

GROWING KENT & MEDWAY

A world-class research, innovation and enterprise cluster

STRATHOUSE



UK Research
and Innovation

growingkentandmedway.com



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Strat House: an introduction

Note on the authors of this report

Strat House is a strategy consultancy focused on brand and communications strategy. We exist to help brands grow.

Over the last eight years we have been fortunate to work for an inspiring range of global corporations and brands. Our task is typically to assist in refreshing foundational strategies and also helping to raise the bar in terms of best practice approaches.

We're in our element tackling transformative challenges: equipping brands for the future. We achieve this by deploying a hybrid mix of the latest marketing theory, consumer insight, classic brand planning and communications strategy.

www.strathouse.co.uk



Introduction

Growing Kent & Medway (GKM) is an innovation cluster that focuses on driving inclusive economic growth in the region's advanced horticulture, fresh produce packaging, and food and drink processing sectors.

Its core mission is to establish Kent and Medway as a world-leading region for sustainable and climate-smart food production and processing.

GKM achieves this through four main activity streams:

- **Investing in R&D Infrastructure:** GKM has invested over £8.6 million to create or upgrade four key hubs, including the GreenTech Hub (horticulture), the Industrial Biotechnology Hub (plant-based compounds), the Medway Food Innovation Centre (MFIC, food processing/alternative proteins), and the Industrial Agri-Engineering Hub
- **Providing Funding:** GKM allocates secondary grant funding (e.g., Large R&D, Business Innovation Vouchers) to fund industry-led innovation projects.
- **Offering Business Support:** This includes the Food Accelerator Programme (for entrepreneurs), an extensive

programme of events and networking plus a Mentoring Programme to help businesses innovate, grow, and bring new products to market.

- **Developing Skills:** GKM works on a strategic framework to address skills gaps and professionalise the sector, such as creating a regional skills hub and supporting initiatives like the Thanet Earth Centre for Excellence.

Overall, GKM brings together industry, scientists, technologies, and entrepreneurs to stimulate collaboration and deliver innovation, with a focus on supporting the adoption of new technologies for improved productivity and sustainability.

Strat House was commissioned by GKM and Niab to undertake a formal independent evaluation of the Growing Kent & Medway (GKM) brand, including an evaluation and market valuation. This report shares that evaluation and valuation ('fair market value').

Purpose of the evaluation and valuation

Objective

- To undertake an evaluation and valuation ('fair market value') of the GKM brand in order to:
- Understand its current 'worth' and contribution
- Clarify its future potential

The evaluation and valuation will serve as supporting evidence, when securing future investment and commitment:

- Financial
- In-kind
- Partnerships

GKM works in association with the following project partners



Understanding brand

What is a brand?

Brand positioning is defined as the memories, thoughts and ideas we seek to prompt in our target consumer's mind:

- The words, colours and images they associate with us
- What they think that using our service, or owning our product, says about them – and how it makes them feel
- What they believe we stand for
- Whether they believe we are truly authentic.

An effective positioning will maximize:

- The distinct nature of our brand, in relation to competitors
- Prompted and unprompted awareness
- Propensity to choose our brand over others.



Marketing is no longer (just) about the stuff that you make, but (also) about the stories, you tell."

Inspired by Seth Godin

When codifying a brand we aim for an evenly-proportioned focus on audience, product and 'personality'

(Shown here: a brand heart - AKA 'everything you need to codify your brand')



When trying to value a brand we assess a wider range of factors – that extends into management and marketing

What goes in

- Whether the brand is run efficiently
- Whether it adheres to its strategy
- Whether it honours its commitments
- The consistency and commitment of the management team running the brand

What's created

- The authority the brand commands
- The differentiation of the brand
- Whether the brand is trust worth and authentic
- Whether it communicates itself simply and clearly

What goes out

- Whether it delivers on its goals
- Whether it is retaining its audience
- Whether it is thriving
- Whether it appeals

Methodology

Methodology: research approach

This study is anchored in a ‘pragmatic’ philosophy – guided by our belief that the most important factor is the utility and relevance of the findings for organizational decision-making. The study adopts a Mixed Methods approach:

- **Quantitative Data Collection:** document collection and analysis to understand the brand’s achievements, the brand proposition, marketing efficiency and also to benchmark the brand against comparable initiatives
- **Qualitative Data Collection Second:** a concurrent phase of stakeholder interviews to contextualise and enrich the quantitative findings

- **Financial Valuation:** integration of the above with external financial data to derive an estimated monetary value of the brand. This approach ensures the brand valuation is validated and contextualized by stakeholder- based insight.

Note: The supplied documents are stored on the Strat House server and Strat House is under NDA with Niab.

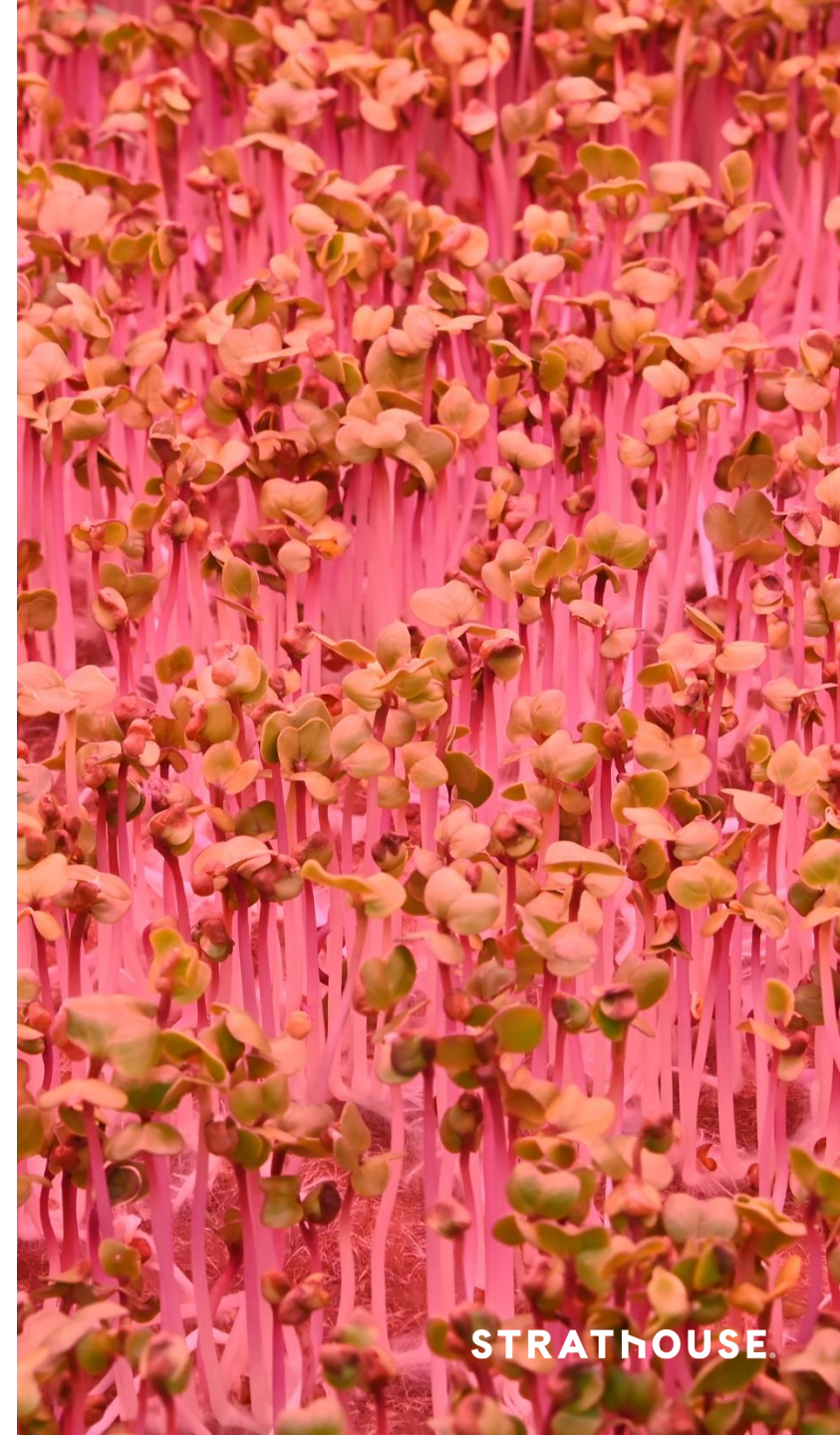
Methodology: research activities

The overall research design was structured into distinct but interconnected phases as shown in the table below. This minimizes the limitations of relying on a single data source:

Phase	Objective	Methodological Focus	Key Output
1. GKM progress to date	To document the full range of GKM achievements in order to confirm the contributions it has made to its sector and region	Quantitative – analysis of supplied documents	Summary of achievement, primarily shared using quantitative data
2. Evaluation of the brand proposition	To document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What the GKM proposition is understood to be externally How the GKM proposition is perceived How the brand as a whole comes across – its perceived personality and the emotions it prompts 	Qualitative – stakeholder interviews validated against analysis of supplied documents	Summary and assessment of proposition together with recommendations for next steps
3. Mapping of the GKM ecosystem	To document the structure and features of the future GKM proposition	Quantitative – analysis of supplied documents	Map of GKM ecosystem together with proposition features
4. Evaluation of GKM marketing and comms	To document and assess GKM's marketing and comms activity	Quantitative – analysis of supplied documents	Summary and assessment of activity together with recommendations for next steps
5. Benchmarking exercise	To contextualise the evaluation	Quantitative – analysis of external websites and sources	Case studies with key learnings; the Strength in Places Fund, Innovate UK, Media Cymru and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation
6. Brand Financial Valuation	To calculate the net present value of future earnings directly attributable to the brand asset.	Quantitative and Financial – analysis of supplied documents to conduct BSI assessment, combined with external financial data to confirm attributable revenue base <i>Note: BSI assessment validated separately using a closed AI. See relevant section in this document for further detail</i>	The definitive Monetary Value of the brand (e.g., using the Royalty Relief or Multi-Period Excess Earnings Method).

Summary of supplied information

- Growing Kent & Medway Mid-term Progress Report 2024
- Wavehill, Growing Kent and Medway Evaluation, February 2025
- RAND Europe, Evaluation of the Strength and Places Fund: Wave 1 Process Evaluation
- DEFRA, A UK government food strategy for England, considering the wider UK food system, July 2025
- GKM Quarterly Reports
- Accelerator Testimonials
- GKM Communication & Events Summaries
- GKM channel and comms analytics
- Press coverage
- GKM proposed Food System Approach
- Overview of associated activities, Researchfish



Sources for benchmarking evaluation

- Stakeholder interview feedback (Innovate UK)
- RAND Europe, Evaluation of the Strength and Places Fund: Wave 1 Process Evaluation
- Innovate UK - owned channels (<https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/>)
- The Innovation Hub by Innovate UK (<https://ukinnovationhub.ukri.org/>)
- AI Skills Hub by Innovate UK (<https://aiskillshub.org.uk/>)
- Innovate UK x PwC (<https://www.pwc.co.uk/press-room/press-releases/corporate-news/innovate-uk-launches-ai-skills-hub-to-turbocharge-growth-in-crit.html>)
- Innovate UK press and industry coverage
- Media Cymru - Vision & strategy (<https://media.cymru/about/our-vision/>)
- Media Cymru - News & progress updates (<https://media.cymru/new-data-from-media-cymru-makes-case-for-long-term-rd-investment-in-wales-5bn-creative-industries/>)
- Media Cymru - Interim progress report (<https://media.cymru/research/media-cymru-interim-progress-report/>)
- Media Cymru - Cardiff Capital Region News: <https://www.cardiffcapitalregion.wales/news-events/latest-news/a-strong-start-for-media-cymru/>
- Media Cymru industry press coverage
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation - own channels and content (<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/adaptive-strategy-for-circular-design/introduction>)
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation - news & media centre (<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/media-centre/overview>)
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation Network (<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/network/overview>)

