the consultees can be found in Appendix B. The feedback is summarised below.

Rationale

There was a general consensus that there was, and continues to be both a strategic and market efficiency/failure rationale for the support products. The original drivers came from SE recognising that in the post recession climate there was a need to offer light touch support to the wider business base. This fits with their wider aspirations to support and grow the Scottish business base.

There continues to be a need to engage with the business base and the products are seen as a useful platform to facilitate this.

To some extent the products have helped promote market adjustment through removing information barriers i.e. they have facilitated access to external specialist support and companies are more aware of SE and their role as an economic development organisation. This is seen to have benefits for both the company (accessing support and more knowledge of public sector support provision) and SE (through engaging with and becoming aware of the potential growth companies).

Project Definition

All the consultees were aware of the origins of the product support and what they were originally designed to deliver. However, these have shifted over a few years and there is now no clear direction or guidance on the products. This is having an impact on the delivery and outcomes of the products, particularly as different internal teams and groups have a different filtering criteria.

There was recognition that the products are being used more and more to support DRM companies as these companies are already known to SE and have less impact on internal resources e.g. less input required to scope out projects.

It was identified that in moving forward this is a key issue that needs to be addressed – who are the products targeted at users/beneficiaries and what are they designed to do (outcomes).

Engagement

As with the focus groups, the consultees identified that currently the engagement and appraisal process is not effective in filtering out the NRM companies the products were designed to support.

From this, it was recognised that both SE and Business Gateway have a larger role to play in ensuring a more meaningful and robust engagement process. Business Gateway should remain the key point of contact and referrals should come from them. However, consultees felt that Business Gateway should undertake some form of diligence and more in-depth upfront appraisal in order to filter out the companies not appropriate to support.

It should be the role of SE to ensure that Business Gateway are fully informed on the types of companies that are eligible and appropriate to support through the products, and are provided with enough training and support to effectively undertake appraisals. Overall there is a need to improve communication with Business Gateway.

It was felt that if a more formal and robust upfront appraisal system was in place this would have significant beneficial impacts on the quality of referrals coming through. The 'Yes to Growth' campaign was identified as a recent campaign where SE and Business Gateway worked well together in partnership.

Linkages

The products sit well within SE's existing portfolio of support with little duplication. That being said, it is not clear how or where the products fit with the wider support products. Also, for NRM in particular there is no clear path of 'what's next' other than referral back to Business Gateway.

Product Offering

The product offering was viewed as generally fine, with a good core offering that covers most enquiries e.g. ICT, innovation, and Business Improvement. Consultees were unable to comment on other more niche products but felt they may not be well used or promoted.

In terms of how the products are promoted, it was felt that having 10 products at the front end was maybe too many and that this should be changed. For example – one product with a number of sub themes, three products targeted at DRM, NRM and sector teams, etc.

The supplier Framework was seen as being too large and not being used as originally designed – specialists do, and will likely continue to work with those consultants they have previous experience working with. The Framework should retain a core group of suppliers but be flexible to allow changes and niche engagements. For example, within constantly changing thematic areas like ICT and innovation where changing technology means demand for support will change at a fast pace, the Framework should retain flexibility to bring in new suppliers or to advise existing suppliers where there are skills gaps.

Commercialisation

The general feeling was that there is no rationale or appetite for charging NRM companies for the support products, key feedback suggests that:

- the products are designed to aid future SE investment decisions therefore it is actually SE getting the key benefits, with any benefits for the NRM company being seen as a knock on benefit;
- it is hard to demonstrate the impacts and value to businesses of two days support – if charging, there would potentially have to be more intensive support; and
- there is possible scope for charging DRM companies if the products are used to scope out projects that are implemented/go forward and therefore generate benefits for the company.

Value for Money

Consultees reported it was hard to measure or quantify the value for money of the products as it is hard to capture the longer term benefits and impacts over and above the immediate outcomes e.g. action plan developed. There is potential for developing new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are more effective in tracking the companies to see where action plans have been implemented, and whether these companies engage with SE further along the customer support journey.

That being said, there is a clear need to improve the engagement and filtering process so that more time and resources are spent on eligible and appropriate companies.

Key Strengths, Weaknesses, and Improvements

Strengths:

- flexible and good light touch introduction to SE for NRM companies;
- useful way to assist DRM companies scope out projects – possibly not long enough;
- addresses information failure barriers for businesses;
- good pool of external specialist consultants; and

- SE seen as supporting the wider business base during difficult trading conditions.

Weaknesses and Improvements:

- the project definition does not help SE or partners identify the most appropriate businesses to support, this needs to be more targeted;
- the current filtering system is not effective – relationships and communication with Business Gateway require improvement;
- the complicated product offering could be rationalised or simplified; and
- there is poor monitoring and there should be tracking of performance of supported companies to capture the wider value of products.

5. Recommendations

This section presents recommendations to support the future delivery of the Expert Support products. Please note, our recommendations are based on a review of secondary data, feedback from stakeholders through the discussion groups, one-to-one meetings, and consultation with the Expert Support products delivery and operation staff.

Recommendation 1: Clearly define who the products are designed to support/target

Recommendation

Based on feedback and discussions with SE, we would recommend that the products are targeted at NRM companies as per the original rationale and business case, but also extended to DRM companies on a commercial basis i.e. the number of days of specialist support is increased and the company make a financial contribution to the support.

