

Impact Report

5 YEARS OF BOOSTING SMALL ORGANISATIONS



Our Purpose



Our Model



2025 Highlights



Our Community



Our Social Value



Our Future



Karen Licurse
Managing
Director

It all started as an experiment.

Five years ago, we saw a clear challenge: the UK's smallest organisations were struggling to navigate an increasingly complex digital world, and traditional support models weren't reaching those who needed help the most.

We set out to rethink the model. Could we convince talented people all across the UK to share their knowledge for free? Would small businesses ask for help?

As you'll read in this report, five years on, the answer is a resounding yes. With more than 5,000 volunteers and 36,000 small organisations engaged so far, what started as a test has grown into a movement.

We are inspired every day by the talented professionals who step up to mentor, and by the brilliant partners who collaborate with us. Our community has come together to help deliver measurable improvements in confidence, digital adoption, and productivity in businesses all across the UK.

The need is greater than ever. Small organisations underpin our communities and economy, but the challenges they face are big and growing. They need help to adopt AI, be financially resilient, grow sales, and more. We are ready to rise to this challenge and have ambitious plans to grow our impact.

But we cannot do this alone. To sustain this momentum and reach every corner of the UK, we need more skilled volunteers and partners to join our mission. We have a proven platform ready to scale, and a flexible approach to meet our partners' goals.

Join us to ensure that every small organisation has the support they need to thrive.

Our Purpose

WHAT WE DO

We help small organisations build the skills, confidence, and networks needed to thrive, today and in the future.

HOW

By connecting them with skilled volunteers, peers, and trusted partners, who share knowledge and help them grow.

WHY

Because when small businesses and charities succeed, our communities and the wider economy do too.



Impact at a Glance

5 years of collaboration to deliver free mentoring and practical guidance for every UK small business or charity



Source: Digital Boost verified platform data: 1 Sept 2020 – 1 December 2025 + event attendance; Impact based on third-party survey of user perceptions and change.
*Does not include ongoing relationships and support that continue off platform

Impact stories



Steve
Datsit Skincare
London

Steve launched his organic skincare company at 50, seeking solutions for his daughters' skin irritation.

Our mentors have helped him optimise his website, define his paid advertising strategy, establish automated email flows, explore fundraising options, stay focused, and much more. And importantly, transform what was once a side hustle into an award-winning business.

“ I owe a huge thank you to Digital Boost. The mentors have been a lifeline, helping shift my mindset and keep pushing forward.



Cath
CDS Printer Solutions
Staffordshire

CDS Printer Solutions was a self-described “old fashioned business, plodding along, standing still.” Co-founder Cath felt “frozen” about how to grow.

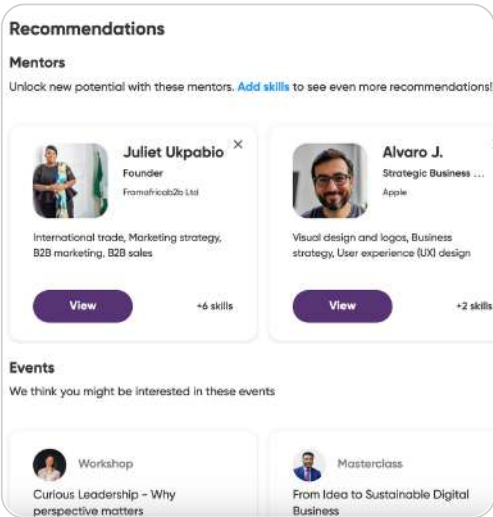
A mentoring session on business growth helped her see how AI could help her with marketing and sales. Our free three-week AI Essentials peer learning programme provided the fundamentals; ongoing mentoring and Masterclasses helped her put it into practice. The results have been transformational.

“ It’s been a real boost for our business. I don’t think any of us knew how much we could grow.

We’ve grown 15–20% in six months, and are hiring for the first time in years!

Our Scalable Model

Human connection, tech-enabled



Small organisations

Any startup, small business, freelancer, school, or VCSE* can easily register with us.

Platform & data

Our platform continually smart-matches them to the right mentors & support based on their real-time needs, and manages the interactions.

Free, flexible support



Expert guidance

Unlimited virtual 1:1 sessions with skilled volunteers on 80+ topics.



Ongoing mentoring

Longer-term support to shape strategic direction & drive accountability.



