

colbea.co.uk

A place to Work, Learn, and Grow

3 Year Strategy 2021-2024

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About Us

Colbea is a not-for-profit enterprise agency acting as a catalyst for business success across Essex. Colbea provides high quality, inclusive and accessible workspace, business support and creative training programs with an ambition to create economically thriving communities across the region.

Since our inception in 1982 in Colchester, Colbea has supported thousands of people to fulfil their business potential through great products, services and through excellent incubation workspace for start-ups, move-on and growing organisations.

We have almost 40-years' experience and expertise in providing modern, relevant high-quality business support through Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and training in Colchester and the surrounding areas.

What sets us apart is our people first approach supporting individuals into self-employment and in fulfilling their growth potential.

Our aim is to be fully self-sustaining. In 2018 we introduced our core funded programme of IAG and training services to ensure that all pre-start and start-up businesses have equal access and opportunity to start their business and have the best possible support in North and Mid Essex. We partner with our Borough Councils to achieve this and our quality and reputation is built from these great partnerships.

Our ambition is about driving the best service possible to meet the ever changing needs of a diverse and growing client group. We are passionate about supporting as many flourishing entrepreneurs as possible to start, evolve and change in the ever dynamic economic and business landscape.

We actively monitor trends in the changing needs of business support resulting in quick reactions and adaptations to the Colbea offer.

We want to work in partnership with stakeholders, partners, and local communities to deliver accessible workspaces for small businesses providing the guidance and training needed to succeed in their chosen business.

We would like to thank our Sponsors, Tenants, Local Authority Partners, Staff and our Board who have all actively influenced our future ambition and helped us to be the strong and resilient business that we are today.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara'.

Sara Thakkar
Colbea Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ashleigh'.

Ashleigh Seymour-Rutherford
Colbea CEO

People & Culture

Our organisational goals can only be achieved through our people and partnership collaboration. We value our relationships with our partners, sponsors, tenants, clients, and staff. Having the right people, in the right roles, with the right depth and breadth of skills, knowledge and behaviours will enable us to create new opportunities, improve our performance and deliver our strategic priorities. Our partners enhance our expertise and reach and enable us to be stronger working together. Fostering relationships with local business communities and building on our long-term partnerships will underpin and strengthen our goals.

We aim to be a great place to work with employees who are engaged and committed to our organisational and strategic goals and are valued for their contribution.

Our Values

Our clients are at the heart of what we do, and our values guide us and drive how we work with you and for you:

Integrity:

We are open, honest, and respectful; always striving to do the right thing and strengthening the use of client feedback to inform and develop our services.

Ambitious:

We are passionate about the social and economic success of our clients and provide practical yet creative solutions to enable businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive.

Inclusive:

We are committed to making our services relevant and accessible to all.

Sustainable:

We are outward focused and adapt and evolve to remain relevant and of value. We strive to minimise our negative impact on the environment.

Learning and Organisational Development

Through our approach to learning and organisational development, we will ensure our people have the skills, capabilities, and behaviours to enable us to continuously improve our performance and deliver our organisational goals.

We pride ourselves in making sure we promote learning and development to everyone, recognising that all our people have the potential to perform strongly and continuously improve. For our management team, we have implemented a coaching programme which sees an innovative approach to leadership development which includes 360-degree feedback, mentoring, action learning sets, promotion of coaching culture and continuous improvement for people and the organisation.

We pride ourselves in making sure we promote learning and development to everyone, recognising that all our people have the potential to perform strongly and continuously improve.

We will continue to support young people into business by working with apprentices and interns to give them their first steps into the business and working environment and develop and support them into growth opportunities.

Strategic Goals

The three strategic goals reflect the ambition to be as financially independent as possible and to provide long term sustainability to the organisation.

The strategy provides a road map to achieve the aim of increasing activities and geographic stretch across Essex and to continue to extend and innovate inclusive and accessible business support which demonstrates positive outcomes for economically healthy communities.

- > Being a Resilient Business
- > Providing Inclusive and Accessible Business Support
- > Great Spaces to Work and Grow From

Being a Resilient Business

Colbea's resilience and sustainability is key to supporting people and their businesses and ensuring its own longevity.

Measure of Success

- Colbea has an organisational structure and governance set that best fits its strategic intent to achieve independence and growth with a strong brand and communication that reflects the internal and external messaging of Colbea and its clients.
- Colbea has an upskilled team who are confident and capable.
- Colbea minimises its use of non-renewable resources, reduces energy usage and increases its recycling of supplies and materials, minimising the impact of Colbea's activities and any incubation centre it manages and raising environmental awareness among staff, tenants, and clients.

Key strategies for achieving this goal:

- Create a solid foundation of proportionate governance and appropriate company structures
- Be financially independent
- People expertise: confident and capable staff
- Develop and strengthen the brand identity of Colbea
- Sustainability: Be serious about our environmental impact

Provide Practical and Inclusive Business Support

Colbea is committed to remaining relevant and inclusive by providing accessible, pragmatic, and inclusive advice and training programs to support businesses in Essex to succeed.

Measure of Success

- Colbea delivers its core funded programme working with key partner local authorities, business support agencies and business sponsors in mid and North Essex, supporting new and developing businesses.
- Colbea designs and delivers inclusive entrepreneurial training programs alongside developing a sustainable service model through innovative and accessible means.
- Colbea actively seeks opportunities to engage and support people and sectors in need and develops supply chains.

