

## Objectives and key achievements

The [SME Strategy](#) was launched in June 2024 to:

- Consolidate our support offer for start ups and SMEs
- Position the City of London Corporation as a gateway to SME support
- Expand and convene the partnership network
- Develop a targeted approach to SME support through access to finance, data, space, expertise, and networks.

Signed the Federation of Small Businesses Local Leadership Pledge to further establish our commitment to supporting small businesses.



### SME GATEWAY

Launched a user-focused landing page for [Business Support and Advice](#). A clear navigation point which consolidates all SME resources available from the City Corporation. This intuitive design has **increased service visibility and streamlined access to critical resources, empowering small businesses to efficiently find the guidance they need.**

### ACCESS TO FINANCE FOR EARLY-STAGE SMEs CONFERENCE

Delivered the City Corporation's first flagship SME Conference, attracting over 250 SMEs. TFeaturing funding expertise from industry leaders, a high profile Business Showcase with partner organisations, and a dynamic pitching competition – **positioning the City Corporation as a convener of innovation and opportunity with the "Access to Finance" space.**



### SME TECH REPORT

Produced a data-driven, analysis of the [City's tech SME ecosystem](#) in partnership with Beauhurst. This landmark report presents **actionable insights into emerging trends and barriers to growth, providing an evidence base for targeted, high-impact policy interventions and strategies** to accelerate innovation in the sector.

# City of London Corporation SME Strategy

**CATALYSING BUSINESS GROWTH:  
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIRST YEAR**



## Large-scale SME events

Two of the core priorities within the SME Strategy are enhancing access to expertise and expanding professional networks for SMEs. We have supported these aims by hosting and facilitating expert-led events that connect SMEs with our partners and communities in our network.



SME Breakfast to launch the SME Tech Report  
(expert led conversations)



International Women's Day Pop-Up Market  
(over 100 buyers supporting small business)

- ◆ **Elevating Female Entrepreneurs** (4 events helping female founders develop their skills and network)
- ◆ **E-Business Event – Future Ready: Essential Digital Skills and AI for Business Growth** (50 SMEs in attendance)
- ◆ **Future Founders: Ignite Your Entrepreneurial Journey** supporting (75 young entrepreneurs)



## Customer support programmes

### SMALL BUSINESS RESEARCH + ENTERPRISE CENTRE

Small Business Research + Enterprise Centre (**SBREC**) is the go-to service for pre-startups and startups who use our resources to get their business off the ground. We then refer them on to more developed spaces in our partner network to continue growing.



**1994**  
TOTAL NUMBER  
OF MEMBERS



**1768**  
NEW MEMBERS  
THIS YEAR



**24.7%**  
RENEWAL RATE  
(up by 50% YoY)

**29.7%**  
PRE-STARTUPS

**24.5%**  
STARTUPS



On average, **184 members**  
visit the Centre per month



**110**  
EVENTS  
(organised by the SME Delivery Team)

**57**  
ONSITE AT THE  
GUILDHALL

**53**  
ONLINE  
WEBINARS

- ◆ **603 SMEs** attended onsite events
- ◆ **36 speakers and experts** took part in the events programme
- ◆ **37 sessions** were led by our in-house business advisers
- ◆ Majority of people who registered for events were **based in London**

### SAMUEL WILSON'S LOAN TRUST



**24 loans**  
given to date  
at a total value  
of £753,000

The focus for the Samuel Wilson's Loan Trust (SWLT) this year has been improving the application process and the loan pipeline.

The Trust has been present at 12 trade events, including the Young Entrepreneurship Initiative by the Worshipful Company of Saddlers and the New Territories Exhibition hosted by Goldsmiths University, to raise awareness of the SWLT and the City Corporation's business support.

## Customer support programmes

### LONDON E-BUSINESS PROGRAMME

We were allocated additional funding as we exceeded our original targets.