Learning programmes

High-touch peer learning programmes & scalable Masterclasses where organisations learn together.



In-person events

Bootcamps & workshops, all across the UK.

Outcomes

Small organisations

Build skills, networks & confidence. Increase productivity & grow.

Volunteer mentors

Use skills to give back. Gain inspiration. Develop skills & confidence.

Partners

Deliver Social Value. Engage & upskill employees. Build trust & reputation. Measure impact against goals.

Governments

Increase small business productivity. Gain insights. Drive local growth.

*Voluntary, Social, Charitable Enterprise

Our flagship programme – 1:1 mentoring & expert guidance

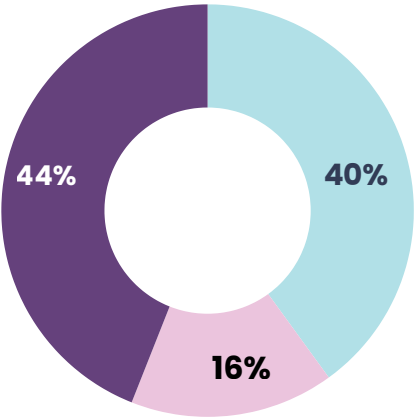
We’ve reimagined how 1:1 support is delivered, making it free, flexible, unlimited, and accessible to all. Our volunteer mentors have hands-on experience in their fields – so the guidance is on point and stays up to date as the landscape evolves.



74% of support requests are matched within 72 hours

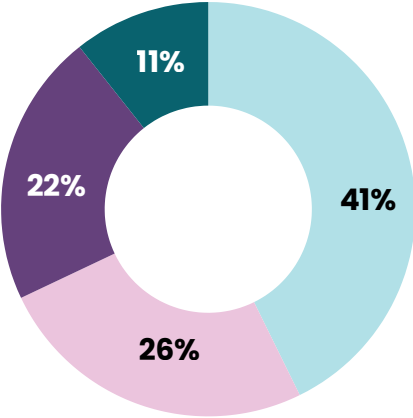
Mentors do a mix of one-off expert sessions and ongoing mentoring

- One-off expert sessions
- Ongoing mentoring relationships
- Both



Mentors & mentees meet flexibly based on needs

- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Weekly
- Other



In-demand topics for support

Technology

Artificial intelligence
Websites
Mobile apps
E-commerce
CRMs

Strategy

Setting up a new business
Business planning
Digital strategy
Data analysis
Pricing strategy
Prioritisation

Marketing & Sales

Content creation & strategy
Search / AI engine optimisation
Social media strategy
Email marketing
B2B sales
Visual design
Branding

Operations

Funding
Financial planning & reporting
Accounting
GDPR
Sustainability / Net Zero

Enabled by our award-winning platform

Our technology is built specifically for small business mentoring and support, unlike most generic mentoring or community platforms.

It's easy to navigate and use, even for those with limited digital skills.

“ The platform's intuitive matching system efficiently connects mentors with mentees based on their needs and expertise, making the entire process seamless.

–Alex, Volunteer Mentor



Personalisation

User preferences serve up the right opportunities for each mentor and mentee, with dashboards to facilitate scheduling, messaging, progress and action tracking, session feedback, and more.