One of the key issues to arise through our review was that the products need to be more clearly defined and have transparent boundaries and objectives. In addition, these need to be effectively communicated to stakeholders and partners.

In defining the products, this should look at:

- who are they aimed at and who are the most appropriate businesses to support?;
- why are they being targeted at these beneficiaries?;
- what services are going to be delivered?; and
- what are the intended outcomes for both the beneficiary and SE?

The products (stemming from the original innovation support product) were originally designed to provide a platform for early engagement with companies that SE did not have an existing relationship with but demonstrated growth potential. These 'fringe' companies were to be primarily identified through working with the sector teams and used as a first step to establishing a longer term engagement and relationship with SE.

However, throughout the lifespan, the project has evolved and changed its focus so that DRM companies could also access free support through the products on a discretionary basis.

To date there has not been a consistent approach from Business Gateway, SE specialists, sector teams or account managers in how the products are targeted and used.

In moving forward, there are three key options for SE to consider in terms of the products form and function:

- **NRM only** – the products should be delivered as per the original business case and rationale to support companies that do not have an existing relationship with SE as a vehicle for early stage engagement;
- **DRM only** – the products should be rolled out more widely and incorporated within the wider DP portfolio to assist account managers. Feedback identifies the products have previously been used for helping to scope out projects and for companies that are newly integrated into the account management system; and
- **NRM and DRM** – the products continue to be available to both NRM and DRM companies.

Feedback suggests that the two days of light touch support is a useful tool to engage companies that do not have a relationship with SE and, if used appropriately, can help businesses scope out a development project.

The key anticipated output for NRM businesses through engaging with the support is the development of a project action plan. Feedback suggests that without the intervention/support, very few of these businesses would have the capacity, resources or experience to scope out projects on their own. This is not to say that the next steps/actions identified within these action plans are always taken forward (this is considered further below), however there is some added value to businesses generated through this process – the counterfactual position being that a number of the projects would not progress.

Since the onset of the recession c. 2008 there has been a policy shift within SE and recognition that as the principal body responsible for economic development in Scotland they need to engage with, and support the wider business base.

This was one of the key original drivers for the development of the Expert Support products.

For companies that are not supported through the Account Management or Growth Pipeline systems (which totals c. 2,000 companies), outside of Business Gateway and some small local authority delivered projects, there is very little in the way of business development support available to the wider business base.

There is therefore a clear strategic and equity rationale for SE providing light touch support to companies that they do not have an existing relationship with.

In terms of supporting DRM companies, as identified above, account managers have used the support products in a variety of ways including: helping to scope out projects; as an introduction for companies new to the account management system; and as a way of 'plugging the resources gap' where there is a lack of capacity within the SE specialist teams.

Anecdotally, the feedback suggests that the products have provided value to the companies accessing the support through, for example, helping to scope out a wider project that would be eligible to access DP support.

However, there is no clear evidence that identifies where and how the products are providing added value to these companies e.g. it is hard to identify how many wider DP projects have progressed as a direct result of the products. This is particularly true when companies are undertaking a large scale project and have accessed a number of more intensive support packages and products through the DP framework. The Expert Support products are light touch and therefore it is extremely difficult to identify, and thereafter attribute any impact or added value to the products e.g. projects were bigger, better, generated greater impacts, etc.

Another issue raised through the consultations (and considered below) is the length of the interventions available through the support products (up to two days). In particular, account managers identified that two days support with an external consultant is often inadequate for larger companies to effectively scope out a multi-layered project. Therefore, while feedback identifies the products are useful in helping to scope out projects, in some instances it may actually constrain the development of larger projects with DRM companies due to the limited number of days.

Finally, there does not appear to be any consistency in how the products are used by account managers. The products were designed to be discretionary, however, evidence on the usage shows that year on year there has been an increase in the proportion of enquiries from DRM companies, and overall the greatest proportion of enquiries (48%) comes from DRM companies. This would suggest that account managers are already using the products as part of their wider engagement tools.

Based on the above, we would recommend that the Expert Support products are targeted at, and used to support both NRM and DRM companies. The products should continue to support NRM companies, albeit with a stronger focus on the initial engagement and filtering process to ensure that the 'right' type of companies are accessing support (discussed below).

In addition, the current offering is extended to DRM companies as part of SE's wider offering of support. However, the products should be extended on a more commercial basis through increasing the number of days of support, for example, up to four days input from an external specialist and requiring a financial contribution from the company. This would allow the company to access specialist support from an SE approved Framework of consultants for project scoping support.

Recommendation 2: Improve and refine the engagement process

Recommendation

SE should strengthen the current NRM engagement, filtering and appraisal process and work with partners/stakeholders to ensure that the 'right' type of companies are coming through the process and accessing the products.

Another key issue that was fed back was the need to improve the upfront engagement/filtering/prospecting process. The quality of projects being proposed and suitability of the companies accessing the products is very mixed, and as a direct result they are not having their intended impact.

Currently the three ways in which businesses engage with the Expert Support products are: self referral; referral through Business Gateway; or, if a DRM company, through their account manager.

DRM companies have an ongoing relationship and regular communication with their account managers and demand/appropriateness of accessing support is identified on a case by case (more informal) basis. It is recommended that this should continue as the most effective method for engaging with DRM companies.

For NRM companies, feedback identified that in a number of cases a significant amount of time was spent with companies either through a surgery or a one-to-one visit exploring whether the company was even eligible or appropriate to support, or had a viable project scoped out.