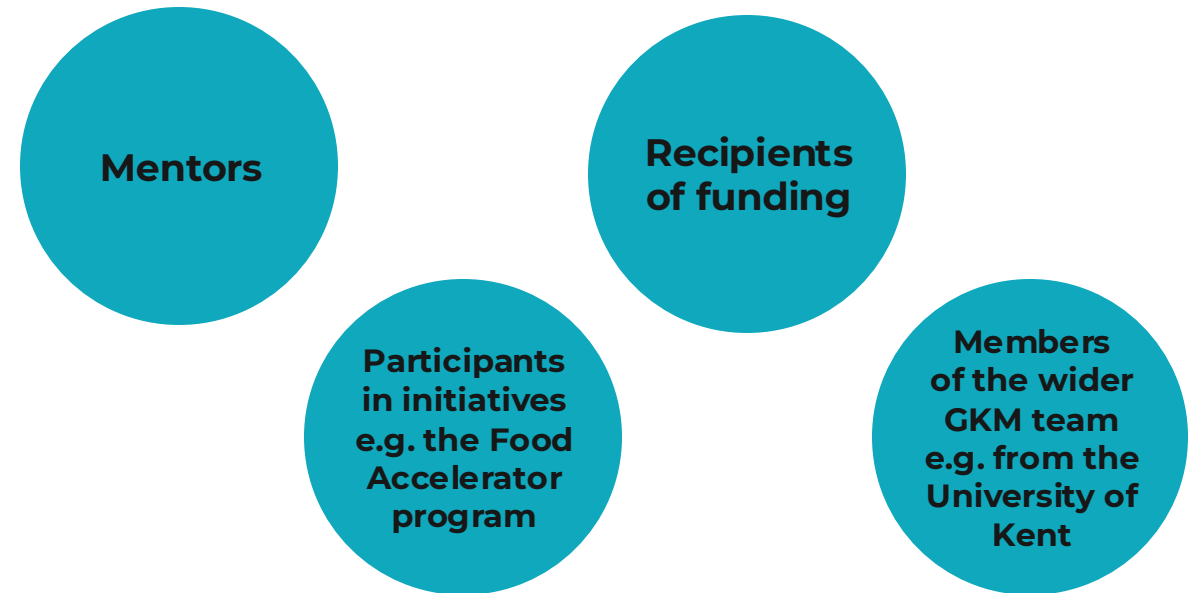
Summary of stakeholder interviews

Interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders to understand their experience and observations of GKM as a brand.

The questions in the interviews covered their understanding of the brand proposition, their experience of the brand, their perceptions and how these had evolved and their awareness of or engagement with marketing and comms activities.

Privacy and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) considerations were taken into account when conducting interviews and interviewees have not been identified in reporting.

In total, 9 people were interviewed:



Stakeholder interviews |

Interview topic guide

- Please share an overview of you and your role (as it pertains to GKM)
- Please tell us about your working relationship with GKM
- If you were asked 'what is GKM and what does it do?' what would you say?
- Has your understanding of what GKM offers changed over time?
- Were you aware of GKM and what they do prior to your introduction?
- Has your perception of the GKM brand changed over time?
- Are you aware that GKM extends beyond the Kent and Medway region?
 - Now that you are aware, does that affect your perception of the brand and if so how?
- In your working life, do you encounter colleagues or clients who are aware of GKM?
- Please provide an overview of your interactions with in relation to marketing and comms: do you attend webinars, tradeshow, read the newsletters...?



Methodology for the valuation: the Royalty Relief Approach

The Royalty Relief approach to brand valuation estimates a brand's value by calculating the present value of the future licensing fees (royalties) a company would save by owning the brand, rather than having to license it from a third party:



Determine the royalty rate

- We estimate the percentage of revenue (the royalty rate) that another brand might have to pay to 'license' a brand with a similar strength profile in the industry
- We use the Brand Strength Index (BSI) score to pinpoint this specific rate, depending on the industry range used



Project future value

- We forecast the future revenue the brand could generate or influence



Calculate present value

- The estimated annual royalty 'savings' are calculated over a forecast period (typically 10 years but for GKM this is 5 – the duration of the project) and then discounted back to today's value

Brand Strength Index (BSI) | Chosen GKM balanced scorecard

Based on a blended approach – combining the preferred factors of Interbrand and Brand Finance

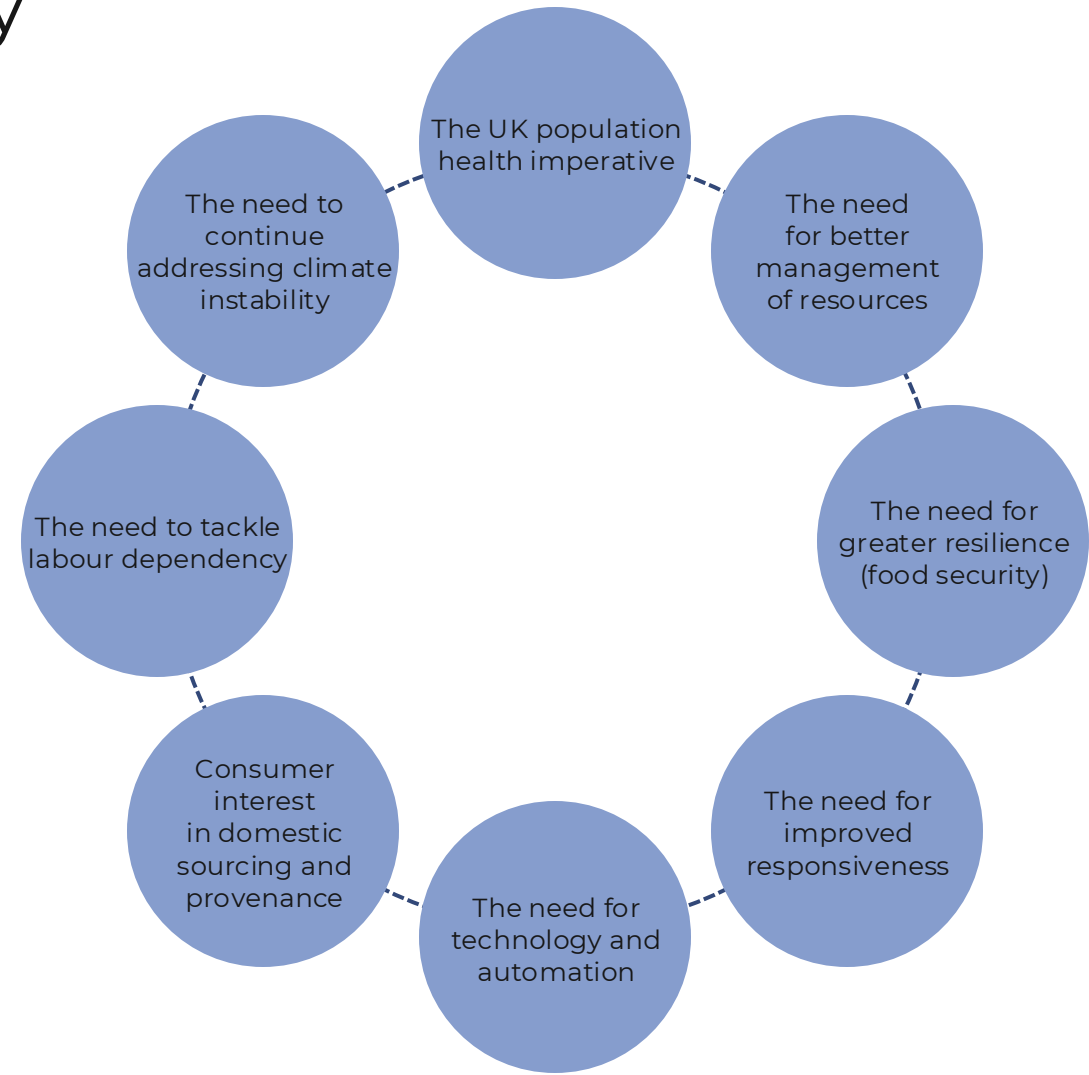
Brand inputs: commitment & resource deployment 20%		Brand equity: stakeholder perception & trust 40%		Brand outputs: economic & sectoral impact 40%	
Key assessment questions	Kpis	Key assessment questions	Kpis	Key assessment questions	Kpis
1. Governance Efficacy: How clearly do senior staff articulate GKM's proposition and goals to the wider team and partner network?	Stakeholder interviews + QRM reports	1. Strategic Authority: To what extent has GKM's activity influenced external organisation?	QRM reports + Wavehill report	1. Collaborative Funding Success: How much additional competitive R&D funding (Innovate UK, DEFRA, etc.) have GKM consortium partners successfully secured through joint bids since the GKM project began?	QRM reports + Wavehill report
2. Funding Leverage Quality: How much matched funding has GKM secured, and what percentage comes from high-value, mission-aligned partners?	New Commercial Funding (total and sources by %)	2. Differentiation/Uniqueness: Compared to other UK R&D/economic hubs, how unique and superior is the quality of support or IP offered by GKM?	Benchmarking + SIPF report	2. commercialisation Success: What percentage of collaborative R&D projects from the last three years have resulted in a product or service reaching the market?	QRM reports + Wavehill report
3. Marketing Efficiency and Effectiveness: How has GKM performed in terms of perception, engagement and awareness of the brand?	Perception, engagement and awareness figures	3. Trust & Advocacy (NPS): How likely are stakeholders to recommend GKM's partnership or services to another business in the food/horticulture sector?	Stakeholder interviews + QRM reports + Wavehill report	3. Market Stability: Does the GKM brand association reduce the perceived risk of investment for businesses operating within the Kent & Medway sector?	Perceived Risk Reduction Index.
4. Alignment To Strategy: What percentage of GKM's core R&D funding is dedicated to projects that contribute to the advancement and superiority of a Kent Food System?	Strat House evaluation (marking criteria to be agreed with SB)	4. Authenticity & Delivery: Does GKM consistently deliver on its objectives and promises?	Stakeholder interviews + QRM reports + Wavehill report	4. Partner Loyalty/Retention: What percentage of core businesses/universities/agencies renew their formal commitment to GKM annually?	Stakeholder interviews + QRM reports + Wavehill report
5. Employee Brand Engagement: What percentage of GKM staff and key partner staff report are demonstrably motivated by the GKM mission and consistently serve as brand ambassadors?	Stakeholder interviews + QRM reports + Wavehill report	5. Clarity Of Proposition: How clearly does GKM communicate GKM's unique value proposition and what is the external understanding of the proposition?	Stakeholder interviews + QRM reports + Wavehill report	5. Talent Attraction: How many new, permanent, high-skill jobs were demonstrably created or secured within the region due to GKM-enabled growth?	QRM reports + Wavehill report

The need for GKM

The need for GKM is driven by a range of macro forces:

When we evaluate a brand we first check the status of the sector it operates in. We do this because we are hoping to find factors that indicate growth potential, for example:

- A category or sector with an established demand
- A category or sector with promising drivers.
- Whilst it is always possible to grow a brand in a stagnant or declining category or sector (and indeed to use a brand to grow that category or sector), a thriving environment gives us even more confidence that our brand will succeed – especially when in the hands of a strong and capable team.
- The need for GKM is driven by a range of macro forces (shown to right) all of which are on the increase. This indicates the brand exists in a fertile environment.



Why GKM?

The need for GKM, both in the Kent and Medway region and nationally, is driven by a combination of factors that are limiting the food and agriculture sector's ability to drive growth:

- A persistent R&D 'exploitation gap'
- An acknowledged infrastructure deficit
- Low business investment in R&D.

The constantly changing geo-political background is exacerbating these issues, driving up energy costs and increasing supply chain fragility, making the need for a place-based innovation community ever more urgent.

GKM exists to support and fuel an 'ecosystem' of infrastructure, brokerage, and funding that is desperately needed to bridge the gap from research to successful execution. It does this to drive widespread commercial growth in the sector.