**12**

Created 12 jobs



**14**

14 SMEs have new or improved products



**101**

Safeguarded 101 jobs



**32**

32 SMEs entering new markets



WORKED WITH  
**160 SMEs**

#### Additional outcomes for SME participants included:

- Improving internal processes
- Refining their digital marketing strategies
- Introducing new digital tools, e.g. accounting or graphic design software
- Improved their digital knowledge and skills, including how to use AI

### CYBER GRIFFIN

*These numbers include both SMEs and larger organisations.*



TRAINED OVER  
**21,500**  
DELEGATES

**Conducted 580 cyber security training services** including end user awareness, strategic security exercising, incident response and cyber maturity assessments.

**580**  
TRAINING  
SERVICES



Key training resources:

- **Baseline Briefing**, an end user awareness training on cyber threats and how to tackle them. Attended by over 12,600 delegates.
- **Case Study: Spear Phishing**, an interactive, behind-the-scenes look into what happens during a cyber attack. Highlights the importance of good cyber hygiene and how actions can mitigate attacks.
- **Incident Response Hydra**, a new resource launched this year, this offers Incident Responder Teams an opportunity to test their capabilities against various threats. Accessed over 25 times since launch.

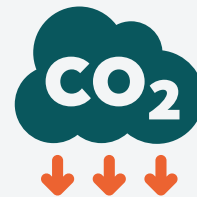
## Customer support programmes

### HEART OF THE CITY In the last year, the charity has:



Provided training, support or resources to over 1,500 businesses to embed social and environmental value into their operations

- Supported 176 SMEs to understand and embed social value into their operations, including adopting the Living Wage and implementing diversity initiatives
- Won three SME focussed awards, including the Most Innovative Corporate CSR Support Company in the Greater London Enterprise Awards
- Helped 280 ethnic minority-owned SMEs in London become supplier-ready through the Minority Business Matters programme, delivered in partnership with MSDUK, enabled at least 34 ethnic minority owned businesses to engage in new markets or adopt new products/services and generating £240,000 worth of new contracts.



SUPPORTED  
**213 SMEs**

TO EMBED NET ZERO INTO THEIR BUSINESS

These businesses have committed to a reduction of 170,217 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e by 2050 (138 in the Square Mile, committing to a reduction of 91,833 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e by 2050)

## Local authority services

### BUSINESS RATES



**£2,718,819**  
SMALL BUSINESS  
RATE RELIEF

The City has awarded £2,718,819 in Small Business Rate Relief to 754 small businesses

- Of the 19,154 current properties liable for business rates in the City, 12,671 (66%) pay based on the small business multiplier
- The City has also awarded nearly **£25 million** in business rates relief to businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector

## Local authority services

### RESPONSIBLE PROCUREMENT

Launched their first **RP Impact Report** which includes progress on supplier diversity. A new report will be launched in June and was designed by a female-owned, ethnic-minority, SME. <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/supporting-businesses/responsible-business/responsible-procurement-policy>

**37 Supplier Diversity Engagements**, including peer to peer engagements

Spend and number of SMEs in the City of London Corporation's supply chain:

- **£21m** with **1548 micro** suppliers
- **£34m** with **1197 small** suppliers
- **£87** with **687 medium** suppliers
- **114 SMEs** from the Square Mile

We challenged our suppliers to identify opportunities to improve sustainability, and as a response, one of our minor works contractors organised a Green Innovation Day. **On 2 May 2024, six SME suppliers pitched innovations to reduce carbon emissions at our sites.** One of the pitches was a window treatment that we identified could be a new supplier, and who has now been funded to receive the necessary training to install the product on our site.

### PROPERTY ADVICE



**45**

**BUSINESSES  
ENGAGED WITH**

Engaged with 45 businesses looking for offices or other forms of space for their operations. This includes both SMEs and larger corporations.