Where it was identified that companies were not appropriate to support they were signposted elsewhere (usually Business Gateway) and where the specialist spent time scoping out a project with the client, this often ate into the time developing an action plan with the external specialists (consultants).

Therefore, it is clear that the engagement process in its current form is not an effective or efficient tool to filter out the appropriate companies to support.

Further supporting evidence comes from the usage statistics which shows that 17% of NRM enquiries did not progress after engagement with a specialist. Please note that these figures are likely to underestimate the number of projects that did not progress or were not appropriate to support:

- there are significant gaps within the monitoring data (as data was only available in hard copy, not electronically) and feedback suggests that the number of enquiries not progressing may be higher; and
- feedback from specialists identifies there have been instances where companies have accessed support even though they may not have been appropriate.

There are two suggested improvements and refinements to the current NRM engagement process that will help ensure the 'right' type of companies are coming forward to access the products. This in turn should help improve both the conversion rate (enquiries into projects) and the quality of projects that are being proposed.

The three suggested improvements to the engagement process include:

1. **Work more closely with Business Gateway.** BG are a key referral partner for SE, however, the feedback/evidence would suggest that the quality of referrals coming from BG is mixed.

There is therefore scope to work more closely with BG to provide them with further and more detailed guidance on the products (who is eligible, what are the intended outcomes, etc) and ensures that a formal system that delivers a robust upfront appraisal and diagnostic is undertaken by BG.

As the first key point of contact and referral organisation for a number of businesses, BG should be responsible for gathering information, critically assessing and appraising whether or not companies may be eligible or appropriate for support through the Expert Support products.

This could include for example:

- background business details (sector, historical performance - number of employees, turnover, profit, etc) and future forecasts;
- business plans;
- project scoping or feasibility studies; and
- anticipated project timescales, processes, outputs, etc.

Building better relationships with BG and ensuring there are channels for regular communication will help strengthen the upfront engagement process.

For example, if a company comes through to a specialist that is not appropriate to support there should be a formal system and open channels of communication for the company to be referred back to BG, with an explanation as to why they were not appropriate to support.

This should therefore have an impact on the quality of businesses and projects coming through the system, and in addition, will help free up SE specialists time and resources.

2. [Upfront web and telephone based engagement platform](#). For those NRM companies that are not referred through BG (e.g. that may have become aware of the support through word of mouth and attend a surgery) there is a need to develop a web based portal that captures business information and growth potential.

The initial stage would be for companies to register on a website providing some background business details so at the very least SE has some information on the business. For those businesses that are not eligible for support, the web site could provide signposting to other support providers or more general support.

The suggested next step would be a front end consultation (potentially via telephone) with an advisor (SE or BG) to discuss the potential of offering support through the Expert Support products. At this stage businesses could discuss their potential project and thereafter the advisor can make an informed decision whether they are eligible/appropriate to access support (refer on directly to a specialist or surgery) or refer them to BG if not appropriate/eligible.

3. [referral from sector teams](#) – the original project was aimed at working with companies that SE sector teams identified as having high growth potential within the priority sectors. It is recommended that the Expert Support products team work more closely with the sector teams in order to help identify these potential high growth companies.

Ensuring there is a more robust and detailed upfront engagement and filtering process will help ensure that the 'right' types of companies are accessing the products.

In order for these recommendations to be successfully implemented, it is important that both SE and BG communicate and engage on a regular basis. This could take the form of quarterly performance update meetings where progress and any issues are discussed.

Recommendation 3: Rationalise the number of products

Recommendation

It is recommended that SE rationalises the number of products available in order to simplify the process and better target businesses through a core offering of support – Innovation, ICT, Business Improvement, Offshore Wind, and Marketing.

Feedback from stakeholders, and in particular a review of the usage statistics, suggests there are too many products (and sub products), see [Table 5.1](#), and that these can be rationalised to provide a core offering of support.

Table 5.1: Usage Statistics 2010/11 – 2012/13

	No.	%	Spend	% of Spend
ICT	191	33%	£420,099	49%
Business Improvement	155	27%	£194,226	22%
Innovation	115	20%	£183,133	21%
Marketing	18	3%	£39,960	5%
Design Innovation	13	2%	£39,960	5%
Life Science	3	1%	£13,301	2%
Employee Ownership	9	2%	£475	0.1%
Collaboration	2	0.3%	£4,272	0.5%
Offshore Wind	68	12%	*	*
Consortium	0	0%	*	*
Total	574	100%		

Source: Scottish Enterprise

* No monitoring data available

Currently there are ten products however, as identified above, there is a significant variation in their usage. The original project delivered support through one product (Innovation) and this was subsequently rolled out based on where there was perceived demand and to meet SE's changing strategic priorities.

That being said, the current offering is perhaps too broad in terms of how it is promoted and therefore needs to be rationalised. That is not to say the types of projects and businesses being supported will change, however at the front end this will make it easier for businesses and specialists to determine the most appropriate product for each client and also better target resources.

Below we provide some recommendations on what products may be most appropriate to keep, which should be rolled up within other products, or where there is no real demand.

There are three key products (ICT, Business Improvement, and Innovation) that account for 80% of all enquiries. In a more general sense, these three products are somewhat of a 'catch all' in terms of the type of support they offer, and can service the support demands put forward by the majority of businesses. These are also the areas where SE has the most specialists and resources to support businesses. Based on this is therefore recommended that these products continue to be delivered.

