



**BRITISH  
CHAMBERS  
OF COMMERCE**  
BUSINESS AWARDS

**UK Chamber of the Year**

# East Midlands Accelerator

**Nottingham City**  
Case Studies 2022

Delivered in partnership with:



## A lasting legacy for accelerated business growth



The East Midlands Accelerator provided businesses in Nottingham with the funding, training and advice needed to grow, create and safeguard jobs, and recover from the Covid pandemic.

The project received £1.1 million from the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund (UKCRF), and was led by East Midlands Chamber (Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire) in partnership with B-Global, NBV Enterprise Solutions Ltd and the Food & Drink Forum.

The project supported 618 businesses and delivered 1,455 business support interactions. Some 108 grants were awarded – valued at £679,479 – and 100 specialist Consultancy projects brokered. A total of 69 unemployed people were supported into work.

Matching businesses with the support they need, when they need it and how they need it – through the region's most comprehensive business ecosystem yet – is surely the most important legacy of the project, and will act as a springboard for growth in our region for many years to come.



**Diane Beresford**  
**Deputy Chief Executive**  
East Midlands Chamber  
(Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire)

## Achievements and Successes



**69**

People into employment/  
self-employment



**90**

Jobs safeguarded



**40**

Businesses using  
new products



**118**

Employment increase  
in businesses



**19**

New businesses created



**44**

Decarbonisation plans



## Broadening horizons for more young people



## Blue Stamp Travel

Sector	Education
Location	Carrington
Number of employees	8
Support received	Kickstart wage subsidy Business Adviser support Digital skills training



## The Business

Blue Stamp Travel Ltd offers language and work experiences abroad for the 16+ age group, with the aim of personal and professional student development. Its services include au pair and study packages, host family accommodation, internships abroad, language courses, and online language tuition. It has a network of partner schools across France, Germany and Spain, providing some of the most exciting language opportunities available.

## Challenges

As a business whose unique offer is built around travel, it has suffered major disruption as a result of Covid; in both operational and revenue terms. The opportunity to take on three exceptional candidates under East Midlands Chamber's original Kickstart project played a large part in aiding the business's post-Covid recovery.

However, when that project came to an end, the business faced the prospect of losing those candidates and the momentum they had each brought.

## Acceleration

Support from the Kickstart strand of East Midlands Accelerator has allowed the business to offer marketer Natalie a longer-term contract. This means she can continue her valuable work in more targeted and regular social media and marketing; in turn, reinforcing what is a very strong brand.

It made perfect sense that the business also take advantage of the wider support under the Accelerator project, and Natalie's attendance at the Chamber's Marketing Mastery bootcamp offers her expert support on marketing planning, creation and measurement.

## Impact

Natalie's efforts have already led to a very tangible increase in the number of direct enquiries and improved Google page rankings; with business increasing as a result.

With the added capacity and skills that Natalie brings, the business has been able to secure more Turing funding (the UK's new programme for studying, working & living abroad); allowing it to support more students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

It has also received welcome PR when included in a BBC feature about opportunities for local young people presented by Kickstart.

Learn more about the business: [bluestamptravel.com](https://bluestamptravel.com)



"Salary support from East Midlands Accelerator means I have a staff member entirely dedicated to marketing so I personally can spend less time on marketing operations, and more on strategic activities such as bidding for funding. I'm very pleased to report this is already having a truly transformative impact on the scale and reach of our business."

**Steve Manderson**  
Owner and MD

## Developing a top-flight marketing strategy



### RDC Aviation

Sector	Software
Location	NG1
Number of employees	24
Support received	Grant funding Business Adviser support 'Leaders of Change' training

### The Business

RDC Aviation is a global aviation data business which collects, analyses, and delivers unique data to airline and airport clients around the world. Its online apps, APIs and datasets provide market intelligence on the health of aviation by modelling costs such as landing fees and passenger charges.

Over the last five years, this Chamber member has successfully transformed itself from a knowledge-based consultancy to a subscription-based business.

### Challenges

Whilst the business has enjoyed very strong growth of 8-10% over some years now, a lot of its work and its clients' operations were temporarily grounded as a result of Covid no-fly restrictions.