Reduced admin

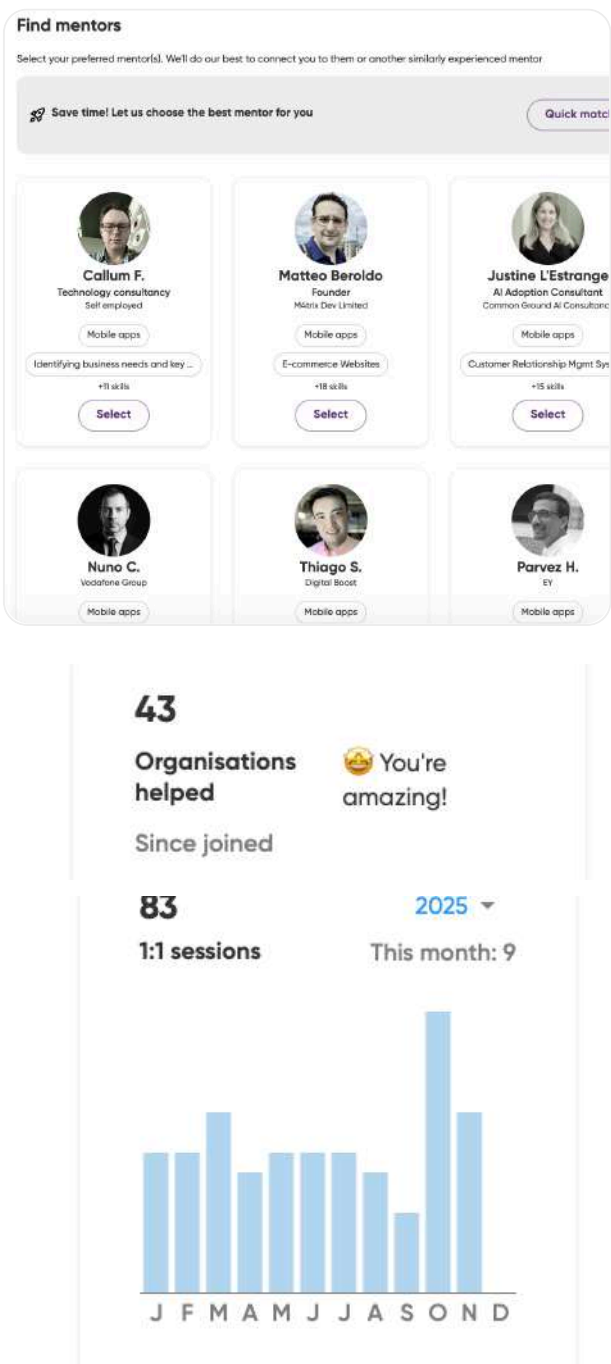
AI and automation handle the routine tasks, from scheduling to reporting, allowing humans to focus their time where it really matters: delivering impact.

Partner customisation & reporting

Partners can create their own branded mentorship & support hubs, with dashboards matching their reporting standards. Compliant with TOMs and PPN 002 for Social Value reporting.

Continuous improvement

In 2025, we launched a major upgrade, allowing greater customisation for partners, hyper-local matching, in-person support, multi-role accounts, more flexible scheduling of mentoring sessions, and translation into foreign languages.



2025 Highlights

This year, our community and support network continued to expand, strengthened by local matching, accelerated AI training, and a deeper commitment to inclusive entrepreneurship.

Deepening engagement

7,500 new mentoring connections

1,818
3 to 6 week peer learning participants

1,021
in-person event attendees

175 virtual events delivered



TrustPilot 4.9/5
Excellent



Mobilising local support

With mentors across the UK, Digital Boost has always delivered in communities nationwide.

We recently completed a powerful upgrade to enable hyper-local support, including:

- Local Authority-level matching, connecting small organisations with local mentors
- Locally branded & customised mentoring & support programmes
- Regional cohorts of peer programmes
- Bootcamps & workshops across the UK

20 in-person events in 2025



Connecting with small businesses in Lancaster



Small Business Bootcamp in Edinburgh with Royal Bank of Scotland

Accelerating AI & digital adoption

In line with the UK Government’s AI Opportunities Action Plan, supporting small businesses through the AI transition is a critical priority for us and our partners.

In 2025, we significantly expanded our support, helping businesses practice in a safe environment and use AI ethically and responsibly.

300 AI
mentors
recruited

8,000+
AI training
hours
delivered

57 AI
Masterclasses
delivered

3,200
participants
in Digital Skills
Labs



AI in Marketing Roadshow
in 8 UK locations,
supported by BT Group



AI Bootcamp
A full day of inspiration,
practice and mentoring
for 200 businesses, in
partnership with NatWest



AI Essentials
500 businesses completed
nine hours of AI training
each via the Google.org AI
Opportunity Fund

Championing inclusive growth

We continue to expand our support for under-represented founders and their teams.

Disabled & Neurodivergent Leaders

Mentees and mentors can now optionally declare disabilities, long-term health conditions, and accessibility needs. We connect them to others with similar lived experience, and targeted support.

Refugee Founders

Through Visa’s Pioneer Everywhere programme, 30 female founders with refugee backgrounds were matched to ongoing mentors for 12 months of accountability and tailored support. This programme will expand in 2026.

Female Entrepreneurs

In 2025, our six-week BEGIN peer learning programme for aspiring women entrepreneurs, delivered with Buy Women Built and NatWest, supported its 1,000th woman! 100% of respondents said they would recommend.