Further, there is also a strategic rationale for retaining two additional products:

- Off-shore Wind – this is a priority sector for both SE and the Scottish Government through the renewables agenda; and
- Marketing – the Marketing product is the only marketing focused support SE offers, and therefore an important source of support for NRM/DRM clients. In addition, since its introduction, usage has gradually increased, and this is also the only product that offers more than a maximum of two days support (up to four days).

The usage statistics show that the remaining five products have been seldom used – although it should be recognised that the gaps in the monitoring data make it hard to accurately identify where there are fewer enquiries, and that two of the products (consortium and collaboration support) have only recently been rolled out (Summer 2012).

It is therefore recommended that SE undertake internal discussions, including the sector teams to determine the future of these products and should consider both anticipated demand and also the fit/contribution towards SE's strategic objectives and priorities.

Rationalising the product offering will have a knock-on effect on the supplier framework, which is discussed below ([Recommendation 6](#)).

Recommendation 4: Product assessment criteria

Recommendation

There should be no significant changes to the current assessment process for NRM and DRM companies.

In order to provide the most valuable intervention it is important that the specialist and account manager has a good understanding of the business and the scope of the proposed project. There are three key steps to this:

- identifying the project scope and setting an appropriate brief;
- identifying the most appropriate product to access support through; and
- engaging with the most appropriate supplier through the Framework.

Currently, for NRM companies this process is undertaken on an ad hoc basis either through surgeries or one-to-one meetings. Based on the specialist's experience and understanding of the businesses needs they then signpost them to the appropriate product, and thereafter, suppliers. For DRM companies, as highlighted above this is undertaken on a more informal basis between account managers and their clients.

Feedback suggests that this is the most effective process to identify the next steps and it is recommended that this is continued for future delivery.

Recommendation 5: How are the products promoted

Recommendation

It is recommended that SE consider how to best promote the products to maximise their potential impact.

While this is more of an internal issue, discussions with stakeholders identified that there is potentially an opportunity to make changes to the front end promotion/marketing of the products. The key issue to consider is whether the products should be packaged as one Expert Support product or should remain as individual products – potentially five based on a rationalised product offering.

Recommendation 6: Rationalise the Supplier Framework

Recommendation

The current Supplier Framework should be rationalised to ensure it is flexible and both SE and their suppliers get benefits from their engagement.

A review of the usage data and feedback from stakeholders identifies that:

- there are a large number of suppliers/sub-consultants on the Framework – c. 40 suppliers but significantly more individual consultants which makes it hard to manage and effectively assess the suitability of the suppliers;
- there is overlap within the Framework i.e. the same consultants are recruited to the Framework via different suppliers; and
- the Framework is not being used as it was intended as the specialists tend to use the same core group of suppliers they have worked with previously.

In re-procuring the Supplier Framework, SE should look to recruit a core group of around c. 20 - 40 suppliers/consultants to the Framework. This will be beneficial to both SE, through having a 'preferred list' of trusted suppliers that they have built up relationships, but also for the suppliers through having regular and ongoing contact with SE.

Ensuring SE retains a supplier Framework that has the skills and experience to meet the demands of companies, and can demonstrate value will be important, particularly for DRM companies that will be required to make a financial contribution to the support.

In order to help define an appropriate brief/specification for the recruitment of suppliers, SE should undertake some internal scoping works as to: what products will be delivered; what type of companies are going to be supported; and what are the required/desired skills set and experience within the Supplier Framework.

Generally, there are no obvious skills gaps within the existing Supplier Framework and the consultants appear to have an appropriate mix of skills and experience to deliver support. We would therefore recommend a similar supplier procurement process moving forward.

In addition, any Framework agreement should be flexible enough to allow for 'niche' consultant support to be accessed on a case by case basis e.g. for particular skills that may not be part of the wider core supplier Framework offering. This could take the form of a contractual clause which would require suppliers to identify where they would access this additional niche support during the procurement process.

Finally, SE should consider setting up 'meet the supplier days' where suppliers and SE colleagues get an opportunity to meet, network, and establish open lines of communication. Currently, the Framework (to some extent) is perceived as closed off – where only those that either have an existing relationship with SE or are aware of how to engage with the public sector are seeing any returns (project work).

Recommendation 7: Follow up with supported companies

Recommendation

SE should consider the potential benefits and impacts of following up with supported businesses.

One of the key issues raised through our discussions was that the products are not set up to monitor the longer term impacts and benefits generated through the support, for NRM companies in particular.

Currently, the impacts/outputs for NRM companies are measured through the number of action plans delivered. However, it was identified that it is the next stage (after implementation of the action plan) where the benefits and impacts are likely to accrue for the business. Therefore, project monitoring is not capturing the added value of the support, or where further support is needed.

In order to capture these benefits and identify where the company is in terms of its development (along the customer support journey) SE should consider developing a formal web based system for capturing this (see [Recommendation 8](#)).

In terms of following up with NRM companies not engaging with SE on a regular basis this could be a mail shot that asks for feedback on progress, how they rated their consultant etc. It also provides a potential opportunity for a follow up chat (with SE or BG). This could help keep companies engaged with SE and 'in the loop'.

In addition to light touch web based engagement tools, SE should consider how best the sector teams can work with and establish relationships with supported companies post engagement.