GKM progress to date

What Growing Kent & Medway has achieved –
April 2021 to June 2025

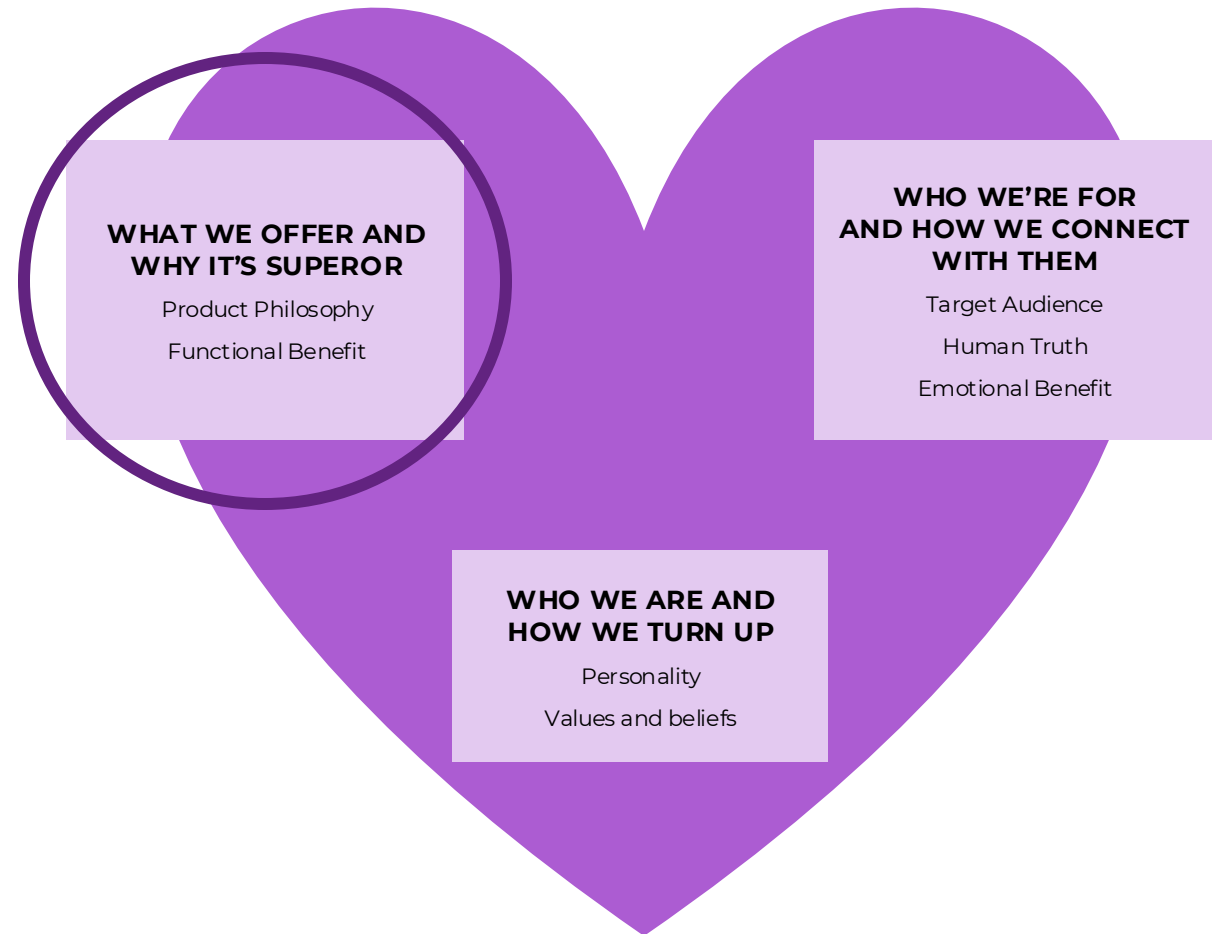
Tracking progress to date

When we look at how a brand is created, one third of the offering is 'what we offer and why it's superior':

- The product or service we offer
- The benefits our product or service delivers

For this reason, it's essential when evaluating a brand, to understand:

- What was achieved
- Whether it performed to or above targets
- Whether it drove engagement in the offering.

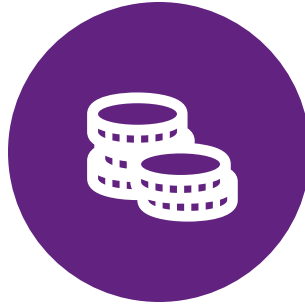


Headline achievements



Tangible value creation

- Delivered and fully operationalized four R&D Hubs, investing over £8.6million in physical infrastructure
- (These hubs quickly became centres of activity, supporting 145 collaborative projects and engaging over 47 businesses for the minimum 12-hour threshold by the mid-term mark)
- Directly supported the creation of 51 new food and drink related products or processes brought to market



Funding and support

- Projected to have secured £24.4 million in leveraged investment, significantly augmenting the original SIPF grant
- Successfully allocated grants toward industry-led R&D, supporting projects that generated £1.4 million in match funding from businesses
- Extension of academic work programmes into national and international collaborations with partners including Imperial College, Bezos Foundation and Tony Blair Foundation
- Successfully built a large professional network, exceeding the KPI target with 220 registered member businesses by Q11 2023



Inclusive growth

- Surpassed its key social target, delivering 63% of dedicated business support to under-served groups and priority areas (vs. a 30% target)
- The Mentoring program connected 139 entrepreneurs with 67 mentors, delivering over 845 hours of professional support
- The Accelerator program (run by University of Greenwich at the MFIC) has supported 91 businesses with training and access to lab facilities
- Successfully launched high-visibility, targeted events, such as a major exhibition at the Living Land event, to engage approximately 3,000 school children
- Established the *Be Your Own Boss* initiative specifically address challenges in engaging with and supporting young people – who are typically under-represented in the sector

Headline achievements (continued)



Thought leadership

- Co-authored the Alternative Proteins Road map: Identifying UK Priorities
- Developed the Workforce 2030 Skills Strategy which fed into and influenced the Local Skills Improvement Plan for Kent and Medway
- Established Growing Green which supports businesses to reduce carbon emissions and become more sustainable, resulting in the creation of Decarbonisation Plans for participating businesses
- Hosted the House of Lords Select Committee on Horticulture, securing its role as an international gateway for Agri-food R&D



Governance

- Successfully implemented a complex operational model involving seven work packages, four core partners, and 10 different funding streams
- Successfully drove cluster growth and engagement, leveraging focused campaigns that resulted in frequent web traffic and peaks in social media impressions, especially during grant calls
- The team managed and mitigated consistent external risks (like the economic climate) and internal issues (like R&D grant delays and staff recruitment turnover) throughout its life cycle

The total overall investment catalysed by the GKM program is projected to reach over £24.4 million by the end of the project

Funding Source	Type	Total Value / Target	Key Purpose
SIPF Award	Primary Grant	£17,909,204	Overall project delivery, R&D Infrastructure, staffing
Leveraged / Additional Funding	External Grants, Philanthropy, etc.	£6,596,974 secured (Mid-term)	Further R&D projects, PhD studentships, specific research focus areas
Industry Co-investment (in Grants)	Business Match-funding	£2,849,052 (Mid-term)	Match funding for secondary grant competitions (Large R&D, BIVs, etc.)
Grant Drawing Partner Co-investment	Partner Match-funding	£6,513,044 (Project target)	Match funding for core project activities and infrastructure
Total Projected Investment	Overall Capital Mobilized	>£24.4million	Overall regional economic uplift and cluster support



GKM is investing £5 million in secondary grant funding for R&D and innovation activity, and has already awarded more than £3 million in grants to date

Grant Funding Stream	GKM Grant Awarded	Industry Co-investment	Total Project Cost
Large-Scale R&D Grants (Round 1)	£1,036,427	£951,467	£1,987,894
Large-Scale R&D Grants (Round 2)	£1,350,239	£815,386	£2,165,625
Business Innovation Vouchers (Round 1)	£154,000	£53,447	£207,447
Business Innovation Vouchers (Round 2)	Over £320,000	N/A (Project costs up to £60k, 50% grant)	N/A
Business Sustainability Challenge (Round 1)	Over £262,783	£276,424	£539,207
Business Sustainability Challenge (Round 2)	£199,426	£199,426	£398,852
Large-Scale Prototyping & Demonstrator Fund	£496,458	£213,550	£710,008
Total (Sum of Rounds/Funds where data is available)	£3,499,333	£2,509,700	£6,009,033

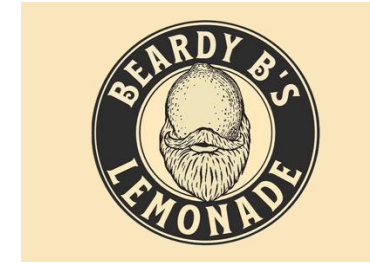
GKM has invested a total of £8.6 million in research infrastructure, which has added ground-breaking research and innovation capabilities to the region

Infrastructure Hub	GKM Investment (SIPF Funding)	Total Value / Target
GreenTech Hub (Niab, East Malling)	£2,700,000	£3,200,000 (East Malling Trust), £2,000,000 (Local Growth Fund/SELEP), £2,900,000 (East Malling Trust match to LGF), £157,000 (Niab in-kind), £600,000 (East Malling Trust for research winery)
Industrial Biotechnology Hub (University of Kent)	Over £215,000	Over £55,000 (further in-kind funding)
Food Innovation Centre	£800,000	£725,000 (co-investment by the University of Greenwich)
Industrial Agri-Engineering Hub (Canterbury Christ Church University)	N/A (Part of GKM collaboration)	N/A (The wider EDGE Hub is estimated to be worth £7.6m to £11.4m per year to the K&M economy)



GKM has actively supported the creation of 51 new food and drink related products or processes

This successful commercialisation effort, primarily driven by the Food Accelerator Programme and the R&D Hubs, focused heavily on sustainability, waste valorization, and plant-based foods.



Product examples

Alternative Proteins:

Plant-based prawns (Food Squared), and alternative protein-based food and drink products generally



Frozen Plant-Based Meals:

Frozen plant-based children's ready meals (Wildly Tasty)



Health and Wellness:

Long-life canned lemonade (Beardy B's Lemonade), fermented cookies (Fermenti), and improved longer shelf-life energy paste (Enduosport)

Plant-Based Alternatives:

Vegan gluten-free doughnuts with extended shelf life (Borough 22) and Vegan chocolate covered ice cream (Mochi Bros)



Beverages:

WuraBrew range of drinks, spicy beer (Babrani Ltd), and roasted fruit tea (Bohemian Treats)

Value-Added Agriculture:

Dried mushrooms in a jar and grow-in-a-bag oyster mushrooms (Margate Mushrooms), and freeze-dried cherry powders and side streams



Process examples



Waste Valorization & Circular Economy

- Mushroom Production: Trialling the production of specialty mushrooms using waste grain, water and energy generated by whiskey production (Canterbury Brewers & Distillers)
- Insect Protein: Transforming food waste into animal feed and fertilizer using black soldier fly larvae (Inspro)
- Cherry Waste: Researching the development of new foods from cherry waste.



Sustainable Packaging & Shelf Life

- Developing chitosan-infused antimicrobial fresh fruit packaging
- Sustainable soaker pads for raspberry punnets
- Research into paper-based pouches to replace plastics used in packaging



Crop & Energy Efficiency

- Developing a small-scale intelligent (vertical farming) growing system for producing young brassica crops with high nutritional value (Evogro)
- Energy efficient drying methods for probiotic fruit snacks
- Exploring the role of biochar in increasing crop land productivity and removing atmospheric greenhouse gases



Agri-Food & Crop Resilience

- Screening for resistance to spotted wing drosophila in strawberry and raspberry accessions
- Enabling new techniques for transforming seaweed extracts into a plant-based thickening agent for food and pharmaceuticals
- Next-generation apple breeding for resilient UK production.

GKM has facilitated over 67 mentors supporting 139 entrepreneurs

Measure	Achievement	Impact & Context
Total Entrepreneurs Supported	139 entrepreneurs	The program targeted start-ups, with 71% of supported mentees being in their first one to five years of business.
Total Mentors Recruited	67 mentors	Mentors included experienced professionals from high-profile companies like Thanet Earth and Macknade, providing high-value guidance.
Total Hours Delivered	More than 845 hours of support delivered.	This support directly contributed to increased confidence and provided crucial strategic direction for early-stage founders.
Inclusive Growth	83% of mentees were drawn from at least one target group (under-served groups or priority areas).	This demonstrated strong success in reaching targeted demographics, notably helping 85 female entrepreneurs.
Key Function	The mentoring network worked closely with the Food Accelerator, providing one-on-one and group coaching.	