### LICENSING



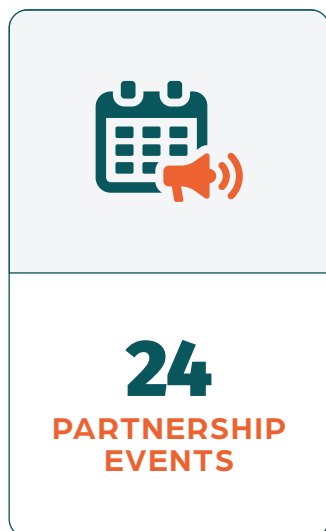
**57**

**NEW PREMISES  
LICENCES ISSUED**

- **160 Pavement licences** issued
- **90 Special treatment licences** issued
- **13 Pre-application advice meetings** facilitated
- **75** Premises accredited with **Safety Thirst** best practice award

## Building relationships

The SME Delivery Team has focused on strengthening external partnerships with key organisations across the small business ecosystem. These collaborations enhance our existing support offer and enable us to maximise resources to better serve SMEs.



### KEY OUTCOMES

- ◆ Negotiated a partnership with Association for Business Mentors which gives SBREC members access to **free mentoring** sessions
- ◆ A wide range of support organisations took part in the SME Conference, contributing to the **high level of expertise** SMEs could access at the event
- ◆ The City of London Corporation is now part of the **City Ventures Alliance** in partnership with Bayes Business School and City University.
- ◆ SBREC members receive **access to discounts**, including for the Markel Business Hub, which has factsheets, legal documents, templates, and toolkits

### CYBER GRIFFIN

Cyber Griffin has **partnered with 218 businesses** ranging from SMEs, local government, charities, volunteer organisations, academic institutions, and large, multinationals.

### HEART OF THE CITY

Heart of the City has **partnered with 15 large corporates and public sector bodies** (12 business, 3 public sector) to support small businesses in their value chain to take action on social value or net zero.