One of the key objectives is to help companies that do not have an existing relationship with SE but have growth potential to realise their grow ambitions and become more involved with SE through the Growth Pipeline or Account Management systems. Some provision for follow-up support would both provide additional support for the business, but also allow SE to track where the clients are on the customer support journey.

Recommendation 8: Develop a web based engagement and follow up platform

SE should develop a multi function web based platform that can support their engagement/filtering, signposting, and NRM company aftercare processes.

As highlighted in [Recommendation 2](#) and [7](#), SE should consider ways in which they can make their upfront engagement/filtering and follow up processes more robust.

SE currently have web based engagement tools and platforms that are currently not well used, and these could be developed to help support the Expert Support products.

The web based system could have a number of functions, including:

- front end engagement/filtering tool for businesses self referring to the programme (see [Recommendation 2](#));
- an online resource for companies through signposting to other support providers for companies not eligible for support, access to online toolkits, etc; and

- send out mail shots to companies after they have received support as light touch aftercare/follow up (see [Recommendation 7](#)). This could allow the company to have some form of continual engagement with SE and also provide links to the other online resources e.g. signposting.

One of the key benefits of having a multi function web based system is that it would free up resources and help reduce overheads.

Recommendation 9: Robust Monitoring Framework

Recommendation

In order to effectively monitor and capture the benefits generated through the support, SE need to implement a more robust and flexible monitoring framework.

The current monitoring system is not set up to capture the most 'meaningful data' (as highlighted above), and more generally there is a lack of consistency with regards to monitoring data – currently it is collated on hard copy and not all the data is available electronically.

The usage statistics identify that of 574 enquiries, there is no monitoring data available electronically for 237 of these enquiries (41% of all enquiries). This means we have no easy access to project data e.g. on whether projects went forward, whether they were rejected (and why), which projects are ongoing, etc.

This has made assessing the performance of the products extremely difficult and does not provide meaningful data as to the performance, changes in demand for products, which products have the higher conversion rates, etc. This, however, is not the only area in which SE should consider making adjustments to their monitoring systems.

Below we have highlighted two key areas for consideration:

- [monitoring outputs](#). The current system measures the number of action plans delivered as the key output. However, this is not capturing the wider benefit/impact that the products are designed to deliver. As highlighted above, SE should consider other more relevant indicators to measure the success and impact of the projects.

This might include for example, action plans implemented, companies being involved with SE further along the customer support journey (via Growth Pipeline or Account Management systems, etc); and

- **monitoring suppliers.** For NRM companies that don't have an existing relationship with SE, there is no formal system to gather feedback from supported businesses as to the performance of the consultant, outputs agreed, next steps, etc. It is therefore hard to gauge the effectiveness of the suppliers and whether the support has been worthwhile/valuable (both for the business and the SE investment). Again, there is potential for some light touch follow up monitoring via a mail shot or the web based portal.

Appendix A: Performance, Usage and Spend Data by Product

This section presents monitoring information broken down by individual product.

Innovation Product

Innovation was piloted in 2009. The product is aimed at SME NRM companies who have an innovation project in mind or DRM companies that have a specific project that needs innovation input. The support is not aimed at individuals or large companies.

Support consists of an initial surgery with a member of the Innovation Expert team and successful applicants receive a maximum of two days consultancy support. The key deliverable is the development of an action plan.

DRM companies are referred directly from their Account Manager and an appraisal form is completed this therefore cuts out the need for a one to one surgery.

Usage

A total of 115 applications for Innovation support have been recorded however the project status of two thirds has not been recorded i.e. blank. Innovation accounts for 20% of overall applications for Expert Support, [Table A1](#) below.

Table A1: Innovation Usage 2010 - 2012/13

Status	DRM	NRM	Blank	Total	% of Status
Close Won	9	8	1	18	16%
Close Lost	5	7	0	12	10%
Open	5	3	0	8	7%
Blank	8	46	23	77	67%
Total	27	64	24	115	100%
% of Service Level	23%	56%	21%	100%	

Over half of enquiries were from NRM companies (56%) with DRM representing 23%.

In total 23% of enquiries have been successful, this accounts for 10% of all successful applications to Expert Support.

Spend

A total of £183,133 has been spent to date, [Table A2](#), accounting for 21% of the overall spend for Expert Support.

Table A2: Innovation Spend 2010 - 2012/13

	Spend	% of total
2010/11	£83,689	46%
2011/12	£72,144	39%
2012/13	£27,300	15%
Total	£183,133	100%

Cost per Successful Assists

The average cost per successful assist, defined as Close Won and Open, is £7,044.

Output

A total of 18 projects have been completed, with a further eight currently ongoing.

Business Improvement Product

Business Improvement Expert Support has been operating since 2010. Support is aimed at existing SME NRM companies which have a business improvement idea yet need external assistance to help with cost savings. Support is available to DRM companies through exception and was anticipated to account for a maximum of 15% of all enquiries.

Support consists of an initial surgery for NRM companies to establish eligibility where they complete a Project Appraisal form (the surgery lasts up to 2 hours). DRM companies complete a Business Appraisal form. Successful applicants receive up to a maximum of two days.

Usage

A total of 155 enquiries have been recorded for Business Improvements Expert Support, 27% of the overall Expert Support offered, [Table A3](#).