The Accelerator program has supported 91 businesses (enabling the launch of 36 new food and drink products or processes)

Measure	Achievement	Impact & Context
Total Businesses Supported (12+ hours)	91	Businesses supported through food accelerator workshops
Inclusive Growth Target	30%	Target proportion of support to under-served/under-represented groups
Inclusive Growth Achievement (Overall GKM)	63.2%	Overall percentage of support delivered to target groups across IGM, MFIC, Mentoring, and Accelerator activities
New Products/Processes to Market (Output)	36	Total supported by the Food Accelerator, Mentoring Programme, and MFIC
Hours of Free Mentoring	575	Free mentoring support provided through the associated program



GKM has orchestrated over 223 'give back days' (mainly focused on talent attraction and awareness) via its secondary grant funding

Metric	Achievement	Impact & Context
Social Value Target	Target of 192 days of community engagement.	This demonstrated a formal project commitment to delivering social impact alongside economic growth.
Social Value Days Delivered (Mid-term)	223 days (preparation and delivery) reported by grant-funded businesses.	This figure exceeded the 192-day target before the end of the program, demonstrating high compliance and commitment from grant recipients.
Key Activities	Activities included participation in the STEM Ambassador Programme and offering Nuffield Placements for talented students from under-privileged backgrounds.	The goal was to raise awareness of career opportunities in horticulture, food production, and technology among young people.
High-Visibility Events	The GKM team and partners facilitated interactive stands and workshops, such as at the Living Land event, engaging approximately 3,000 school children.	



Future challenges for the brand around scale-up and commercialisation

Establishing the 'legacy' proposition of GKM

- Establishing a compelling vision of a strong independent brand
- With a refined, sharper tighter proposition for GKM
- That builds on its achievements to date and offers convincing economic benefits

...whilst protecting the equity built to date

- GKM has created a strong and defined brand with clear emotional benefits and an appealing brand personality
- The evolution to a more independent and overtly commercial brand should be managed in ways that do not erode this valuable equity

Sustaining momentum

- GKM's impressive trajectory to date means there is a risk activity could slow down, or appear to slow down
- It is therefore crucial to maintain the current pace

Tracking and measuring success

- The brand would benefit from more tightly defined KPIs and a plan for enhanced data capture in order to then strengthen messaging about what the project has achieved

Demonstrating a maturing proposition

- Quantifying and demonstrating GKM's maturity and relative strengths compared to benchmarks will be essential in terms of continued brand trust

Evaluation of the brand proposition

What stakeholders understand GKM to offer

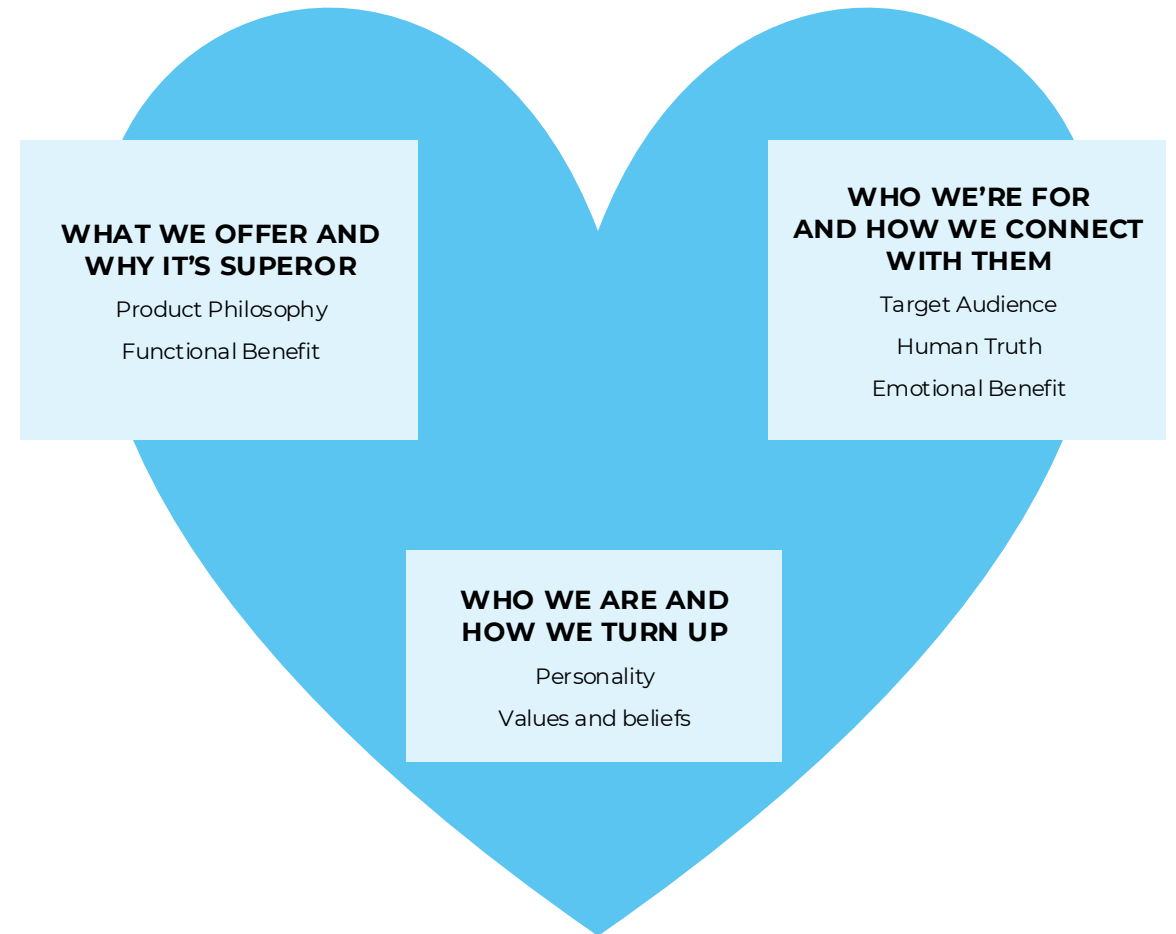
Evaluation of the brand proposition

When evaluating the brand proposition we look at the brand as a whole:

- What the target audience know of the offering – its features and highlights and what benefits they think it offers
- Plus how it makes them feel
- And how it comes across as a 'personality'

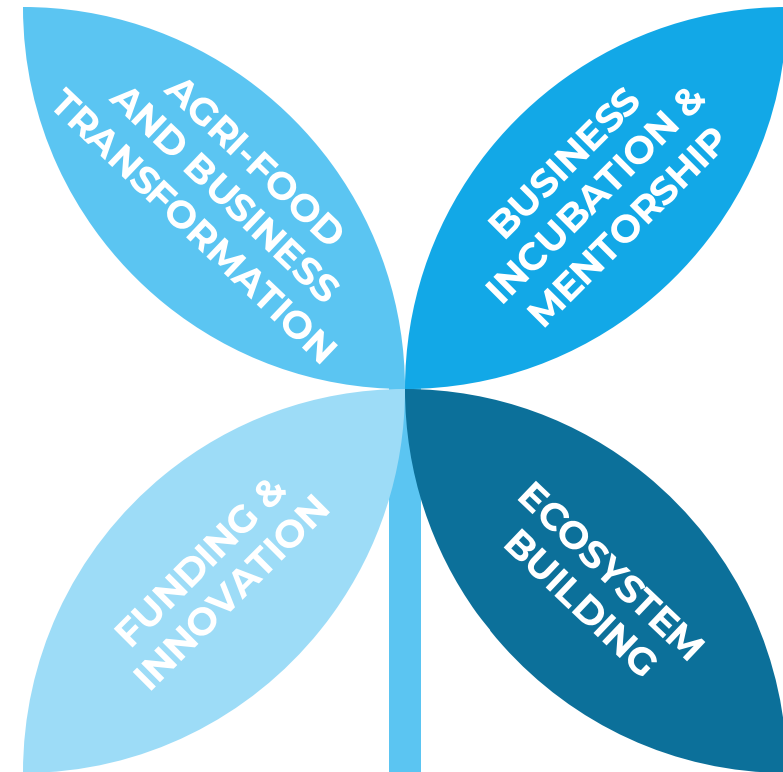
We're trying to work out what our brand makes people feel:

- Do they believe we do what we say we're going to do?
- Are we authentic?
- Do they lean towards us as an offering?
- Would they recommend us to others?



The GKM proposition is strong, differentiated and compelling – first in terms of features...

The most prominent theme is GKM's identity as a unique and comprehensive ecosystem, often described as a one-stop shop or a business in a box for food, drink, and plant-based businesses.



AGRI-FOOD AND BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

There is a strong focus on the technological advancement of the agriculture and food sectors. Expertise provided to businesses covers digital transformation and agri-food solutions.

BUSINESS INCUBATION & MENTORSHIP

GKM provides crucial support for early-stage companies through Accelerator and Mentoring programs. This support is focused on foundational business elements like governance, structure, scaling capacity, and pitch decks

FUNDING & INNOVATION

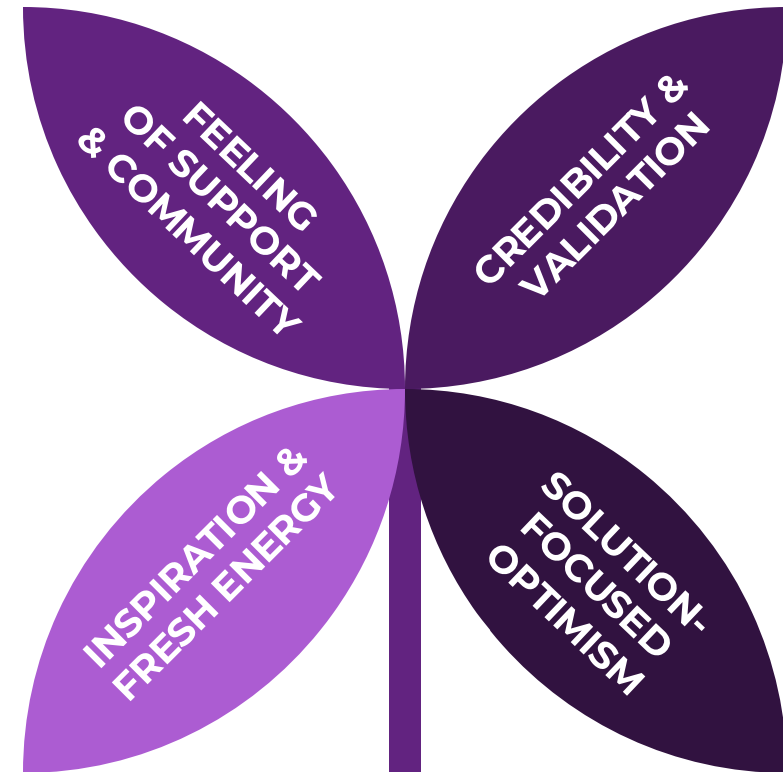
GKM is a key source of match-funded grants and capital for R&D and expansion, particularly in emerging agricultural and food technology sectors like insect and seaweed farming

ECOSYSTEM BUILDING

GKM acts as a central connector, a "one-stop shop", bringing together large businesses, startups, and academic institutions (like its connection to Niab) for knowledge-sharing and mutual benefit

...but more importantly, in terms of the functional and emotional benefits it offers

Perceptions of the brand are very positive. GKM offers a reassuring sense of an 'ongoing' journey and of support beyond the initial program's conclusion.



FEELING OF SUPPORT & COMMUNITY

GKM fosters a strong sense of community and team support, so founders feel they are not working in isolation but have a dedicated network and "a team around" them, particularly during challenging times

CREDIBILITY & VALIDATION

Receiving support or grants from GKM acts as a "stamp of approval" or stamp of "being on the right track," boosting the credibility of startups and attracting further recognition.