Highly Commended

Our Community

We are incredibly proud of our generous and passionate community, who all believe that no one should have to build their business alone. Without any part of the ecosystem, we wouldn't exist - thank you!



Volunteer Mentors



Mentees

Partners

Team



Ayanda, Volunteer Mentor

"Digital Boost has created such a powerful community of support. It's a space where entrepreneurs, professionals, and mentors come together to share knowledge and lift each other up. Every interaction feels like being part of a larger movement that believes in collaboration and giving back."



Natalie, Creative Banter, Mentee

"Coming to Digital Boost, it feels like I now have access to the world's knowledge. I'm so grateful. Without it, I probably would be stuck in the same place, but now, there's growth because of Digital Boost."



Cheryl, Partner, NatWest

"We are proud to have partnered with Digital Boost right from the start. The partnership supports the bank's CSR strategy by enabling our employees to apply their skills in a meaningful way, while contributing to our broader goal of fostering digital inclusion and the growth of SMEs."



Masuma, Head of Partnerships, Digital Boost

"I love creating impactful programmes with our partners - we help them deliver against their goals, and they enable us to help entrepreneurs achieve more. When we combine resources, ideas, and networks, it directly changes what's possible for the organisations and communities we support."

Our skilled volunteers

Our 5,000+ mentors are an impressive group who make our model of highly personalised support at scale possible. They share their knowledge in 1:1 sessions, Masterclasses, peer learning programmes, in-person events, and more.

Our platform provides rigorous quality control and feedback scoring, ensuring only the best mentors are recommended.

Every mentor has access to training, impact tracking, and ongoing support. Through our partnership with the Association of Business Mentors (ABM), this year mentors also participated in professional development workshops.

Who are they?

- 75% have 15+ years experience
- Others have deep specialist knowledge
- 52% female
- Range of backgrounds, from corporate professionals to founders to retirees
- Majority are self-employed
- Aged 25 to 75+, from all across the UK
- Wide range of sectors

What they get out of it

Volunteer survey responses – June 2025

Personal Growth

- Increased confidence in their own skills
- Improved self-awareness
- Better listening skills
- Greater patience and empathy
- Ability to build better relationships

Professional Progression

- Renewed enthusiasm for their field
- Enhanced leadership & communication skills
- More clarity about own career goals
- Stronger professional network
- Speaking opportunities
- Investment or board opportunities

“ I have become so much more confident in my mentoring and also connected with so many amazing people.

– Amy, Volunteer Mentor



Volunteers & team celebrating at our annual recognition ceremony



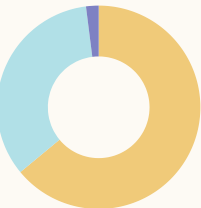
Volunteer speed mentors at a Small Business Bootcamp

Our mentees

Micro, small or medium enterprises (MSMEs) make up 99% of the UK’s 6 million businesses, and there are 250,000 active Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSEs) organisations across the country. Our support is open to all of them for free, but we focus our outreach on those most in need.

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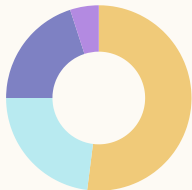
Reaching under-represented founders



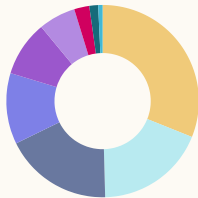
64% female

Disabilities and long-term health conditions

- Neurodivergent
- Mental health
- Chronic illness
- Physical
- Other
- Learning
- Hearing Loss
- Visual
- Deaf