## Increasing visibility

### VISITOR NUMBERS TO WEB PAGES



**15,814**  
SBREC



**699\***  
SME GATEWAY

\* Launched 14 February 2025



**1643**  
SME STRATEGY

### MARKETING STATISTICS FOR SBREC



**LinkedIn**  
FOLLOWING



**Instagram**  
FOLLOWING



**Eventbrite**  
FOLLOWING



**Mailchimp**  
SUBSCRIBERS



**Blog**  
VIEWS PER MONTH



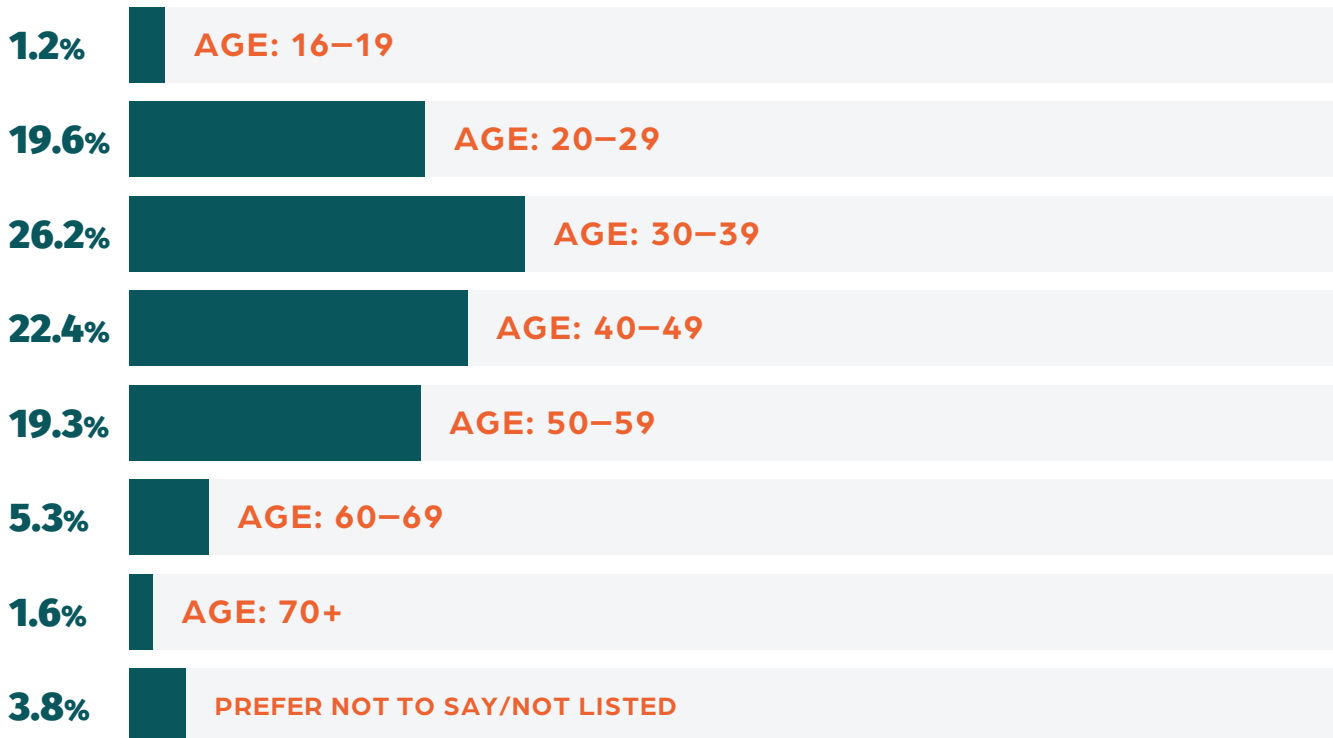
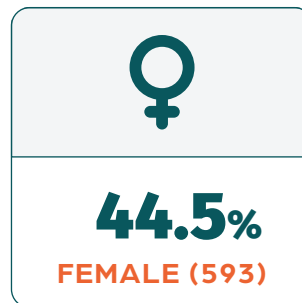
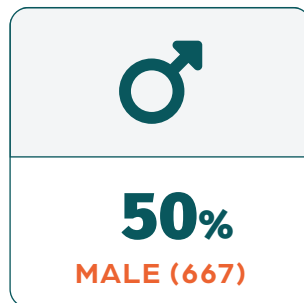
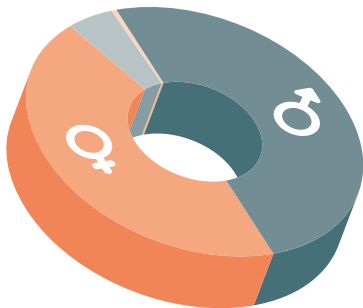
**30.3%**  
AVERAGE  
OPEN RATE ON  
MAILCHIMP

Industry standard:  
25–28%

## Driving inclusivity

Throughout the year, we have prioritised engagement with diverse founders and underrepresented groups. Through targeted events, focused outreach, and strategic marketing partnerships, we have broadened participation in our programmes and helped ensure that our support reaches those who have historically faced barriers to start businesses.

### DIVERSITY OF SBREC MEMBERS



## Driving inclusivity

### DIVERSITY OF SBREC MEMBERS

<b>Asian or Asian British</b>	<b>16.2%</b>
ASIAN-INDIAN (65)	4.9%
OTHER ASIAN BACKGROUND (5)	3.7%
CHINESE (33)	2.5%
ASIAN-BRITISH (32)	2.4%
ASIAN-PAKISTANI (22)	1.6%
ASIAN-BANGLADESHI (15)	1.1%
<b>Black, Black African, Black British, or Black Caribbean</b>	<b>19.4%</b>
BLACK-BRITISH (112)	8.4%
BLACK-AFRICAN (99)	7.4%
BLACK-CARIBBEAN (43)	3.2%
OTHER BLACK BACKGROUND (5)	0.4%
<b>White</b>	<b>37.6%</b>
WHITE-BRITISH (379)	28.4%
WHITE-EUROPEAN UNION (133)	10%
IRISH (17)	1.3%
OTHER WHITE BACKGROUND (92)	6.9%
<b>Mixed or multiple ethnic groups</b>	<b>8.1%</b>
OTHER MIXED/ETHNIC BACKGROUND (78)	5.8%
MIXED – BLACK & WHITE (17)	1.3%
MIXED – ASIAN & WHITE (13)	1%
<b>Prefer not to say/not listed</b>	<b>9.4%</b>

## Driving inclusivity

### BUSINESS SECTORS OF SBREC MEMBERS