Its challenges are two-fold: providing the business's hard-hit aviation clients with an even greater level of intelligence in areas such as costings; and continuing its growth trajectory in new overseas markets. Added to that, it now faces the additional challenges of high inflation and staff shortages.

### Acceleration

The pandemic demonstrated that the business could continue to survive and sell remotely, without the need to meet face to face at exhibitions and trade shows.

An East Midlands Accelerator grant has allowed it to develop new go-to-market strategies for North America and East Asia, by hiring someone with a deep understanding of the aviation sector.

A new marketing strategy is not the only area to take flight.

Rapidly growing SMEs – whilst excellent in offering technical training to their staff – may well lack a formal approach to CPD training. Participating in the Chamber's Leaders of Change programme has provided a welcome first step in addressing this.

### Impact

East Midlands Accelerator is helping the business continue a growth trajectory that has previously had support from the Chamber's Digital Upscaler project, Manufacturing Growth Programme and Peer-to-Peer Networks.

Accessing expertise through this latest grant has allowed the business to develop a cohesive marketing plan for new territories; identify the digital toolset required to implement the plan for immediate impact, and create a Go-to-Market framework to launch the business's growing range of software services.

Learn more about the business: [rdcaviation.com](https://rdcaviation.com)



"We are analysts, developers and aviation experts by trade; we are not marketers. We know who our target markets are but needed expert input to develop effective territory-bespoke, go-to-market strategies. The East Midlands Accelerator grant has helped us hire the right person, with the right knowledge, at the right time. We're now in our strongest position ever to capitalise on the opportunities presented at a global level."

**Peter Hind**  
Chief Executive



Adventure waits in subterranean Nottingham...



## Cave Escape

Sector	Tourism and leisure
Location	NG1
Number of employees	11
Support received	Grant funding Zellar sustainability support

## Challenges

Long-term closure through Covid has hugely impacted this leisure and tourism business although it is proud to have retained its entire team through and since the pandemic; partly through support such as the D2N2 Growth Hub's Covid Recovery Grant.

Its next challenges are likely to be a reduction in consumer spending due to the cost of living crisis, as well as the increased cost of wages and materials.

## The Business

Cave Escape was set up in 2018 by husband and wife, Nick Scott and Jennifer Gilbert-Scott. It is the world's only permanent escape room venue located in a subterranean cave system and has proved popular for its super-immersive, filmset-like experiences. It attracts more than 15,000 visitors annually and has won multiple visitor awards as well as recognition as the top-rated venue on TripAdvisor for "fun and activities" in Nottingham.

## Acceleration

The owners are well aware of the constant need to push the boundaries of immersive entertainment. They are committed to introducing technologies yet to be exploited within the UK escape room industry, including 3D digital projection mapping and new escape room management software and hardware.

This innovative business is clearly important to the city's visitor economy. It is a key role that an East Midlands Accelerator grant is helping to strengthen in two key ways: specialist consultancy in the required technologies; and purchase of the physical hardware required to deliver the concept.

The business has also taken advantage of the East Midlands Chamber's offer to sign up for free, one-year access to the Zellar sustainability platform. Participation means the business can put on firm display its commitment to sustainability; whether that be small steps like adding smart plugs to all devices, or appointing a sustainability champion.

## Impact

Implementing digitisation has given the owners time and space to develop a sister site, which offers a further three escape rooms in another unique, Grade II listed building. The expansion has already led to the employment of two new gamemasters, with plans to take on more.

Learn more about the business: [caveescape.co.uk](http://caveescape.co.uk)



"Support from East Midlands Accelerator has not only allowed us to stay ahead of the curve in terms of technology, but also in our commitments as a sustainable business. Each is an important determining factor for members of the public and businesses alike when it comes to choosing where they spend their leisure time."

**Jennifer Gilbert-Scott**  
Creative Director

Feeding bellies – and curiosity!



## Vegan Chocolates by Luisa

Sector	Food manufacturing
Location	Creative Quarter
Number of employees	4
Support received	Grant funding Growth voucher Specialist Business Adviser support

## The Business

Vegan Chocolates by Luisa is a small, ethical business that makes bean-to-bar, craft chocolate with stone ground machines.