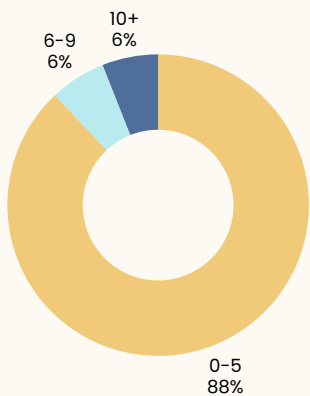


48% ethnic minority

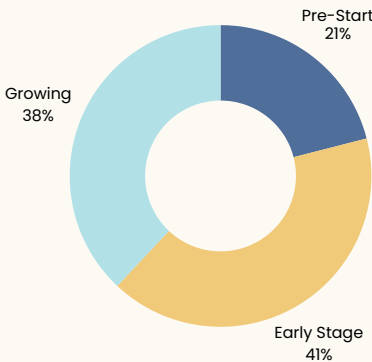


Supporting those left out of traditional support

88% have 5 or fewer employees



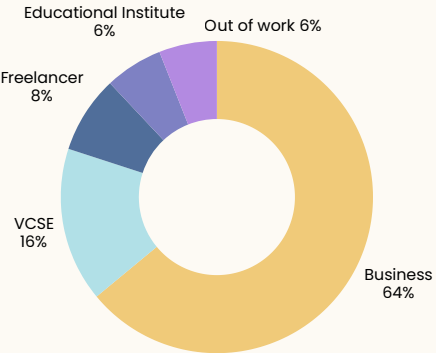
62% pre-start or early stage



Open to all

We support every kind of small business, including registered companies, sole traders, and pre-starts.

We also welcome voluntary organisations, charities, social enterprises, freelancers, schools, and those out of work.

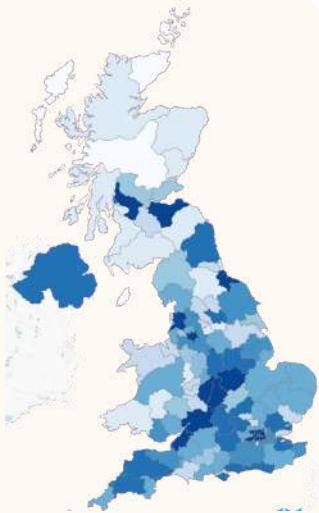


In every community in the UK

Truly national support, local connections

74% live outside London

42% live in areas in the bottom 30% of socio-economic deprivation.



Location of organisations we've supported to date

Across all sectors

Top industries

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Health & fitness | Food & drink |
| Education | Coaching & consulting |
| Retail & Consumer Products | Digital & technology |
| Creative | Hospitality |

Our partners

Our incredible partners all share our belief in the importance of small organisations to our communities and economy.

We work with corporate partners who want to engage their employees, and support their customers or the people in the communities they operate in.

Local governments work with us to enable economic growth and community cohesion.

Entrepreneurial support providers partner with us to complement their programmes and deliver mentoring more effectively.

All our funding comes through these partnerships.

Partner programmes are turnkey, tailored to meet partner goals, and backed with robust, real-time reporting.

Why they partner with us

- Deliver Social Value in local communities
- Engage employees & grow skills
- Enable local small business growth
- Support and retain their customers and / or community members
- Build brand trust & reputation
- Meet and measure ESG goals
- Shared values
- Real-time measurable data
- Reduce admin and manual work in business support delivery



Celebrating our special recognition at the British Diversity Awards with our partners



Bloomberg



Constant Contact

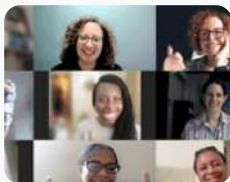
VISA



How partners work with us

Skills development

- Mentoring or training for MSMEs & VCSEs
- Target specific geographies or segments
- Co-create bespoke support programmes
- Support for declined grantees or applicants
- Complement existing programmes with mentoring



Email marketing course with Constant Contact

Employee volunteering

- Skills-based - 80+ covered
- 1:1, small group, or team formats
- Flexible, open to all employees
- Training and support provided



Bloomberg mentoring day supporting female-led social enterprises

Event sponsorships

- Virtual or in-person
- Share knowledge
- Engage organisations
- Locations across the UK



Female Founder Connect events for 180 female founders each, with NatWest

Expert content partnerships

- Toolkits
- Video content
- Branded support hubs
- Podcasts



Content Hub Unpacking Business Finances with Mettle

White label platform

- Customise & brand our platform to deliver support programmes more efficiently



White label platform for careers inspiration in schools

Data & insights

Understanding of small business skills needs; Real-time tracking of programme quality and impact, by segment, location and more

Voices of our community



Gary, Eastnole

"I've had the same mentor now for two years. He's helped so much. Before, I was doing 0-1 sales a month and now I'm doing almost 1,000. Huge!"



Abi, Lit Laboratory London

"Digital Boost is my most precious resource. Having access to experienced mentors who can guide me through challenges is invaluable. The Masterclass on email marketing changed my whole business model."



Kate, Kate Walton Collections

"My website had a complete turnaround thanks to the support of my mentors. With Digital Boost, I can really look through and find the people best suited to what I need, rather than generic support."