SOLUTION-FOCUSED OPTIMISM

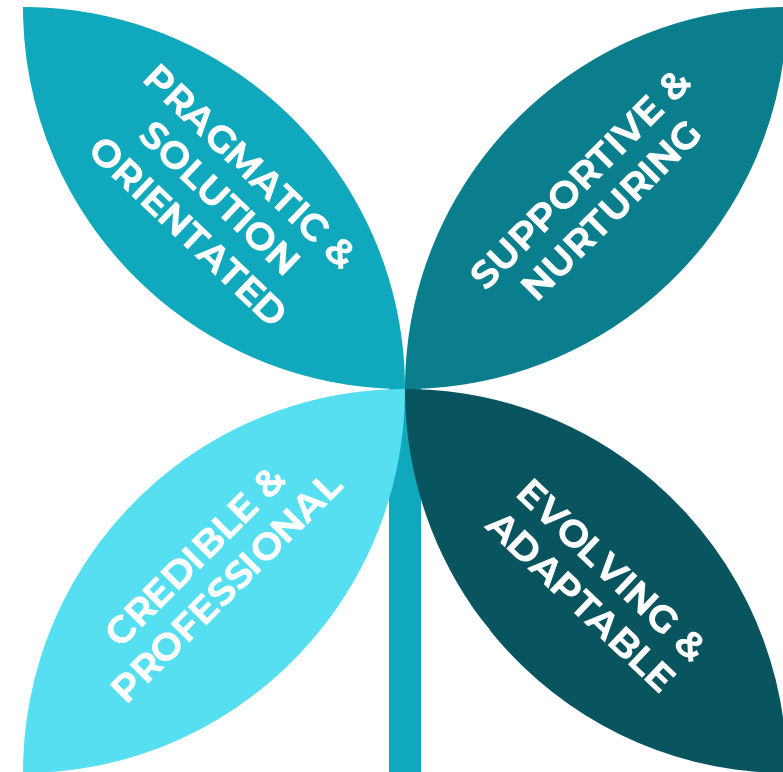
GKM offers a consistently positive, forward-looking, and "solution-oriented" environment, which is highly valued and "very refreshing" when compared to the typically closed or challenging general commercial climate

INSPIRATION & FRESH ENERGY

GKM offers exposure to innovative ideas and diverse communities, keeps business leaders' minds "fresh," and injects new energy and curiosity into established businesses.

...and the 'personality' the brand has created

The GKM brand personality is the dedicated, highly capable facilitator that believes in the potential of the food and drink sector and actively helps entrepreneurs overcome commercial challenges



PRAGMATIC & SOLUTION ORIENTATED

Practical, realistic, and focused on tangible outcomes. Doesn't engage in tick box exercises. Viewed as having a solutions-focused approach not a 'no approach'

SUPPORTIVE & NURTURING

Offers continuous, flexible, and often tailored support to businesses, aiming for a 'lifelong journey with the businesses'. This supportive nature fosters a strong sense of community, making founders feel they are not alone

EVOLVING & ADAPTABLE

Perceived as having evolved over time, demonstrating a willingness to be flexible and adaptive. Notably by extending its reach beyond Kent and Medway to attract talent from far afield

CREDIBLE & PROFESSIONAL

Adds a stamp of approval and credibility to businesses. The brand's strength lies in attracting and harnessing a deep pool of talent and expertise. This is reinforced by its strong links with academia and industry

Importantly, the GKM team (and the feeling of community they foster) is an integral part of the brand

You and the whole team at Growing Kent & Medway went above and beyond in supporting me and the rest of the group.

I've been really encouraged by their enthusiasm and willingness to help.

One of the standout aspects of Grow Kent and Medway is their comprehensive approach to business support.



Being able to ask questions to experts in the industry face to face and through online courses has been a brilliant learning experience.

[The GKM team] bring forth a wealth of knowledge.

Their holistic support, from practical resources and expert advice to community building, has made a significant difference.

We can see the brand has performed well in comparison to other SIPF initiatives (our closest benchmark)

- [Growing Kent & Medway has created a] “trusted legacy brand”.
- Strength in Places Fund In-Person Event Summary Report

Strength in Places Fund



UK Research
and Innovation

All of these factors in combination give us a sense of the potential elevator pitch of GKM

The 'elevator pitch' is the combined product of the brand promise and the brand discriminator ('the heart of the heart'). It is an important tool we use to do the following:

- Focus us on most important elements of the proposition (the 'key beats')
- Sense-check the collective understanding of the proposition as a whole – do people agree the elevator pitch summarises those elements?

The elevator pitch can be a paragraph or two, it can be a sentence. What matters is that it:

- Summarises what we offer
- Explains why we're better
- Clarifies why our audience should choose us over other options.



The 'elevator pitch' we take out of our combined findings

DRAFT ELEVATOR PITCH

GKM – the food systems catalyser

- The Growing Kent and Medway (GKM) initiative is a highly valued and unique innovation ecosystem designed to accelerate the growth of food, drink, and plant-based businesses operating in horticulture and fresh produce.
- Its core proposition is the comprehensive and flexible support it provides, encompassing access to R&D facilities, labs and mentorship to help founders structure and scale their businesses, with streamlined access to funding, grants, and academic/industry networks.
- The initiative is characterised by its dedication to offering continuous, tailored support rather than short-term, generic assistance.



Given the brand is currently re-staging, it is definitely time to refresh and refine the brand positioning

The current 're-stage' of GKM, as it shifts from being a part of the SIPF to a fully independent organisation, means it is time to review the brand positioning and refine it, tailoring it to the new vision and business strategy.

This will be a positive adjustment. The brand has permission from its audience to keep evolving – and in fact this appears to be expected of it, given its momentum to date.

However, all recommendations should be executed in ways that preserve the valuable equity that has been created.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS, BASED ON THE COMBINED FINDINGS:

1. REFRESH AND REFINES GKM'S OBJECTIVES	2. REFRESH AND REFINES THE AUDIENCE	3. REFRESH OR REFINES THE PROPOSITION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm the brand vision and objectives moving forward (building on its legacy) Clarify brand hierarchy (in relation to GKM ecosystem and also partner organisations e.g. Ground to Growth) Confirm future-facing 'business model' for GKM (to guide refreshed proposition) <p>Consideration should also be given to ownership of the brand (and how ownership is communicated) moving forward.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify who we are for (and who we are not for) Clarify the needs we address (functional and emotional) <p>Consideration should be given to the 'user journey' of the audience. How can we make engagement ever more seamless?</p>	<p>Lock the 'brand on a page':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product/service offering and functional benefits Personality and values + beliefs Plus locked elevator pitch. <p>Care must be taken to ensure the proposition maintains an appropriate balance of approachability without compromising on expertise and professionalism.</p>

Consideration should also be given to the brand name

The issue	Rationale for, and benefits of, the name	Argument against a brand name change	Argument in favour of a brand name change	Potential solutions
<p>The brand does, and arguably should, operate beyond Kent and Medway:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating in the wider UK (and beyond) improves positive perception of the brand amongst stakeholders – who see this as implying expertise, capability and ‘success’ 	<p>Growing Kent and Medway was a logical name to select at the start of the initiative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It referenced the function of the initiative ‘growing’ It rooted the brand in a specific location (which has been since shown by SIPF to be a positive brand attribute) It pulled in some allusions to an emotional benefit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name changes (and in fact any dramatic changes to the brand or its branding) are typically discouraged by practitioners This is because brands are simply the memories and associations we have placed in people’s minds – to introduce change disrupts those memories and damages valuable equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasionally a brand has a name that is not congruous with the direction of travel moving forward This could be considered to be the case with GKM – over time as the brand expands, the over use of ‘Kent and Medway’ may confuse participants and stakeholders from beyond the region - who are likely to assume the brand is not for them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clients and stakeholders already tend to refer to the brand as ‘GKM’ not ‘Growing Kent and Medway’ The simplest solution would therefore be to shift from the full name to a shortened name This approach has been used extensively in the past (e.g. 3M, BA, IBM, RCA, FedEx), and tends to work – it keeps hold of existing equity and gives time for comms to establish new memory structures

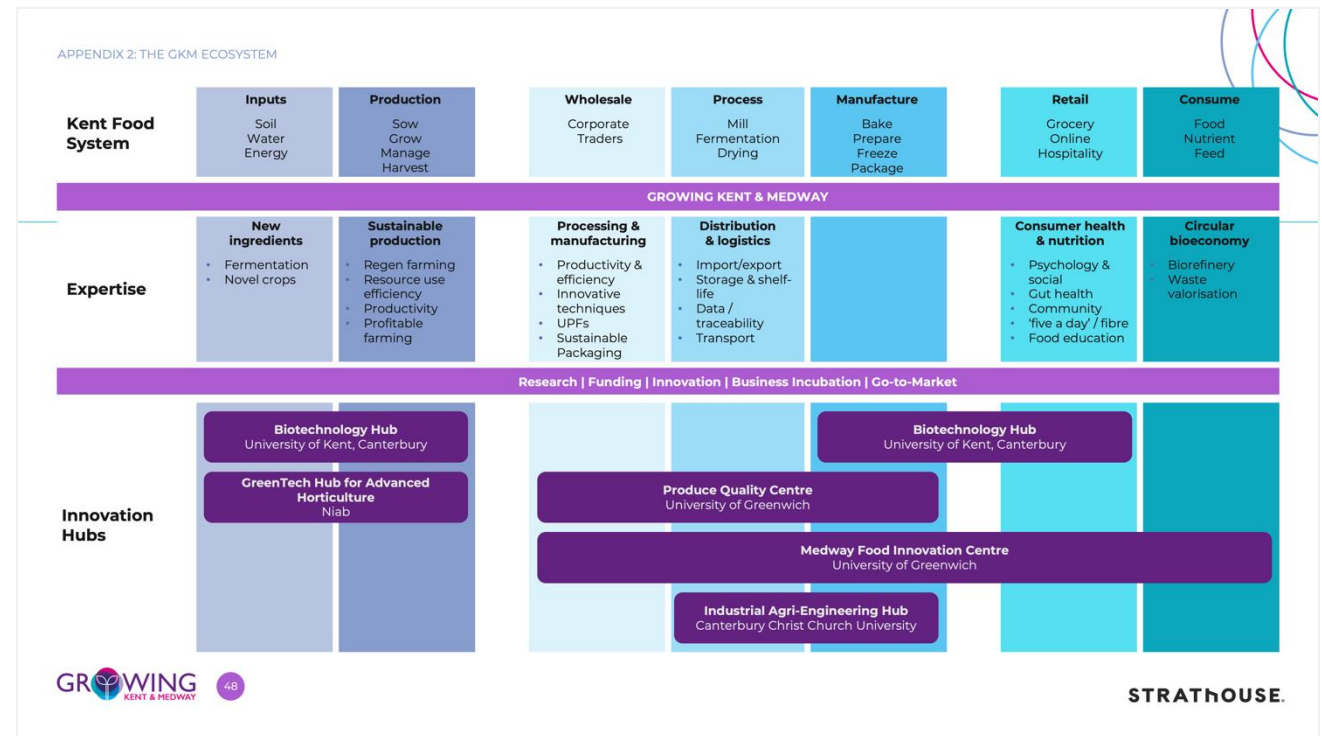
On the ecosystem specifically

The GKM ecosystem is necessarily complex. This is not causing issues for participants and stakeholders currently, but it is a factor to be mindful of

Best practice in brand tends to advise simplicity. This is because we're trying to create memory structures and people don't have great memories: simple is easier to recall.

The GKM ecosystem is necessarily multi-factored. This is not causing issues for participants and stakeholders currently: they are able to describe the proposition accurately and remarkably succinctly. They also frequently reference the word 'ecosystem', which is impressive.

Sometimes things need a lot of elements to function properly. But the complexity of the GKM offering is something the brand should always monitor.



It is worth considering whether access to GKM services could be tiered, fast-tracked or become revenue-driving, in order to grow

Participants and stakeholders clearly love the GKM service. But this is almost certainly because it is clearly the 'gold standard'.

