



Supporting SME opportunities in
Bioenergy, Bioproducts and Energy Systems
Impact, Highlights and the Future



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

PRACTICAL HELP FOR BUSINESS

In 2016, EBRI was awarded a £2.74m project 'Business Investment in Research' jointly funded by the EU European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and Aston University.



The main objective of this three year initiative was to accelerate small business innovation in the application of energy, energy systems and bioproducts to drive new growth, employment and export opportunities in the West Midlands and beyond.

Results and impact

The European Bioenergy Research Institute (EBRI) at Aston University appointed Focus Consultants to undertake an independent assessment and evaluation of the project. Their findings are summarised over the next few pages, providing an insight into project performance, effectiveness and value for money, as well as its potential impact on shaping future business support.



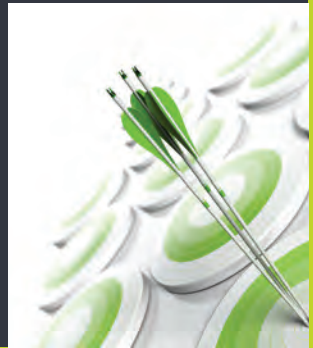
Background

The EBRI project was designed to provide practical solutions for businesses in the West Midlands to explore the growing 'Energy-from-Waste' and Energy Systems markets, and the opportunities they offer. Business decision makers were able to benefit from:

- Bespoke guidance through the EBRI 'Value from Waste' Master Class
- Testing and analysis of materials
- Assessment of business proposals
- Analysis of supply chain opportunities

Help given – a statistical summary

- 4,126 hours of business support provided by EBRI.
- 172 West Midlands businesses assisted.
- An average of 24 hours of support provided to each business.
- 103 businesses received over 12 hours of support, amounting to 3,727 hours of support.
- This equated to over 36 hours of support per business, or 300% of what was required to hit the ERDF minimum business support requirement.
- The actual cost per business support output was £12k. The projected budget cost allocated for each output was £34k.



Achievements against targets

The EBRI project overperformed against the required number of ERDF outputs as detailed in the table below.

Support	Target Number	Actual Number	% Achievement of Target
Enterprises with over 12 hours of support	93	103	111%
New enterprises supported	8	11	138%
Enterprises cooperating with research entities	31	39	126%
Businesses introducing new to the market products	11	12	109%
Enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	15	23	153%

Working with businesses

During the three years of the programme, EBRI offered companies a variety of options to help them develop new products and services – ranging from events focusing on how to access funding, two-day Master Classes, through to bespoke market and technical evaluation reports.

An independent survey was issued to all of the businesses that received support from EBRI to gain their feedback. The key findings from the survey respondents are listed below:

44%	Predict an increase in Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) in the next 2 years as a result of working with EBRI.	
50%	Believe they will create new jobs as a result of the support from EBRI.	
77%	Felt the project has had a positive impact on their company. This increases to 87.5% for businesses who took part in EBRI's more indepth support offer.	

A number of beneficiary case studies illustrate the wide-reaching impact EBRI has had on project participants, with one business for instance forecasting that as a result of their involvement with the project they will recruit approximately 50 new staff.



To see EBRI's full range of case studies visit:
www.bioenergy-for-business.org/case-studies
and **www.bioenergy-for-business.org/reviews**

Economic impact

According to the independent summative assessment and evaluation of EBRI's project, the potential direct and indirect impacts of the project over the next two years are estimated to be:



169 Jobs*

Employment created



£19.9m**

Gross Value Added (GVA) i.e. a return of £7 for every £1 invested in the project



£1.47m

Increased spend in R&D by businesses involved in the project

* This is the estimated potential total direct and indirect employment created over the next two years as a result of the project. Calculations are based on the following: average number of jobs predicted to be created by businesses who took part in the project (based on data from a business survey) multiplied by the total number of businesses supported by the project. The calculations also take into account deadweight, displacement and use Type 2 Multipliers.

** A simple measure of GVA has been used – the estimated turnover created by the additional employees in the new posts created through the EBRI programme.

Wider benefits

According to the independent evaluation report, the EBRI project has delivered a number of benefits not only to local companies, but to Aston University, the West Midlands community and beyond.

In order to produce the independent evaluation a number of key external and internal stakeholders were interviewed to determine the impact of EBRI's support.



Benefits of the project on Aston University in the region

- Improved reputation
- Improved regional engagement
- Greater participation in local initiatives
- Development of regional supply chains
- Creation of company relationships
- Attracting PhD students
- Supported local alumni relationships
- Enhanced teaching through contact with industry



The future

Drawing on the success of this project, EBRI has announced a new three year ERDF project which will build and develop on the findings of the independent evaluation report. This new initiative will support access to Low Carbon research and innovation in West Midlands businesses commencing July 2019.

The European Bioenergy Research Institute (EBRI) at Aston University provides practical solutions for businesses to explore the growing 'Energy-from-Waste' and Energy Systems markets, and the opportunities they offer.

Companies can benefit from specialist support, cutting-edge technologies and bespoke events, e.g. workshops to help stimulate business start-up and growth, plus the development of new products and services.

To discover more email:
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www.bioenergy-for-business.org

The EBRI ESIF European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) 'Business Investment in Research' business support project ran from May 2016 to June 2019.