Sue, National Forest E-Bike Holidays

"I come from the pre-computer era, so digital skills are quite new to me. My mentor helped me think about the entire process. I came away with a much better understanding of the possibilities and what steps I needed to do. It probably saved me thousands of pounds!"

What makes Digital Boost unique?

Many of our volunteers have previously mentored with other programmes. We asked them what makes Digital Boost different:

Ease of use

"You are the most organised community. Everything is so easy to do."

Flexibility

"I love that I can do it when it works for me and select those to help."

Community

"Engagement is very high. Digital Boost does a brilliant job in animating the community and keeping it active."

Who we support

"Terrific range of people asking for help, which makes the engagement extremely interesting."

Measurable impact

"Tracing the impact made is unique and a big difference."

Our Social Value



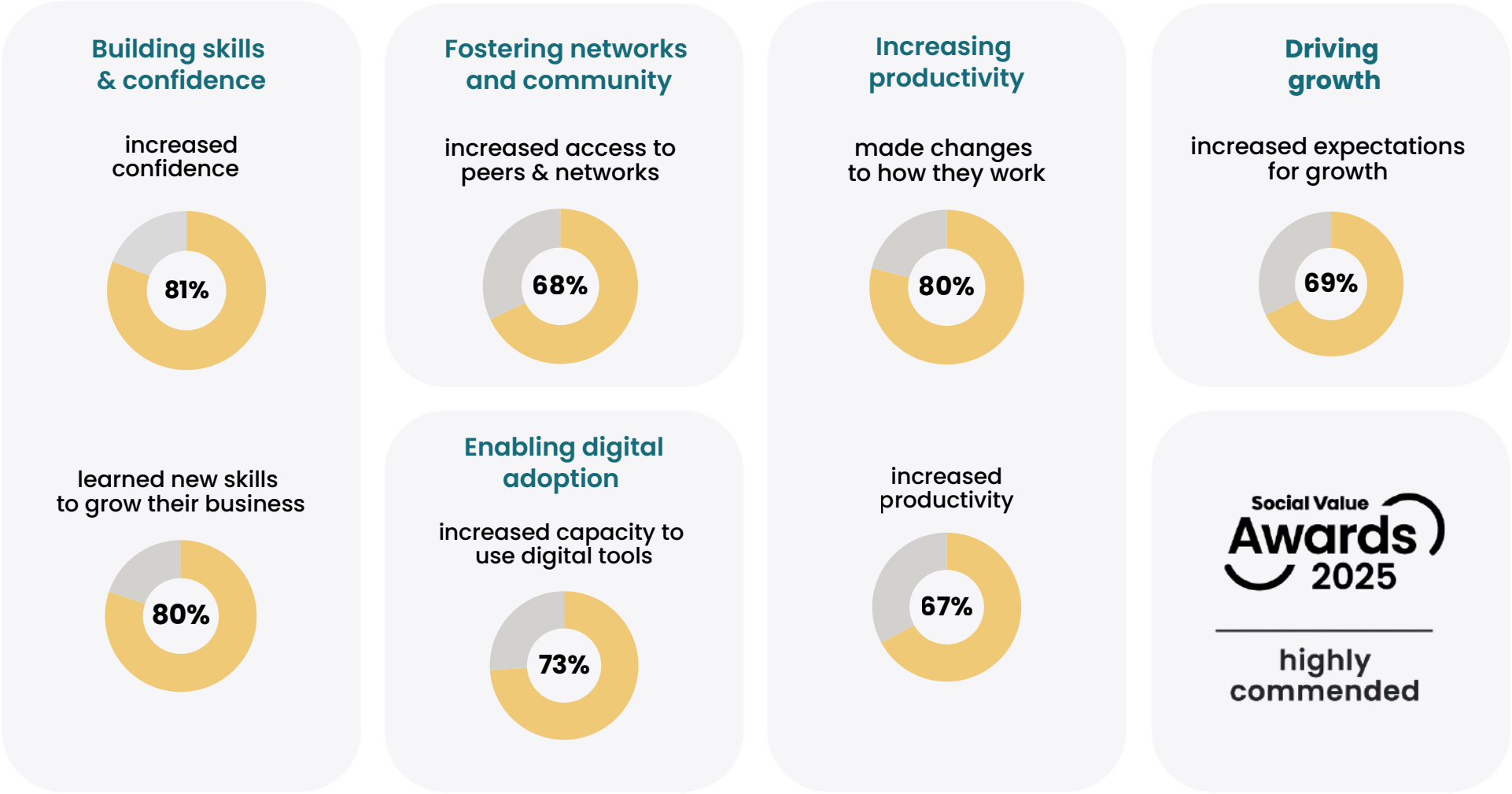
As a Social Enterprise, we reinvest all surplus funds directly into our mission or donate them to our parent charity, F4S, supporting their work delivering careers inspiration & support for young people.