Table A3: Business Improvement Usage 2010 - 2012/13

Status	DRM	NRM	Blank	Total	% of Status
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Close Won	39	9	7	55	35%
Close Lost	12	6	0	18	12%
Open	28	13	4	45	29%
Blank	17	13	7	37	24%
Total	96	41	18	155	100%
% of Service Level	62%	26%	12%	100%	

A total of 64% of enquiries recorded were successful.

A key point to note is that DRM companies account for nearly two thirds of recorded enquiries (62%).

Spend

A total of £194,226 was spent, accounting for 22% of overall spend, see [Table A4](#) below.

Table A4: Business Improvement 2010 - 2012/13

	Spend	%
2010/11	£67,522	35%
2011/12	£72,875	38%
2012/13	£53,828	28%
Total	£194,226	100%

Cost per Successful Assists

The average cost per successful enquiry, defined as Close Won and Open, is £1,942.

Output

A total of 55 projects have been completed (35% of enquiries), with a further 45 projects ongoing.

Life Science Product

The Life Science product has been operating in some form since 2007 however has been operating under the Expert Support banner since 2010. Performance has been analysed from 2010 onwards to remain consistent with the other Expert Support data.

Support is aimed at SME NRM companies who have a life sciences project or DRM companies that have identified projects that needs expert assistance. The support is not aimed at inventors, individuals or large companies.

The application process follows that of Innovation - a one to one surgery is undertaken with NRM applicants and eligible companies are able to access up to two days of support, DRM companies are referred by their Account Manager.

Usage

There has been little take up of the life science product, and there are also gaps within the monitoring data.

Table A5: Usage 2010/11 - 2012/13

	DRM	NRM	Blank	Total
Close Won	-	-	-	-
Close Lost	1	-	-	1
Open	-	-	-	-
Blank	-	1	1	2
Total	1	1	1	3

Spend

In total £13,301 has been spent during 2010/11 - 2012/13 accounting for 1.5% of the total spend. No spend has been recorded during 2012/13.

Table A6: Life Sciences Spend 2010/11 - 2012/13

	Spend	%
2010/11	£6,771	51%
2011/12	£6,530	49%
2012/13	-	0%
Total	£13,301	100%

It should be highlighted that the total spent for Life Science support is £431,129 over the course of five years (2007-2012/13 YTD) with the majority of it being spent before 2010.

Cost per Successful Assists

The incomplete monitoring data has meant we are unable to assess the cost per successful assist.

Output

No actions projects have been taken forward.

ICT Product

Introduction

The ICT support is available to companies that show a commitment to better/develop their ICT to enable growth and is available to both NRM and DRM (where appropriate). The support is not available to individuals.

NRM companies undertake a one to one surgery to assess the eligibility of their project, and thereafter, the company is eligible to receive up to two days consultancy support; the end result being an action plan for the company to work towards.

Usage

ICT Expert Support received the most enquiries across the ten products, accounting for 33%. [Table A7](#) details the breakdown of usage by status and service level.

Table A7: ICT Usage 2010/11 - 2012/13

Status	DRM	NRM	Blank	Total	% of Status
Close Won	63	22	3	88	46%
Close Lost	14	23	2	39	20%
Open	16	10	1	27	14%
Blank	6	24	7	37	19%
Total	99	79	13	191	100%
% of Service Level	52%	41%	7%	100%	

The split between DRM and NRM companies is relatively even (52% and 41% respectively) and 60% of enquires went forward. This accounts for 43% of all projects going forward at the overall project level.

Spend

ICT has recorded the largest spend of all the products totalling £420,099; this accounts for 49% of the total project spend 2010/11 - 2012/13, see [Table A8](#).

Table A8: ICT Spend 2010/11 - 2012/13

	Spend	%
2010/11	£107,541	26%
2011/12	£180,135	43%
2012/13	£132,423	32%
Total	£420,099	100%

Cost per Successful Assists

The average cost per successful enquiry, defined as Close Won and Open, is £3,653.

Output

88 projects have been completed to date with a further 27 ongoing.

Collaboration Product

Collaboration is a relatively new support product being offered and is available to both NRM and DRM companies that demonstrate an interest to explore collaboration opportunities. Collaboration support is not available to individuals or pre-revenue businesses.

The product is designed to support the objectives of Enterprise Europe Scotland, particularly encouraging UK based collaboration projects.

Usage

Due to its recent introduction, monitoring data regarding the uptake of the Collaboration product is very limited, see [Table A9](#).

Table A9: Usage 2010/11 - 2012/13

Status	DRM	%
Close Lost	0	0%
Close Won	0	0%
Open	0	0%
Blank	2	100%
Total	2	100%

Spend

Collaboration makes up a small amount of overall spend (0.05% of total spend) as only £4,272 has been spend, [Table A10](#) below.

Table A10: Spend 2010/11 - 2012/13

	Spend	%
2010/11	-	0%
2011/12	£2,972	70%
2012/13	£1,300	30%
Total	£4,272	100%

Cost per Successful Assists

The incomplete monitoring data has meant we are unable to assess the cost per successful assist.

Output

To date no projects have been recorded as taken forward.

Design Innovation

Introduction

Design Innovation Expert Support is a pilot project running for 12 months. Support is primarily available for NRM companies that demonstrate the need for design innovation support; however the support is also available for DRM companies that have a specific issue that cannot be addressed through other support means.