Since its establishment in 2017, it has won over 25 worldwide awards, has been featured in The Observer, The Guardian, and Grazia magazine, and is now stocked in Selfridges.



## Challenges

The demand from consumers wishing to follow an ethical, dairy free diet is only growing.

Whilst the business serves many customers online, there are others who wish to see how the chocolate is made. This includes a recent visitor from Switzerland who commissioned a family workshop after a BBC World News feature.

The business recognised that it needed more space for machinery and more staff. It also saw that refurbishment of the premises would allow it to capitalise on its vision to become a destination experience.

It had already identified new premises but fitting out the shop with all the equipment needed at the same time as taking out the lease, presented too much of a financial drain.

## Impact

Expansion has led not only to recruiting a new full-time employee to run the new shop and to train as a chocolatier, but has also safeguarded another post.

Marketing support from project partner, Creative Quarter Nottingham has offered greater insight into how the business might attract, monitor and retain new customers through Shopify.

Learn more about the business: [luisasveganchocolates.co.uk](https://luisasveganchocolates.co.uk)



“With great PR comes great demand and, of course, expectation. Having our sizeable investment supported in this way allows us to contribute further to the Nottingham visitor economy and acts as the launchpad to our next iteration of growth.”

**Luisa Bedi**  
Owner

## Acceleration

Support from East Midlands Accelerator came at the perfect time.

Grant funding has supported a new shop and workshop fit, including the installation of new fascia boards and dedicated area for storing the beans. This new roastery – where the chocolate is also made and converted to bars and truffles – only accentuates the business’s competitive point of difference.

The investment has also enhanced the consumer experience. New chairs and tables mean the business can build on its plans to offer more workshops where ‘science meets chocolate’. Using her food tech teaching background is where owner Luisa gives an insight into the science of cocoa farming and different flavour notes – helping to feed curious minds as much as bellies!



## Securing a lucrative future in aerospace and defence



### SGD 3D

<b>Sector</b>	Additive (plastic) manufacturing	<b>Number of employees</b>	2
<b>Location</b>	Bulwell	<b>Support received</b>	Grant funding Peer networking support Business Adviser support East Midlands Manufacturing Network membership

### The Business

SGD is an additive (plastic to plastic) manufacturer that produces plastic parts for automotive sector OEMs and their suppliers. It was established in 2018 after managing director Sam Gribben identified a local gap in 3D printing.

### Challenges

The aerospace and defence (A&D) sectors are hugely lucrative but also have exacting requirements on clean manufacturing spaces. The business certainly has the capability, competency and capacity to service these sectors; but without a dedicated inspection area, future growth is likely to be thwarted.

### Acceleration

An East Midlands Accelerator grant has funded the creation of two entirely new, dedicated spaces in the company's 500 sq ft warehouse.

Firstly, a new climate-controlled inspection area allows parts to be inspected to a particular temperature and humidity. This offers clients an extra level of certainty that parts are being tested in an environment that replicates as closely as possible the live environment.

Secondly, a new lockable meeting room gives clients added confidence that commercially-sensitive projects are being worked upon in the securest environment possible.

The grant has also allowed for the recruitment of a full-time staff member, and the promotion of an existing member of staff to a design and inspection role.