Together with our partners and volunteers, we are transforming how the UK's smallest organisations access the support they need to survive, participate in supply chains, create jobs, and help our communities flourish.

Delivering against UN Sustainable Development Goals, including:



How we measured impact:
- Verified platform data
- Third-party perceptions survey



highly commended

Most valued elements of the experience

Personalised mentoring
Diverse expertise of mentors
Comprehensive support
Community

Top digital tools adopted

Marketing & sales
Business planning
Accounting
E-commerce
Product development
People management

Top areas of improvement for small businesses

Strategic thinking
Digital confidence
Marketing
Increased networking
Financial management
Business planning
Wellbeing

Partnering to deliver Social Value

We provide the platform, the data, and the community to help our partners turn Social Value commitments into verified, measurable impact.

Our platform streamlines provision of expert support to VCSEs and SMEs, and makes it easy for partners to engage skilled employee volunteers. It enables additionality through highly targeted support for specific local communities or priority groups, within an efficient national infrastructure.

Our reporting provides the robust and verified outcomes required to meet the standards of the Procurement Act 2023, major Social Value Frameworks, and customised reporting requirements.

Aligned to the Social Value TOM System™ Framework

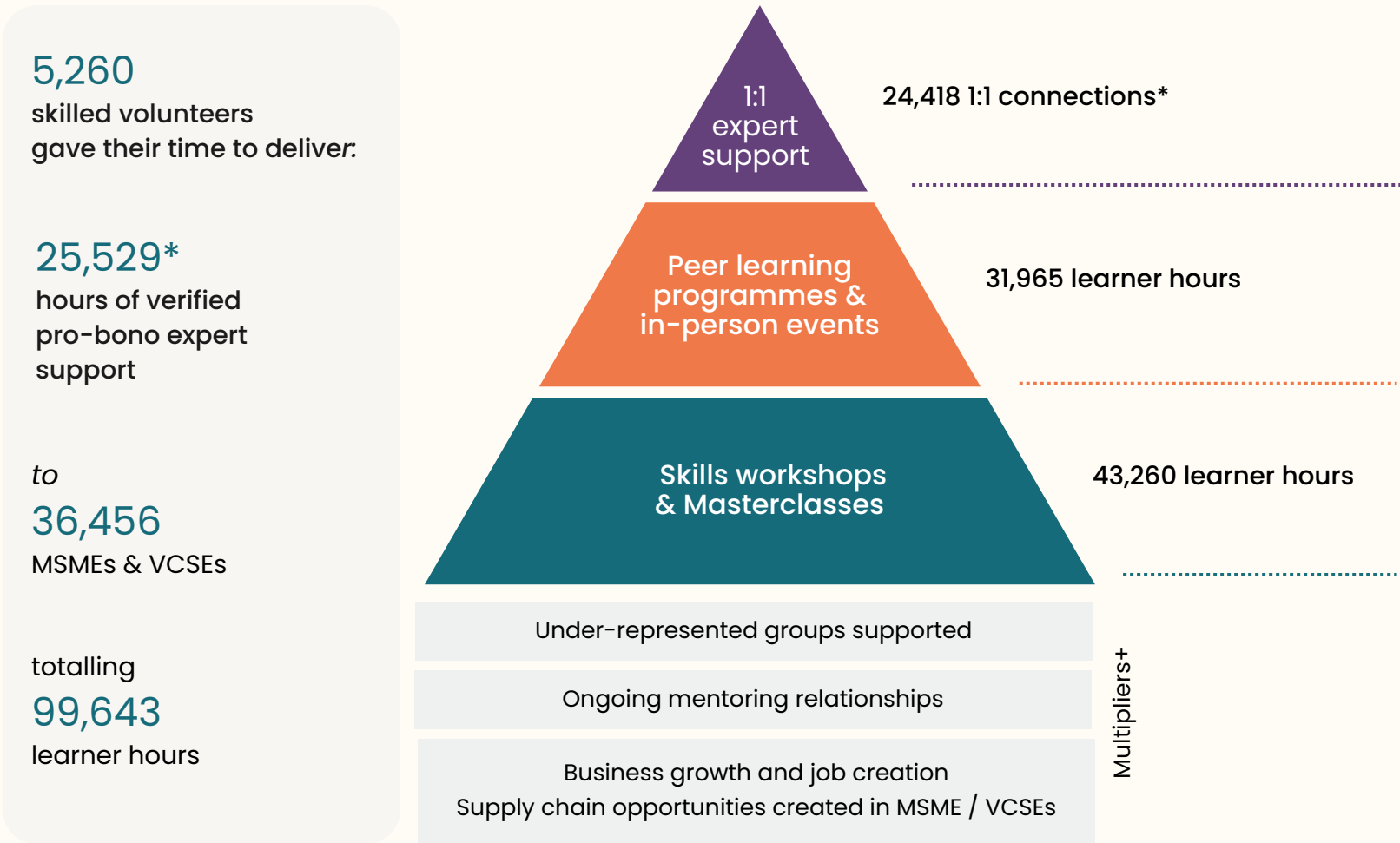
Theme Economy: Promoting a diverse & resilient business community