Usage

There are significant gaps within the monitoring data. It should be noted that the Design Innovation product has only been operating for a few months as a pilot project, and an initial target of 30 successful enquiries was set for the first year.

Table A11: Design Innovation Usage 2010/11 - 2012/13

Status	DRM	NRM	Blank	Total	% of Status
Close Won	-	-	-	-	0%
Close Lost	-	-	-	-	0%
Open	-	-	2	2	22%
Blank	-	2	5	7	78%
Total	-	2	7	9	100%
% of Service Level	0%	22%	78%	100%	

Spend

As mentioned above, Design Innovation has only been operating for a short period of time and accounts for a small percentage, 0.01%, of overall spend to date, (£7,920).

Table A12: Design Innovation Spend 2010/11 - 2012/13

	Spend	%
2010/11	-	0%
2011/12	-	0%
2012/13	£7,920	100%
Total	£7,920	100%

Cost per Successful Assists

The average cost per successful assist, defined as Close Won and Open, is £3,960.

Output

To date no projects have been recorded as taken forward.

Employee Ownership Product

Introduction

The Employee Ownership product is also a relatively new product. The support consists of two stages; stage one is an employee buyout assessment (EBO) which results in an EBO Assessment Report (up to one days specialist time) followed by an EBO Feasibility Study (up to two days specialist time, however it can be extended at the specialists discretion).

The support is available to both NRM and DRM companies that show a commitment to employee engagement, at least 50% of ownership moving to employees, and the change is financially viable.

Usage

A small number of enquiries have been recorded; however, again gaps in the monitoring data mean we are unable to fully assess performance.

Table A13: Employee Ownership Usage 2010/11 - 2012/13

Status	DRM	NRM	Blank	Total
Close Won	-	-	-	-
Close Lost	-	-	-	-
Open	-	-	-	-
Blank	3	6	4	13
Total	3	6	4	13

Spend

There has been little recorded spend over the review period, see [Table A14](#).

Table A14: Employee Ownership Spend 2010/11 - 2012/13

	Spend	%
2010/11	-	0%
2011/12	-	0%
2012/13	£475	100%
Total	£475	100%

Cost per Successful Assists

The incomplete monitoring data has meant we are unable to assess the cost per successful assist.

Output

To date no projects have been recorded as taken forward.

Consortium Product

Consortium Expert Support provides up to 2.5 days of consultant time to help groups of businesses or business people form a new entity which, by achieving scale, helps them improve their individual performance.

The support is available to both DRM and NRM however is not available to social enterprises or pre-revenue businesses.

Usage/Spend

There is no monitoring data available for product usage or spend.

Output

To date no projects have been recorded as taken forward.

Marketing Product

Marketing Expert Support is the most recently developed product. The support is different as it provides support for up to a maximum of four days and is solely offered to DRM companies; Growth Pipeline/Prospect companies that have a Business Advisor; SMART companies with the guidance of an innovation team/specialist; or SMART Explorer companies. Marketing Expert support is not available to NRM companies.

The support has been separated into key areas for:

- general/domestic marketing;
- internationalisation marketing; and
- food & drink companies marketing.

Usage

There are no completed projects, however, 15 (83% of enquires) are ongoing. This is the highest success rate of all the products.

Table A15: Marketing Usage 2010/11 - 2012/13

Status	DRM	%
Close Won	0	0%
Close Lost	1	6%
Open	15	83%
Blank	2	11%
Total	18	100%

Spend

A total of £39,960 has been spent since June 2012, accounting for 5% of the total spent across the project.

Table A16: Marketing Spend 2010/11 - 2012/13

	Spend	%
2010/11	-	0%
2011/12	-	0%
2012/13	£39,960	100%
Total	£39,960	100%

Cost per Successful Assists

The average cost per successful assist, defined as Close Won and Open, is £2,664.

Output

It is too soon to report impacts as the majority of projects are ongoing (15 projects).

Offshore Wind

Offshore Wind Expert Support has been developed to enable companies to take advantage of Offshore Wind opportunities by assisting with the diversification process. Support is aimed at both NRM and DRM companies (existing or pre revenue) that demonstrate an ambition to develop/grow within the offshore wind sector. Support is not aimed at individuals.

Usage

A total of 68 enquiries have been recorded for Offshore Wind, accounting for 12% of all enquiries. There are significant gaps in the monitoring data, [Table A17](#).

Table A17: Offshore Wind Usage 2010/11 - 2012/13

Status	DRM	NRM	Blank	Total	% of Status
Close Won	8	-	-	8	12%
Close Lost	-	-	-	-	0%
Open	-	-	-	-	0%
Blank	21	24	15	60	88%
Total	29	24	15	68	100%
% of Service Level	43%	35%	22%	100%	

The initial target was to support 65 companies. To date Offshore Wind has supported 8 companies resulting in 12% of the initial target.

Spend

There is no monitoring data available for product usage or spend.

Output

Eight projects have been completed.

Appendix B: Consultees and Topic Guides

This appendix provides a breakdown of consultees and the topic guides used within the consultation process.

