Westminster Business Forum policy conference:
Next steps for UK start-ups and scale-ups
Timing: Morning, Friday, 18th September 2026
*****Taking place online*****

Agenda subject to change

WESTMINSTER BUSINESS FORUM

8.30 Registration

9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Charlotte Martin, Head, Access to Finance, Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade

9.05 **Key priorities for improving the UK environment for start-ups and scale-ups**
Irene Graham, CEO, ScaleUp Institute
Questions and comments from the floor

9.30 **'Data-driven approaches to identifying scaling businesses'**
Richard Jeffery, National Director, GC Insight; and Co-founder, Growth Flag
Nathan Shoesmith, Consultant, GC Insight

9.40 **Next steps for financing growth - scaling investment, improving access to capital, and strengthening investor confidence**
priorities for the British Business Bank and Innovate UK | increasing institutional and pension fund investment | addressing barriers to scale-up finance and late-stage capital gaps | implications of capital markets reform and UK listings competitiveness | investor confidence, valuation challenges, and international competition | access to finance for under-represented founders and regional firms | balancing support for priority sectors with wider innovation objectives | improving navigation and coordination across support schemes | private markets and implementation priorities for PISCES | implications of the Autumn Budget and the Government's Backing Your Business growth strategy
Joanna Jensen, Chair, Enterprise Investment Scheme Association
Amelia Armour, Partner, Early Stage Funds, Amadeus Capital Partners
Benyam Hagos, Chief Financial Officer, Form3
Drew Currie, Founder, hibretOne CIC

10.05 Questions and comments from the floor

10.30 **Supporting small business confidence and sustainable growth - implementation of the *Employment Rights Act***
Yvonne Leslie, Senior Business Adviser, Acas
Questions and comments from the floor

10.55 **Chair's closing remarks**
Charlotte Martin, Head, Access to Finance, Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade

11.00 Break

11.10 **Chair's opening remarks**
George Freeman MP

11.15 **Supporting innovation and commercialisation - investor-university links, proof of concept funding, and progression from research and spin-outs to scale-ups**
Scott O'Brien, Chief Investment Officer, Innovate UK
Questions and comments from the floor

11.40 **Priorities for business growth enablers - regulation, procurement, and routes to market**
Dr Nicola Eckersley-Waites, Senior Manager, Technology and Innovation, Confederation of British Industry

11.50 **Strengthening business support - innovation, regional coordination, and access for under-represented founders**
coordination across national and regional growth initiatives | local innovation partnerships and cluster-based approaches | addressing fragmentation and complexity in business support | improving awareness and accessibility of support schemes | attracting and retaining talent | AI adoption and digital capability | support for under-represented founders, including measures for improving inclusive access to growth opportunities | reducing regulatory complexity for growing business | IP protection, barriers to entry, and competition issues in specific markets | priorities for implementation and measuring impact of business support
Fiona Bennington, Director, Entrepreneurship, Catalyst
Alex Till, Chair, National Enterprise Network
Indra Nauth, Deputy Chief Executive, Action for Race Equality
Dr Bethany Adams, Associate Director, Research England
Maximillian Smith, Founder and Director, EluxEvo

12.15 Questions and comments from the floor

12.40 **Next steps for the *Small Business Protections Bill* - tackling late payments, improving cash flow, and supporting SME growth**
Emma Jones, Small Business Commissioner
Questions and comments from the floor

13.05 **Chair's and Westminster Business Forum closing remarks**
George Freeman MP
Thomas Howard, Westminster Business Forum