References NT15 – Expert support to VCSEs and SMEs
NT15a – Expert support to achieve Net Zero

Specific partner initiatives could also contribute to NT11 (support into work), NT27 (networks for vulnerable or disabled founders); NT69 (sustainability support) or NT51 (social innovation).

Each hour of expert support enabled by partners delivers £106.34 of Social Value.




Our pro-bono support for MSMEs & VCSEs



*Only recorded, verified connections are included. Many matches lead to ongoing relationships not captured here, representing significant long-term value. In 2026, we're implementing more robust tracking for long-term mentoring relationships.

+Our support closes the opportunity gap by supporting under-represented groups. It also drives long-term economic impact, by growing businesses, creating or safeguarding jobs, or moving those out of work into economic participation. We hope to conduct a full economic evaluation this year.

Aligned to UK Government missions and the Social Value Model (PPN 002)

Mission	 Kickstart economic growth	 Break down barriers to opportunity	 Become a clean energy superpower
Rationale	£94 billion GDP uplift opportunity annually by lifting productivity in MSMEs by just 1%*	60% of all private sector jobs are with MSMEs* and entrepreneurship is a proven form of economic participation for those furthest removed from traditional employment.	Only 18% of MSMEs say they have the knowledge to go Net Zero**
MACs	2a. Learning & skills development 3a Diverse supply chains 3b Co-design & delivery with communities	6a Create employment and training opportunities 6b Increase representation of disabled people 6c Identify & tackle inequality in employment / skills 7a Remove barriers to entry 7b Create opportunity pipelines	4b Influence staff, suppliers, customers and communities
How we enable partner delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and address local skills gaps for MSME & VCSEs Build capabilities to help small businesses become tender-ready Work with local organisations to address community challenges through skilled volunteering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable those out of work to start and grow businesses Deliver accessible mentoring and skills support for disabled business owners Build capabilities in local female and / or ethnic minority business owners Reduce the digital divide in MSMEs / VCSEs Support schools through our parent charity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentor and educate local MSMEs and VCSEs on sustainable business practices Support startups addressing the Net Zero challenge

Our Future



We are incredibly proud of the community we have built and the businesses we have boosted. But our work is far from done.

With challenging economic conditions and continuous acceleration in the digital landscape, small organisations need expert guidance & support more than ever.

We have big ambitions to scale our reach and deepen our impact, ensuring no small business is left behind.

We need partners to help us achieve that goal.

Get in touch to discuss how we can help you achieve your goals and deliver impact together.

Join our mission:

[Become a partner](#)

[Volunteer your skills](#)

[Get support](#)

Our Priorities

Roll out our local mentoring offering to Local Authorities across the UK

Accelerate mentoring & training on AI adoption

Expand partnerships to accelerate growth and deepen inclusion

Deliver Social Value initiatives in communities nationwide

Ongoing enhancement of impact tracking, including first in-depth economic impact study.

Optimise the ongoing mentoring offering to deepen relationships and tracking further

Continued platform development to further optimise recommendations and next steps for mentees using AI