Table B1: Consultees

Name	Position
Group 1 – Engagement and usage	
Kirsteen Binnie	Account Manager
Ray Calder	Account Manager
Dawn Florence	Innovation Specialist
Tracey Crozier	Innovation Specialist
Alan Linton	ICT Specialist
Group 2 – Usage and impact	
Ian Carstairs	Sustainability Specialist
David Bell	ICT Specialist
Billy Hughes	Account Manager
George	Innovation Specialist
Gordon Ventners	Innovation Specialist
Strategic Consultees	
Ian McCoull	Director Innovation Support
Jim Timmoney	Business Growth Manager
Sandy Cannon	Sustainability Manager

Focus Group 1: Topic Guide

1. Does the 'front end' engagement effectively filter out companies that may not be appropriate to support? benefits and dis-benefits of how it is currently done

2. What are your views on some form of initial engagement or screening process delivered by either telephone or online to help identify appropriate businesses?
 - What would be the benefits and dis-benefits of both?

3. As a key partner in terms of referrals, does Business Gateway help to filter out companies that may be eligible and appropriate to access support through the Expert Support Products? could this be improved?

4. How are the Expert Support Products marketed? what is the benefit/ dis-benefit of this?
 - NRM companies

 - DRM companies

5. Is there a system or process to refer on to other SE or external support providers if the support is not appropriate?

6. How would you rate the turnaround time for when a company first engages with the support to receiving support?

7. How easy is the process to find, and engage with an appropriate supplier – are the systems in place to identify the most appropriate person?

8. Are there any issues with the current pool of suppliers?

9. Any other key issues to consider with the engagement process when moving forward?

Usage of Support

10. How do you assess what companies are eligible/ most appropriate for support and what support product is best to meet their needs? Is there a required process or is this done on an individual ad hoc basis?
11. If on an ad hoc basis, is there a need or potential to standardise this assessment process?
12. How do you collect feedback on the 'next steps' i.e. what a company has done after the engagement process?

Focus Group 2: Topic Guide

1. Are the 'right' companies accessing the support?
 - *How do you assess what companies are eligible/ most appropriate for support and what support product is best to meet their needs?*
2. Relationship of DRM to NRM plus where is it leading to?
 - *For many NRM companies this will be their first engagement with public sector support providers, generally, what are their perceptions before and after engagement?*
 - *Is the current Expert Product Support package an effective tool for early engagement/ establishing relationships with businesses?*
 - *Does it need to be more or less intensive than the up to 2 days of support (high volume quick turnaround)?*
3. Should SE retain the Product as a free point of delivery service to everyone, if yes, why?
4. What are your views on charging DRM companies? what would this model look like e.g. exceptions that are exempt for charges, 2 days free then subsidised rates thereafter, nominal charge etc?
 - *Especially why is it free to DRM when it should be part of a larger development project with both parties sharing risk and contributing to costs.*

Links with Other Support

5. Do companies that receive support come back for further assistance, or are there instances of NRM companies accessing DP support as a DRM company further along the customer support journey? 'repeat business'
 - *Any regular follow through into other specific SE products – commonality?*
6. Does the Expert support link up with what is being delivered through theme specialists and sector teams i.e. common goals/ objectives?
7. Is there any follow up with NRM companies after they have accessed the support to help them engage with SE or SE products in the future? Is this done directly by SE staff or indirectly by e.g. BG?

8. Do you, or is there a need to, monitor or track the performance of companies further along the customer support journey NRM and DRM?
9. Is there a process or system in place to refer businesses on to other SE support products e.g. Interactive Scotland or SMAS?

Impact of support

10. Expert Product Support offers access to ten products, what are your thoughts on the appropriateness of these, please explain?
 11. What products are well used/ in demand?
 12. What products are less well used/ in demand?
13. Can you identify areas of overlap and duplication amongst the different support products:
 14. overlap
 15. duplication
16. For NRM companies, are viable projects and action plans coming out from the support, if not, why?
17. For DRM companies, how is the support being used i.e. does it contribute, and add value to the development projects being identified with account managers, or is more a tool to scope and test the feasibility of whether a development project is viable?
18. What impact do you think the support is having on businesses?
 - quantitative
 - qualitative

19. How do you assess the success of the Products? Action plans delivered, impacts generated, longer term sustainability, etc? Should this be changed?

20. Are the suppliers and theme specialists deployed effective in light of individual skills and experience? How well are they matched to companies?

21. Do the SE experts/ theme specialists and account managers have the required level of detailed awareness of the different products and services available (internal and external)?

Future of Support

22. What would you say are the key strengths and weaknesses of the Expert Support service?

23. Where would you say there is room for improvement?

24. Do you think there is anything that could be done that would have increased its impact?

Strategic Consultees: Topic Guide

Strategic Issues

1. Rationale: what do you believe to be the rationale for such a service? What market failures are being addressed? Is there any evidence of market adjustment?
2. Marketing and communication: what are your views on the marketing and communication of the service to a) client and to b) wider stakeholders like yourself?
3. Does the Expert Product Support link up with other teams, sectors, support providers?
4. Does the support the wider strategic goals and objectives of SE?
5. How do the individual 10 products link and fit with other SE support packages?
6. Is there a need to rationalise or expand the current offering for NRM companies or should SE priorities be on DRM companies?
7. Is there potential to charge for some elements of the service or for particular products? please detail what this model might look like
8. Does the support help to achieve the strategic objectives of the Expert Support team, SE and its wider stakeholders?

9. Do you think the support offers value for money for the public purse?

Future of Support

10. What would you say are the key strengths and weaknesses of the Expert Support service?
11. Where would you say there is room for improvement?
12. Do you think there is anything that could be done that would have increased its impact?
13. Are there any obvious major overall changes that would improve service delivery?