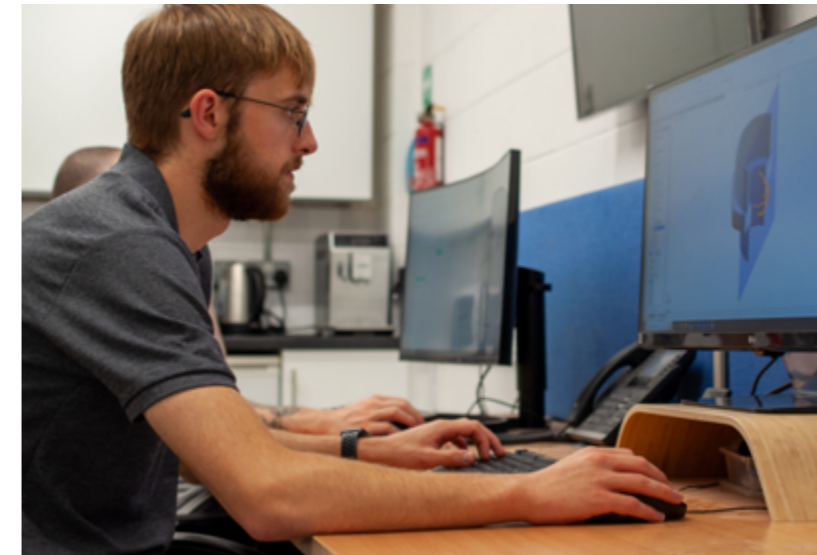
### Impact

Additional support is on hand from the East Midlands Manufacturing Network - a region-wide network led by East Midlands Chamber. Participation in the Network gives the business a direct line to Make UK and, in turn, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This presents a helpful vehicle through which to voice any concerns specific to manufacturing.

A natural progression has been Sam's participation in the Nottingham City Manufacturing Peer Network, where he and other business owners act as sounding boards for one another.

Investing in business and leadership capabilities in this way positions SGD as professional, influential and with the right facilities. It will undoubtedly help to extend its footprint in A&D and beyond.

Learn more about the business: [sgd3d.co.uk](http://sgd3d.co.uk)



"Investing at this level, so soon after the pandemic and now with the rising cost of energy bills, would not have been an option for us. With East Midlands Accelerator's support, we now have a state-of-the art inspection facility. This clean manufacturing space not only ensures we are able to deliver in absolute terms what our A&D clients expect, but gives us the infrastructure needed to scale up."

**Sam Gribben**  
Managing Director

## Making a splash in manufacturing



### Magical Cosmetics

Sector	Cosmetics manufacturing
Location	Sherwood
Number of employees	2
Support received	Grant funding Peer Network support East Midlands Manufacturing Network membership

### Challenges

With rapidly growing market demand, it was clear the company needed to invest in expansion.

It opened the doors of its new factory in 2020 but needed a cash injection when it came to investing in equipment.

### The Business

Magical Cosmetics is a manufacturer of bath bombs, bath salts and soap bars. The seeds for the business were first sown in 2017 when sisters Tequila Buchanan and Sarah Stark created a pain relief balm to help treat their mother's sciatica.

A range of products using CBD and essential oils, under the name Canna Magic, soon followed. In 2020, the manufacturing business Magical Cosmetics was officially launched, producing white labelled goods for sellers of cosmetic products.

### Acceleration

The business has benefited from East Midlands Accelerator support in a number of ways.

Firstly, the business has secured funding to cover a number of elements of the manufacturing process, including the purchase of a batch gun, large hand mixer, and trade approved weighing scales. The purchase of a laptop will also allow for the appointment of a sales and marketing executive, with a printer also enabling the business to retain ownership of the labelling process and reduce reliance on external suppliers.

Secondly, joining the Chamber's new East Midlands Manufacturing Network and Manufacturing Peer Network means mentoring and invaluable support is always on hand from some of the region's leading industry experts.

### Impact

Investment in manufacturing processes in this way means the business can fulfil a burgeoning order book – including an order for 135,000 units of bath 'dust' placed by one of the UK's top five supermarkets.

East Midlands Accelerator marks the start of a much broader relationship with the Chamber. Becoming a Chamber member has allowed the business to tap into expert advice, whether it be the International Trade team's input into navigating different freight options for a sizeable new order in Saudi Arabia or on the steps needed to gain ISO accreditation.

Learn more about the business: [magicalcosmetic.com](https://magicalcosmetic.com)



“Our business is already showing huge potential for growth, with interest from as far afield as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. With the unfailing support of East Midlands Chamber and its industry experts and partners, we're in our best ever position to scale up”.

**Tequila Buchanan**  
Joint Owner



## Nuts about sustainable growth!



## Origin Kitchen

Sector	Food manufacturing
Location	NG5
Number of employees	4
Support received	Grant funding Decarbonisation & sustainability support

## The Business

Origin Kitchen is a family business that was established during the pandemic. It makes innovative, naturally healthy, dairy alternatives made from a cashew base, including savoury spreads and mousse-style desserts.



## Challenges

The business has already made impressive in-roads. It is listed with the five major distributors supplying independent wholefood retailers across the UK, and is currently in talks with two of the top six UK supermarkets. It also sells directly to consumers at vegan and farmers markets across the Midlands.