In order to grow the brand, and therefore its impact, it is worth considering whether there could be an opportunity to:

- Offer 'silver' and 'bronze' versions of the GKM offering (as well as 'gold')
- Create fast-tracked access to simple or simpler GKM services
- Introduce products or services that are also revenue streams



Evaluation of marketing and comms

How the GKM proposition was promoted and communicated

Evaluation of marketing and comms

When evaluating a brand, we also look at how the brand was communicated and promoted because this tells us:

- How clearly the proposition has been articulated (and whether the team running the brand are invested in it)
- How clearly the proposition is understood
- Whether it engages the target audience
- To what extent the brand has influenced external stakeholders and organisations.

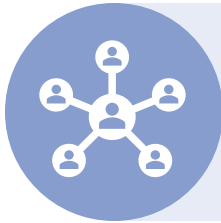


GKM marketing and comms activity has successfully delivered on a range of important objectives and KPIs...

	KEY ACTIVITIES	KPI PERFORMANCE & OUTCOMES
DIGITAL PLATFORMS & AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully launched Website & CRM Phase 1 and 2, integrating membership and signposting services. Web and social traffic spiked during high-impact content releases and grant funding announcements, incl. Business Innovation Vouchers and R&D Grants Trialled targeted outreach to reach new audiences, utilising channels and platforms such as TikTok and youth charities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieved test goals to demonstrate that digital channels drive programme applications Trialled new strategies to address identified challenges and opportunities, including engaging younger demographics
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-authored the highly impactful, national-level workshop paper “Alternative Proteins Roadmap: Identifying UK Priorities” Produced a wide range of new editorial pieces, including articles, op-eds, spotlights, videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positioned GKM at the forefront of national policy and R&D priorities, driving brand authority
MEMBERSHIP & LEAD GENERATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 186 engagement activities carried out GKM engaged with 700+ businesses 220 registered member businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership KPI target achieved & exceeded

It achieved this through a heavy focus on engagement activities...

Digital platforms & audience engagement



- Launch and rollout of website and CRM system (phase 1 and 2)
- Establish central point for services, information and data collection

Central Hub & Membership



- LinkedIn and Instagram for strategic messaging and engagement around program applications and project milestones

Social Media



- TikTok content trials
- Community partnerships with youth charities

Targeted New Audience Outreach

Authority building & content marketing



- Co-authored workshop paper "Alternative Proteins Roadmap"
- Workforce 2030 Strategy

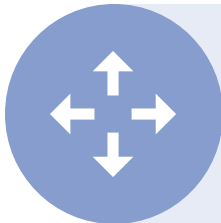
Thought Leadership



- Editorial – articles & op-eds
- Video Case Studies
- Member Spotlights
- Press Releases

Advocacy & PR

PR, events & networking



- Showcase Days
- Ongoing workshops e.g. Sustainable Packaging Forum
- Business Masterclasses
- Rolling calendar of industry exhibition attendance and event support e.g. African Food Festival

Cluster Mobilisation



- Living Land events
- Knowledge exchange
- Agri-Tech Xperience – careers inspiration workshops

Community & Talent

This focus on engagement is exactly what we would expect to see at this stage of the brand's development

In the early days of a brand's development, we expect to see a focus on refining and tightening 'what the brand offers'

Simple offerings can often jump quickly into awareness driving at scale

But for more nuanced propositions, such as GKM, it makes sense to focus marketing activity on engagement (thereby further refining and tightening the proposition)

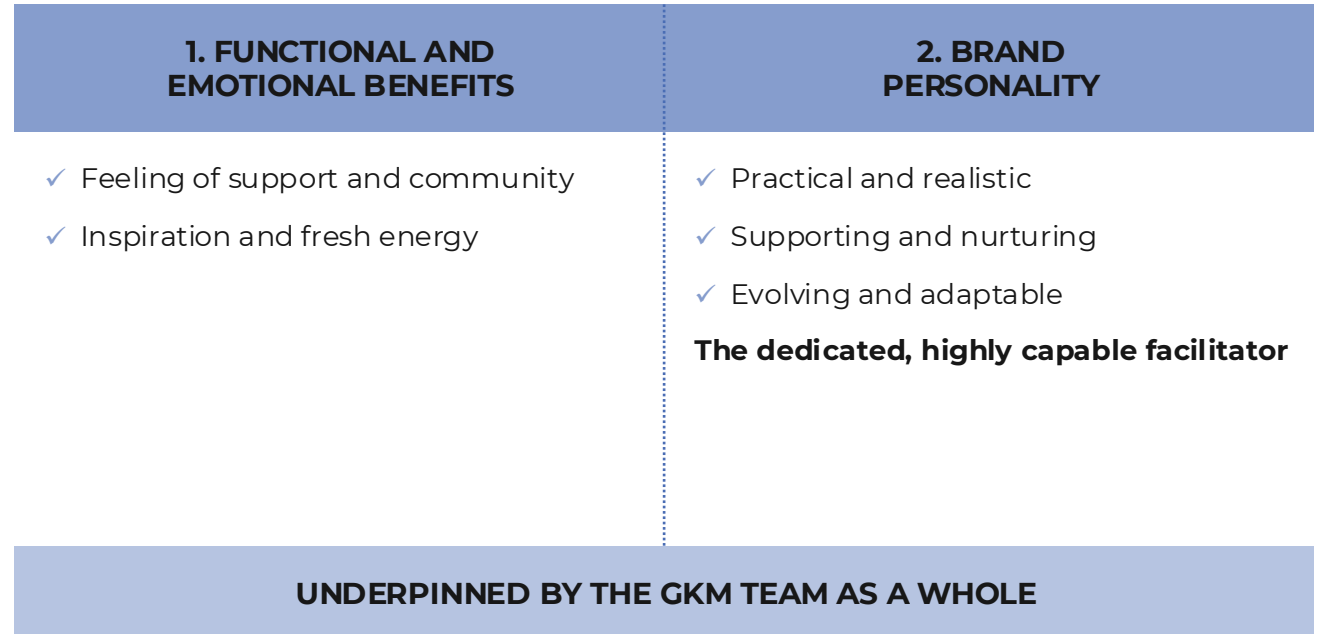
In addition, we should be mindful that GKM has engaged with 10% of businesses in the sector in its first 5 years – which is actually an impressive level of awareness, particularly given that it was driven by engagement activity.



Far more importantly however, this 'ecosystem' of engagement activities heavily contributed to the creation of the brand

The heavy focus on marketing activities that engage people – events, a digital hub, social media and membership – did the following:

- Contributed to the creation of the community
- Fueled the community over time
- Created a sense of dynamism
- Exposed participants and stakeholders to the GKM team
- Critically these activities brought to life the supportive, pragmatic and adaptable elements of the offering. This matters because these are typically brand qualities that are hard to claim and harder still to own – they have to be actioned, not just communicated, in order to convince.



Marketing and comms have been a key part of the engine that fueled the brand's success and should be considered a vital component of the proposition moving forward

Agri-food and business transformation

There is a strong focus on the technological advancement of the agriculture and food sectors. Expertise provided to businesses covers digital transformation and agri-food solutions.

Business incubation and mentorship

GKM provides crucial support for early-stage companies through Accelerator and Mentoring programs. This support is focused on foundational business elements like governance, structure, scaling capacity, and pitch decks

Funding and innovation

GKM is a key source of match-funded grants and capital for R&D and expansion, particularly in emerging agricultural and food technology sectors like insect and seaweed farming

Ecosystem building

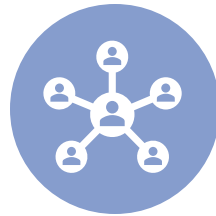
GKM acts as a central connector, a "one-stop shop", bringing together large businesses, startups, and academic institutions (like its connection to Niab) for knowledge-sharing and mutual benefit

Community

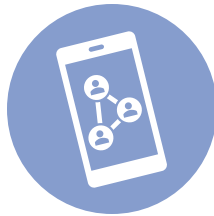
GKM fuels the community through events and communications that act as the 'lifeblood' of the ecosystem

Consideration should be given to ways in which GKM can extend its engagement activities into the ecosystem itself

Consider extending the community effect of the current engagement mix...



Central Hub & Membership



Social Media



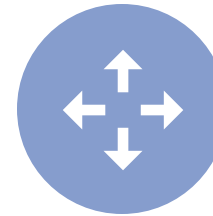
Thought Leadership



Advocacy & PR



Targeted New Audience Outreach



Cluster Mobilisation



Community & Talent



...by taking it into the channels of participants, stakeholders and partners



Partner websites



Partner events



Partner packaging (when relevant)

In addition internal marketing software and systems should be updated so they are 'business-ready'

- The investigation showed multiple instances of marketing software and systems impeding the marketing team's ability to deliver. This should be addressed.
- The ability to host, retrieve and effectively leverage data should also be reviewed – this is necessary not just for effective comms but also to facilitate the brand in demonstrating success, in order to maintain its superiority.



Brand valuation

Brand valuation

We had originally been hesitant to offer a brand valuation on top of the brand evaluation. However when we realised the strength of the brand it became clear this was something we should investigate.

We selected the Royalty Rate methodology because it relies on three variables that were within our control:

- The estimated strength of the brand (it's Brand Strength Index or BSI score)
- The estimated value of the sector the brand operates in (adjusted down to acknowledge that no brand can capture a whole market)
- A standard benchmark range of royalty percentages (our chosen source for this was royaltyrange.com)

The following slides show how the calculation was arrived at. The more detailed BSI evaluation is in the Appendix.



GKM estimated BSI

The score is reinforced by the project's excellence in Brand Inputs (Pillar I) and Stakeholder Perception (Pillar II), confirming the brand is built on a solid foundation of committed resources and strong partner trust. The high score demonstrates that GKM successfully translated its mission and resources into verifiable economic and sectoral impact.

Pillar	Raw score average (0-100)	Weight (%)	Weighted score
I. Brand Inputs: Commitment and Resource Deployment	92	20%	18.4
II. Brand Equity: Stakeholder Perception and Trust	91.6	40%	36.6
III. Brand Outputs: Economic and Sectoral Impact	86	40%	34.4
Final BSI Score		100%	89.4

Attributable revenue base

Instead of using commercial revenue, we defined the revenue base (R) as the total financial value the brand successfully mobilized or influenced over the project period. This is the economic volume attributable to the brand's strength and reputation

COMPONENT	VALUE USED	SOURCE
SIPF Grant	£17.9 million	The core funding authorized by the brand's existence.
Leveraged/Additional Funding	£6.6 million	New funds attracted from external sources because of the GKM brand's strength and authority.
Partner Co-investment (Target)	£6.5 million	The matching financial commitment secured from partners.
Total Revenue Proxy (R)	≈£31.0 million	The total economic volume mobilized by the brand.

