



A world-class research, innovation and enterprise cluster

STRATHOUSE.

Brand Evaluation

Report | Executive Summary



UK Research
and Innovation

growingkentandmedway.com

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



Purpose of the evaluation

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 document shares an executive summary of that evaluation and valuation.

The complete report with detailed findings and calculations plus methodology is available separately.

Objective of the evaluation

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

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

- Financial
- In-kind
- Partnerships.

Methodology

The full methodology can be found in the accompanying report

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 organisational decision-making. The study adopts a Mixed Methods approach:

- **Quantitative Data Collection**
- **Qualitative Data Collection Second:** a concurrent phase of stakeholder interviews to contextualise and enrich the quantitative findings
- **Financial Valuation:** contextualised by stakeholder- based insight.

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

The overall research design was structured into distinct but interconnected phases as shown in the table below. This minimises 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 GKM progress to date

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

ACHIEVEMENTS

- The total overall investment catalysed by the GKM program is projected to reach over £24.4 million by the end of the project
- 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
- GKM has invested a total of £8.6 million in research infrastructure, which has added ground-breaking research and innovation capabilities to the region
- GKM has actively supported the creation of 51 new food and drink related products or processes
- GKM has facilitated over 67 mentors supporting 139 entrepreneurs
- The Accelerator program has supported 91 businesses (enabling the launch of 36 new food and drink products or processes)
- GKM has orchestrated over 223 'give back days' (mainly focused on talent attraction and awareness) via its secondary grant funding

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 – building on achievements to date and offering convincing economic benefits

...whilst protecting the equity built to date

The evolution to a more independent and overtly commercial brand should be managed in ways that do not erode the valuable equity the brand has created.

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

The evaluation found that GKM has created a strong, differentiated and compelling brand in just five years:

The GKM proposition is strong, differentiated and compelling 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.

Its ability to clearly convey functional and emotional benefits (at such an early stage of development) is impressive. 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.

Critically, it has already created the perception of a 'personality'. 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.

The elevator pitch we take out of our combined findings

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.

Headline achievements



Tangible value creation

Delivered and fully operationalised 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 & 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



Thought leadership

Co-authored the Alternative Proteins Roadmap: 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



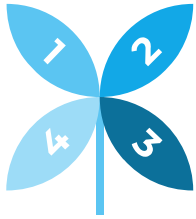
Governance

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

Overview of the brand proposition



1. 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.

2. Business incubation & mentorship

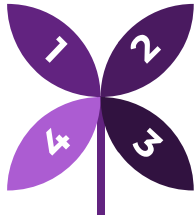
GKM provides crucial support for early-stage companies through accelerator and mentoring programs. This support is focused on foundational business elements like governance, structure, scaling capacity, and pitch decks

3. 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

4. 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



1. 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

2. Credibility & validation

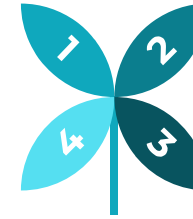
Receiving support or grants from GKM acts as a "stamp of approval" or stamp of "being on the right track," boosting the credibility of startups and attracting further recognition.

3. 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

4. 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.



1. 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'

2. 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

3. Evolving and 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

4. 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

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

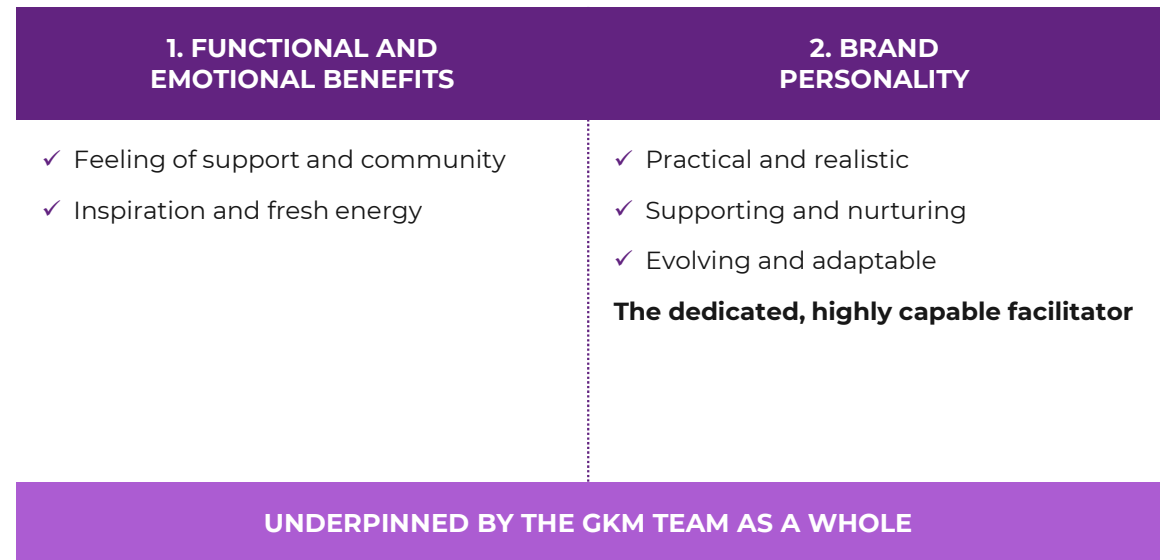
...and this focus on engagement is exactly what we would expect to see at this stage of the brand's development

	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

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.



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

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)

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.



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

- 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)

Consideration should also be given to ownership of the brand (and how ownership is communicated) moving forward.

2. REFRESH AND REFINES THE AUDIENCE

- Clarify who we are for (and who we are not for)
- Clarify the needs we address (functional and emotional)

Consideration should be given to the 'user journey' of the audience. How can we make engagement ever more seamless?

3. REFRESH OR REFINES THE PROPOSITION

Lock the 'brand on a page':

- Product/service offering and functional benefits
- Personality and values + beliefs
- Plus locked elevator pitch.

Care must be taken to ensure the proposition maintains an appropriate balance of approachability without compromising on expertise and professionalism.

Conclusions and recommendations in summary

Conclusions

- 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

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)

On marketing specifically:

- 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

Please contact:

Simon Barnes, Programme Director,
Growing Kent and Medway
simon.barnes@niab.com



STRATHOUSE.

growingkentandmedway.com