Meeting such growth ambitions relies on increasing production capacity; in particular, a phased upgrade of production equipment and a reconfiguration of processes. To make this a reality, the business identified a key piece of equipment – the 40-litre Roboqbo.

## Impact

Accelerating production capabilities with the support of East Midlands Accelerator allows the business to service a growing UK market, as well as enter new European markets, and selected international markets via e-commerce. The new equipment also means the business can trial other NPD ideas without taking up too much processing time, and secures the position of a food production operative.

Learn more about the business: [originkitchen.co.uk](https://originkitchen.co.uk)



“Taking the leap from a business that’s less than three years old to one in discussions with partners as far afield as Vietnam, is testament to the rapid acceleration of our business. Being able to secure funding from East Midlands Accelerator within a matter of weeks is the perfect springboard to make our global ambitions an early reality.”

### Leah Brown

Operations Director

## Acceleration

An East Midlands Accelerator grant has contributed to the purchase of the Roboqbo which is extremely efficient in undertaking several processes, including cooking, cooling, and concentrating. It also improves product quality, colour, consistency, and shelf life.

An increase in both production and efficiencies, of course, leads to increased revenue. This has allowed for the creation of a new, permanent job of food production operator.

A cornerstone of the business’s operations is its unshakeable commitment to sustainability. Support from The Food and Drink Forum – one of the key partners in the Accelerator project – included an onsite visit from a Decarbonisation/Sustainability Expert to help the business assess what changes could be made to its production space and processes, thereby reducing environmental impact, in areas including packaging, transport and logistics, and procurement of raw ingredients.

*Just what the doctor ordered!*



## Prescriptions 4 U

Sector	Medical
Location	Broxtowe
Number of employees	1
Support received	Grant funding Business Adviser support Zellar sustainability support

### The Business

Prescriptions 4 U was set up in 2021 by pharmacist Emran Rashid. After fifteen years of working in big high-street pharmacies, Emran decided to set up on his own. Covid provided the perfect opportunity to spot a gap in the market; that of providing patients with a full service – including prescription collection, ordering and posting – without them needing to physically attend the pharmacy. In particular, Emran wanted to bring back the personal service to patients that is often no longer offered.

### Challenges

The biggest issue facing this fledgling business was cashflow. The NHS don't pay within a three-month period so Emran needed to buy medication without any initial income.

Whilst he could identify key areas of investment needed to grow his client base in the Nottingham area (and one day beyond), he lacked the funds to make it a reality.

### Acceleration

Grant support from East Midlands Accelerator has allowed the business to invest in two key areas: the purchase of a large monitor and a medicinal fridge. The monitor presents the opportunity to review all prescriptions without the need to print them. This not only reduces the use of printer cartridges but also prescription pads.

The medicinal fridge allows the business to store a whole month of insulin, as well as larger stock levels of inhalers, eyedrops and creams.

The East Midlands Accelerator grant also paid for the support of a marketing consultant, who implemented the business's first direct marketing campaign to local residents who take medicine.

### Impact

Larger stock levels mean that Emran is geared up to take on more patients. His marketing campaign to NG8 residents has already seen an increase in patient levels by 30%. This gives him affirmation that his service is needed by local people; both in terms of the convenience of not having to visit the pharmacy; and in the support of a personable pharmacist who is prepared to undertake home visits where needed.

Emran was keen to take up one of East Midlands Chamber's free one-year licences to the Zellar sustainability platform, moving the prescription review process to a computer rather than desk-based system is the first step of his sustainability journey. His next step is to invest in an electric car.

Learn more about the business: [prescriptions-4u.co.uk](https://prescriptions-4u.co.uk)



“Support from East Midlands Accelerator means I have been able to bring forward investment by a couple of years. Unlike funding programmes of old, I simply had to present a case for what MY business needed. This tailored approach is already paying dividends in both patient experience and expanding my reach.”

**Emran Rashid**  
Owner





**East Midlands Chamber (Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire)**

☎ 0333 320 0333

🌐 [www.emc-dnl.co.uk](http://www.emc-dnl.co.uk)

*This project was part-funded by the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund.*