Royalty rate assessment: variables

We used the BSI score together with an estimated attributable revenue base (based on a category standard) to calculate the Royalty Rate range for GKM. The relevant variables are detailed here:

COMPONENT	NOTES	CONCLUSION
Royalty Rate Range	For the UK R&D/Economic Development sector, a typical royalty rate range could be 1.0 (low strength/low IP) to 5.0 (high strength/high IP)	We chose two Royalty Rate Ranges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.0 to 3.0 (established benchmark for a non-profit, sector-enabling brand*) 1.0 to 5.0 (to reflect GKM's high BSI score)
Attributable Revenue Base	<p>The total financial value the brand successfully mobilized or influenced over the project period (5 years).</p> <p>Because the Growing Kent & Medway (GKM) brand is a publicly funded, non-commercial entity and doesn't generate direct sales revenue, we used a proxy for the future revenue stream (which is standard practice in non-profit or public brand valuations)</p>	The estimated Attributable Revenue Base is £31 million (see previous slide)
Royalty Rate	The formula for calculation of Royalty Rate is: min rate + (max rate – min rate) x BSI score/100	This puts the Royalty Rate at somewhere between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.78% for a range of 1.0 to 3.0 4.58% for a range of 1.0 to 5.0
Annual Royalty Value	<p>This calculates a theoretical 'annual value' that could be generated by the brand's reputation</p> <p>The formula for the calculation of the Annual Royalty Value is Revenue Stream Proxy x Royalty Rate</p>	The estimated Annual Royalty Rate Value is somewhere between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £31 million x 2.78% = £0.864 million £31 million x 4.58% = £1.42 million Total Revenue Proxy (R)

Brand valuation (estimated range)

The final valuation is the present value (PV) of the brand's future royalty savings. Assuming a simple, flat annual value over a five-year projection period (the project's lifespan) and applying a discount rate of 10% to represent the risk associated with a publicly funded, evolving program, we made the following calculation:

Year (t)	Annual Royalty Value	Discount Factor (10%)	Present Value (PV)
1	£0.864	0.909	£0.785m
2	£0.864	0.826	£0.713m
3	£0.864	0.751	£0.649m
4	£0.864	0.683	£0.590m
5	£0.864	0.621	£0.536m
Total Brand Valuation (PV)			£3.273 million

Year (t)	Annual Royalty Value	Discount Factor (10%)	Present Value (PV)
1	£1.42m	0.909	£1.29m
2	£1.42m	0.826	£1.17m
3	£1.42m	0.751	£1.07m
4	£1.42m	0.683	£0.97m
5	£1.42m	0.621	£0.88m
Total Brand Valuation (PV)			£5.38 million

Understanding the variables of the valuation and how they impact the GKM valuation specifically

Variable	How it impacts the valuation	Relevance to the gkm estimate
Brand Strength Index (BSI) score	The higher the score, the higher the valuation	The GKM BSI is particularly high (89.4)
Attributable Revenue Base	The larger the viable market, the higher the valuation	Although GKM is known to have engaged with 10% of relevant businesses in the sector, we have chosen to significantly dial down this estimated figure. This is in acknowledgement of the complexity of the sector
Royalty Rate percentage	The full potential range is 1.0 to 5.0. The higher the percentage the higher the valuation	The GKM estimate range runs from 2.78 to 4.58. We are happy with this range, given the high BSI for the brand, but
Brand lifetime	Typically a RR valuation would be estimated over 10 years – the longer a brand has been going the more it is likely to be worth (because more memories will have been embedded in more target consumers)	GKM has only been operating for 5 years and so we had to adjust the RR valuation accordingly. If the brand had been going for 10 years with the same level of performance the valuation would double – however, some aspects of the BSI evaluation would become more demanding over years 6 to 10, for example, we would expect to see loyalty activity explicitly extend.

Final valuation

Using the Royalty Rate method gives us an estimated value of the GKM brand, at the 5 year point, as being in the range of £3 million to £5.5 million.

NOTES AND CAVEATS

- This evaluation and valuation is advisory in nature
- The advisory nature of the valuation is due to the fact that GKM is a publicly funded institution, rather than a sellable asset
- This valuation is based on a lifespan of only 5 years, when typically the calculation is run over 10 years. Had GKM been in existence for 10 years, with the same BSI performance the value would double
- GKM impacted 224 businesses in the region (or 9.35% of all target businesses). Total income from farming alone in the Kent region for 2023 was £187.7million*
- An Attributable Revenue Base of £31 million therefore seems cautious and reasonable
- The bottom end of the valuation range is derived simply from a standard UK R&D/Economic Development sector – the top of the range is impacted by GKMs high BSI score
- A 10% discount was applied to represent the risk associated with a publicly funded, evolving program.



Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions in summary

- The GKM team have created an impressively strong brand
- Most notable is the use of marketing and comms to fuel the 'engine' of the brand through engagement-focused activity that enhanced the sense of community and support
- The larger point, however, is that this has been achieved in just 5 years – a very short time in terms of building a brand
- Should the brand continue on its current trajectory we can expect its valuation to keep track – particularly given the fertile environment it operates in.



Recommendations in summary

- It is time to refresh the GKM brand positioning
 - Refresh or refine; objectives, audience and proposition (update the 'brand on a page')
 - Consider streamlining access to the proposition in order to reach more participants
 - Consider adding new elements to the proposition that are revenue-driving
 - Monitor the ecosystem to ensure participants and stakeholders are able to understand the proposition swiftly and easily
 - Reconfirm the GKM elevator pitch and ensure this is consistently shared across existing channels (and consider new options e.g. an onboarding process)
 - Marketing and comms should be understood to be an integral, and essential, part of the brand proposition
 - Consider extending the community effect of the current engagement mix by taking it into the channels of participants, stakeholders and partners
 - Update internal marketing software and systems so they are 'business-ready'
- Note. All changes should be made in ways that safeguard the equity already created

Thank you



STRATHOUSE.

growingkentandmedway.com

Appendix 1: GKM overview

The original objectives, journey and current status of Growing Kent & Medway

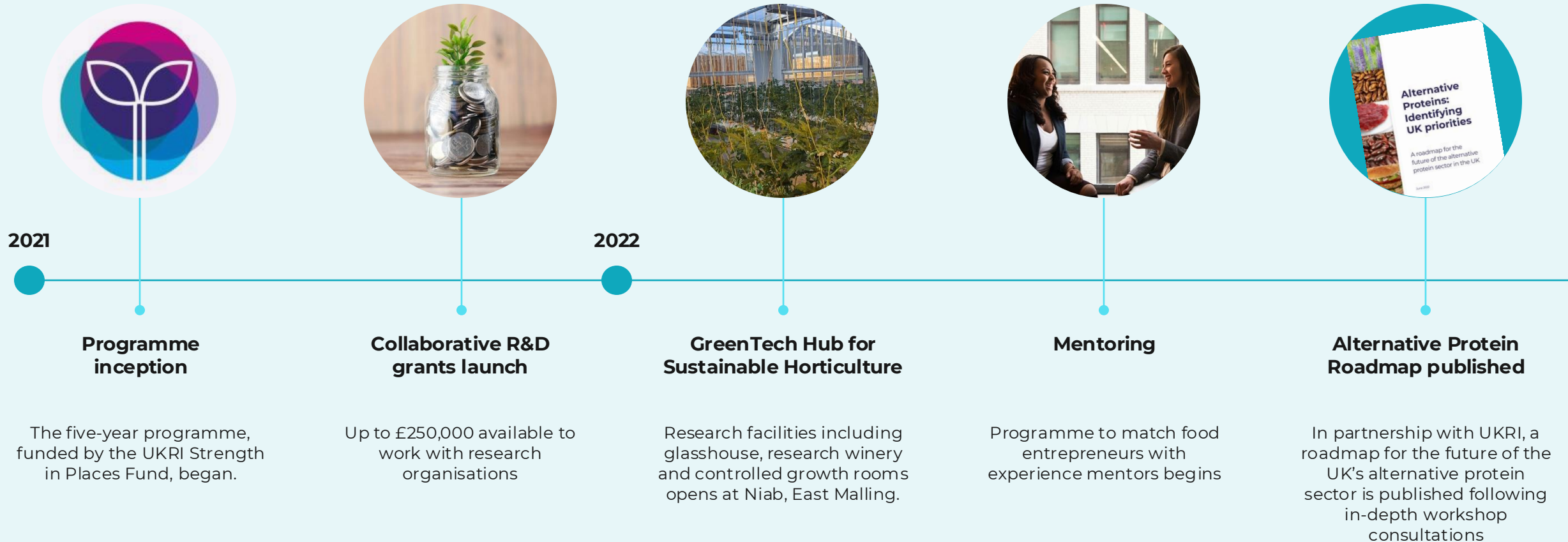
Original GKM objectives

The Growing Kent & Medway initiative was launched to transform the Kent and Medway region into a leader for sustainable and climate-smart food systems by:

- Providing state-of-the-art infrastructure for research, innovation, and demonstration.
- Increasing investment in industry-focused R&D, innovation, and technology commercialisation.
- Fostering a vibrant business support environment to stimulate sustainable business growth.
- Developing a strategic framework for upskilling and professionalising the sector.



Timeline (2021–2022)



Timeline (2022)



Workforce 2030 Strategy

Skills strategy published following industry consultation to secure future workforce for the industry



Business Innovation Vouchers Launch

First round of competition to provide businesses with vouchers to access the research facilities in the region opens, worth up to £20,000



Growing Green pilot launch

Funding secured through UK Community Renewal fund which supported 33 SME's journey to net zero with grants and training



Food Accelerator launch

Technical and businesses support available to help get new plant-based food and drink products to market. Launched in October with 17 businesses in the first cohort



Sustainable Packaging Forum

Industry forum to discuss the challenges and opportunities for innovation in sustainable food packaging took place at University of Kent

Timeline (2023)



2023



Medway Food Innovation Centre opens

Based at the University of Greenwich, the centre opens with state-of-the-art food processing facilities.

Business Sustainability Challenge Launches

Industrial Agri-Engineering Hub launches

A partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University to build collaboration between food businesses and agri-technology specialists

Fruit Research Innovation Hub

Collaborative exhibition and tours with Innovate UK and BBBSRC to showcase latest fruit research at Fruit Focus.

African Food Festival

Specialist food festival at Macknade, Faversham, to showcase businesses on the Food Accelerator

Green Careers Hub launches

A pilot skills hub with The Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture spotlights career paths in the sector

Timeline (2023–2024)



Prototyping and Demonstrate Fund launches (Nov)

£750,000 made available to be used to lead to commercialisation of new products



Living Land

Interactive workshop run with primary school children to spotlight careers in horticulture



Showcase Event

Annual celebration event for members first held at University of Kent, featuring influential speakers and demonstration opportunities



Thanet Earth Centre of Excellence Launches

Official opening of the UK's first Centre of Excellence in greenhouse growing



Serious Gaming

Initiative with Canterbury Christ Church University develops games for 14-17 year olds that address the skills gap in horticulture

2024

Timeline (2024–2025)



Be Your Own Boss

First Youth Entrepreneurship course starts in Margate in partnership with the Perfect Place to Grow



Agri-Tech Mission to UK

Visit coordinated with Dutch Embassy builds partnership opportunities between the UK and the Netherlands

2025



Plant Crop Waste and Valorisation

Report into the potential of horticultural by-products for a biobased circular economy published



Growing Green

Following success of the pilot, a new and improved Growing Green sustainability training and grant programme opens



Agri-Tech Xperience: STEM Careers Day

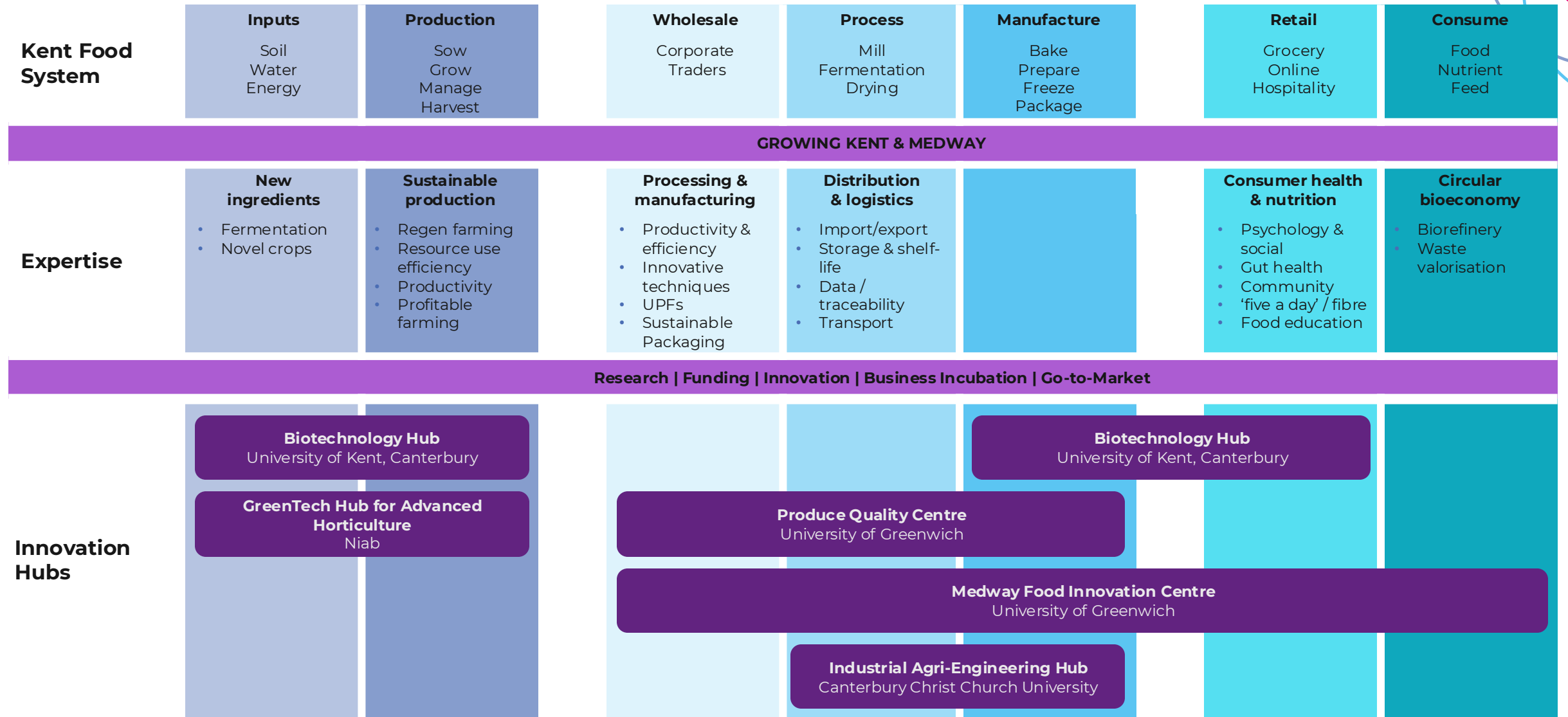
180 students et taste of careers in agritech at an event run in partnership with the STEM Hub at Canterbury Christ Church University

Current status of GKM

- The original GKM program was due to cease in September 2025
- The initiative has been granted a one-year extension (without funding). The core team is being funded by an underspend
- The team is in the process of planning the future of GKM to retain and grow the brand
- Significant changes in innovation funding policy means this is now part of the triple helix approach with business, universities and councils. KCC and Medway Council are coordinating this approach
- GKM will retain the ecosystem and discuss ideas as they develop.



Appendix 2: The GKM ecosystem



Growing Kent & Medway



Science & Research

- Fundamental Research
- Applied Research
- Data Science & Analytics



Funding & Innovation

- Workshops & Sandpits
- Toolkits
- Research & Innovation Grants
- Application & Development Support



Business Incubation & Transformation

- Mentoring
- Incubator
- Business Concept Development
- Business Models
- Risk Analysis
- Investment
- Consortium Building
- Digitalisation
- System Integration
- Project Management



Go-to-Market & Network

- Partnerships
- Events
- Thought Leadership
- Market Potential & Positioning
- Manufacturing Processes & Supply Chain Requirements

Appendix 3: complete BSI evaluation

Pillar 1 | Brand Inputs: Commitment & Resource Deployment

BRAND INPUTS: COMMITMENT & RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT 20% WEIGHTING					
ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT	HOW MEASURED	RAW SCORE	WEIGHTED SCORE	ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS
1. Governance Efficacy: How clearly do senior staff articulate GKM's proposition and goals to the wider team and partner network?	Strong. The proposition (leader in sustainable, climate-smart food production) is consistently articulated across all documents and confirmed in the Wavehill report. Governance was praised for being effective and responsive, ensuring the strategy permeated down through the Innovation Growth Managers (IGMs) to the founders.	Stakeholder interviews + QRM reports	90	18	1. Governance Efficacy: How clearly do senior staff articulate GKM's proposition and goals to the wider team and partner network?
2. Funding Leverage Quality: How much matched funding has GKM secured, and what percentage comes from high-value, mission-aligned partners?	Excellent. GKM secured over £6.6 million in leveraged funding, a key quality indicator of investment attraction. Success in attracting mission-aligned partners includes the Bezos Sustainable Protein Centre and significant public R&D funding (UKRI/Innovate UK).	New Commercial Funding (total and sources by %)	95	19	2. Funding Leverage Quality: How much matched funding has GKM secured, and what percentage comes from high-value, mission-aligned partners?
3. Marketing Efficiency and Effectiveness: How has GKM performed in terms of perception, engagement and awareness of the brand?	High. The brand demonstrated strong awareness (KPI 3: 220 members vs. 200 target) and engagement, with spikes tied to grant calls. The project successfully transitioned from initial launch to sustained visibility across all relevant media (BBC, HortWeek, Kent Business News).	Perception, engagement and awareness figures	90	18	3. Marketing Efficiency and Effectiveness: How has GKM performed in terms of perception, engagement and awareness of the brand?
4. Alignment To Strategy: What percentage of GKM's core R&D funding is dedicated to projects that contribute to the advancement and superiority of a Kent Food System?	High. Funding and infrastructure (four R&D hubs) are fully dedicated to strategic areas identified for the Kent Food System: sustainable crop production, waste valorization, alternative proteins, and agri-engineering. The grant calls (Large R&D, BIVs, BSC) explicitly focused investment on these areas, confirming strong alignment.	Strat House evaluation (marking criteria to be agreed with SB)	90	18	4. Alignment To Strategy: What percentage of GKM's core R&D funding is dedicated to projects that contribute to the advancement and superiority of a Kent Food System?
5. Employee Brand Engagement: What percentage of GKM staff and key partner staff report are demonstrably motivated by the GKM mission and consistently serve as brand ambassadors?	High. Internal and external reports attest to high staff motivation. The Director expressed pride that the team became the "heart and soul" of the network. Accelerator testimonials frequently praise the dedication and professionalism of staff (IGMs, Programme Managers), which directly translates staff commitment into positive brand equity among beneficiaries.	Stakeholder interviews + QRM reports + Wavehill report	95	19	5. Employee Brand Engagement: What percentage of GKM staff and key partner staff report are demonstrably motivated by the GKM mission and consistently serve as brand ambassadors?
Weighted Average Score			92	18.4	

Pillar 2 | Brand Equity: Stakeholder Perception & Trust

BRAND INPUTS: COMMITMENT & RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT 40% WEIGHTING					
ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT	HOW MEASURED	RAW SCORE	WEIGHTED SCORE	ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS
1. Strategic Authority: To what extent has GKM's activity influenced external organisation?	Very High. GKM secured major strategic authority: 1. Partnering as a "spoke" for the \$30 million Bezos Sustainable Protein Centre. 2. Hosting the House of Lords Select Committee on Horticulture. 3. Influencing national policy through key reports like the Alternative Proteins Roadmap. 4. Its skills review fed into the Local Skills Improvement Plan for Kent and Medway.	QRM reports + Wavehill report	95	38	1. Strategic Authority: To what extent has GKM's activity influenced external organisation?
2. Differentiation/Uniqueness: Compared to other UK R&D/economic hubs, how unique and superior is the quality of support or IP offered by GKM?	High. GKM's differentiation lies in its holistic, place-based, food system approach. Key unique offerings include: 1. The suite of four cross-disciplinary R&D Hubs (BioTech, MFIC, GreenTech, Agri-Engineering). 2. Its bespoke focus on high-growth areas like plant-based foods and alternative proteins. 3. The establishment of the Thanet Earth Centre for Excellence for glasshouse growing.	Benchmarking + SIPF report	90	36	2. Differentiation/Uniqueness: Compared to other UK R&D/economic hubs, how unique and superior is the quality of support or IP offered by GKM?
3. Trust & Advocacy (NPS): How likely are stakeholders to recommend GKM's partnership or services to another business in the food/horticulture sector?	Extremely High. Testimonials provide an overwhelming degree of advocacy. Accelerator participants repeatedly state they "would definitely recommend the programme", calling the experience "absolutely brilliant" and a "complete game changer". This direct feedback acts as a strong proxy for a high Net Promoter Score (NPS), especially since the program operates on referrals.	Stakeholder interviews + QRM reports + Wavehill report	98	39.2	3. Trust & Advocacy (NPS): How likely are stakeholders to recommend GKM's partnership or services to another business in the food/horticulture sector?
4. Authenticity & Delivery: Does GKM consistently deliver on its objectives and promises?	Generally High, but Challenged. GKM delivered on all major infrastructure and program objectives (4 Hubs operational, exceeded Inclusive Growth target, launched Accelerator/Mentoring). However, delivery was significantly challenged by external factors. The Wavehill and RAND reports highlighted delays in R&D grant activation and issues with the administrative overhead (CRM/M&E complexity), causing internal delivery friction.	Stakeholder interviews + QRM reports + Wavehill report	85	34	4. Authenticity & Delivery: Does GKM consistently deliver on its objectives and promises?
5. Clarity Of Proposition: How clearly does GKM communicate GKM's unique value proposition and what is the external understanding of the proposition?	High. The proposition is clear and consistent (leader in sustainable, climate-smart horticulture and food). The project successfully articulated this value, evidenced by the fact that 61% of businesses surveyed agreed their interaction with GKM led to increased collaboration. This suggests the value proposition—facilitating connections and innovation—is well understood and acted upon by the target audience.	Stakeholder interviews + QRM reports + Wavehill report	90	36	5. Clarity Of Proposition: How clearly does GKM communicate GKM's unique value proposition and what is the external understanding of the proposition?
Weighted Average Score			91.6	36.6	

Pillar 3 | Brand Outputs: Economic and Sectoral Impact

BRAND INPUTS: COMMITMENT & RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT 40% WEIGHTING					
ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT	HOW MEASURED	RAW SCORE	WEIGHTED SCORE	ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS
1. Collaborative Funding Success: How much additional competitive R&D funding (Innovate UK, DEFRA, etc.) have GKM consortium partners successfully secured through joint bids since the GKM project began?	Excellent. GKM partners secured £6,596,974 in additional (leveraged) competitive R&D funding from external sources (UKRI, Innovate UK, DEFRA, charities) due to their involvement in GKM, demonstrating strong success in collaborative bidding.	QRM reports + Wavehill report	95	38	1. Collaborative Funding Success: How much additional competitive R&D funding (Innovate UK, DEFRA, etc.) have GKM consortium partners successfully secured through joint bids since the GKM project began?
2. commercialisation Success: What percentage of collaborative R&D projects from the last three years have resulted in a product or service reaching the market?	High. The Accelerator and R&D Hubs directly supported businesses to bring 51 new food and drink related products or processes to market by the end-term projection. This consistently translates R&D investment into commercial results.	Benchmarking + SIPP report	90	36	2. commercialisation Success: What percentage of collaborative R&D projects from the last three years have resulted in a product or service reaching the market?
3. Market Stability: Does the GKM brand association reduce the perceived risk of investment for businesses operating within the Kent & Medway sector?	Moderate. The GKM brand successfully counteracted challenging conditions (Brexit, high energy/labour costs) which were actively discouraging investment across the wider sector. The presence of GKM's capital assets (£8.6m infrastructure) and its consistent funding calls served as a stabilizing force, reducing market risk for participating small and micro-businesses.	Stakeholder interviews + QRM reports + Wavehill report	75	30	3. Market Stability: Does the GKM brand association reduce the perceived risk of investment for businesses operating within the Kent & Medway sector?
4. Partner Loyalty/Retention: What percentage of core businesses/universities/agencies renew their formal commitment to GKM annually?	High. Consortium partners (Niab, UoG, UoK, LiK) maintained their formal commitment for the duration of the multi-year project. Stakeholders are vocal about their continued desire to collaborate. The strategic future plans confirmed strong partner intent to evolve the collaboration into a legacy program, and cluster membership consistently exceeded targets.	Stakeholder interviews + QRM reports + Wavehill report	90	36	4. Partner Loyalty/Retention: What percentage of core businesses/universities/agencies renew their formal commitment to GKM annually?
5. Talent Attraction: How many new, permanent, high-skill jobs were demonstrably created or secured within the region due to GKM-enabled growth?	Good. While quantifiable job figures are challenging due to reporting lag, 36% of survey respondents reported creating FTE/part-time roles in the last 12 months. The Accelerator provided concrete examples of job creation, such as one business hiring 2 new employees. Crucially, the project directly addressed the skills gap through the Workforce 2030 Strategy and the establishment of the Thanet Earth Centre for Excellence, building the pipeline for future high-skill jobs.	Stakeholder interviews + QRM reports + Wavehill report	80	32	5. Talent Attraction: How many new, permanent, high-skill jobs were demonstrably created or secured within the region due to GKM-enabled growth?
Weighted Average Score			86	34.4	