Key strategies for achieving this goal:

- Provide our Core Funded Programme through our key partners
- Innovate the way our clients access business support
- Annual opportunities which actively engage, celebrate, and spotlight people who will benefit from raising their creativity on a range of influencing platforms

Great Spaces to Work and Grow From

Colbea's incubation centres and workspaces are modern and provide pragmatic workspaces for new and aspiring businesses to grow and succeed from.

Measure of Success

- Colbea's workspaces are modern and provide agile and innovative options for tenants to be self-sufficient and sustainable.
- Colbea is innovative in its thinking to adapt its workspaces to meet the changing needs of businesses to collaborate and train from.

Key strategies for achieving this goal:

- Adapting and/or creating a more fit for purpose physical/virtual space
- Growing the Workspace Management Portfolio
- Being a responsible incubator with workspace for start-up, move-on and growing organisations
- Creative and modern meeting and training spaces
- Thought leadership in the post covid workspace thinking

Cross-Cutting Themes

The themes that underpin the strategy are areas that we will continue to develop to ensure we achieve our goals over the next three years. These themes describe the sort of organisation we need to be and how we need to grow our capacity to achieve the strategic goals.

Sponsor involvement and experience of supporting entrepreneurs

We will maximise opportunities for Gold Sponsors to seek opportunities to engage with our clients with sector experience, information, and networks.

Influence and brand

We will analyse our brand, create development opportunities, and build awareness of our brand throughout Essex. To deliver our strategy fully, we will need to continue to build strong relationships in our delivery area with public and private bodies at local, regional, and national levels. We will develop leadership and collaboration with business support providers and the National Enterprise Network.

Collaboration

For people and businesses to access the right support at the right time we will need to work through partnerships, representative bodies, and other service providers to support a seamless provision of support to new and growing businesses. We will lead where necessary; convene the organisation and people we need in a common cause or provide support to others where that has the best impact.

Engagement and funding

Our clients, stakeholders and funders will have the best possible experience of Colbea and access to our insights into barriers for development and support. We will seek to provide business support through the most innovative means whilst diversifying our range of income sources and seek financial independence for our core funded services whilst pursuing funding for entrepreneurial and development training programmes.

Leadership and culture

We will use our values to lead and have the very best people motivated and developed to work in ways that have the most impact on supporting our clients and stakeholders.

Key Performance Indicators

To direct our energy and resources where we can have most impact on supporting entrepreneurs and growing businesses, we have developed a set of Key Performance Indicators that enable us to track our overall progress over the next three years. These KPIs are a powerful description of our strategic priorities. They are not intended to be attributable to any one goal or cross-cutting theme. Instead, they take a holistic view of the strategy and reflect the interdependency of the goals and multi-disciplinary approach we are taking to achieve them.

- Colbea will increase its reserves by **30%**.
- Colbea will, through its Core Funded Programme, deliver support to businesses working in partnership with local councils, with at least **85%** client satisfaction.
- Colbea will meet or exceed all business support outputs on contracts of business support.
- Colbea will maintain an average occupancy across our workspace of **84%**.
- Colbea will seek opportunities to manage a third workspace for incubation or growing businesses with a focus on North and Mid Essex.
- Colbea will actively promote its green initiatives and encourage its clients to participate.
- Colbea will improve its sustainability and green initiatives by **10%** over the planned period.
- Colbea will actively recognise Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity. We will understand the profile of users and will be determined in our approach to break down any barriers that exist that hinder new business success.

What Our Clients Say

A place to Work

"If you're a business starting out then you have nothing to lose by contacting Colbea. Whether it's free advice, office space or simple support you're looking for then reach out – they can only benefit your business."

Gerard Francis – Lighthouse Personnel

"I would highly recommend Colbea's offices and business advice service to anyone who wants to start out in business"

Neil Payne – Construction Chemicals Marketing Ltd

A place to Learn

"Thanks so very much for all the great materials, insights, enlightening sessions and teachings that this course has entailed - your work and efforts to encourage, support and educate are immensely appreciated and valued"

Paula Brooks, Advance into Business participant 2020

"Taking part in the business accelerator course with Colbea and the Weave has been really helpful in moving my business forward. I started with a business name and a rough idea of what my services would be and that was about it. Through the weekly training and the pitch, I have been able to hone in on what area to focus on, who my target audience is and what their needs are. The final pitch was a great way of putting all the information together from the previous weeks and presenting it in full to a panel who had no prior knowledge of the services I plan to provide. The feedback from the panel was really valuable and will help me move my business to the next stage. I am excited to see what happens next."

Nicola Walsh - New Wisdom Design and Digital

A place to Grow

"I received immensely useful advice which has helped me with pricing, confidence and logistical problems that I was really struggling with. Lots of great ideas and supportive encouragement, which was really beneficial, especially with all the challenges small businesses have to face during Covid. I really have benefited from the advice."

Emma Chesters – Good Souls Baker.

"The session was brilliant. I had sound, wise advice that brought clarity on how to move forward with my business ideas. I have now set up my business and looking forward to executing my plans. This is a very valuable service and deserves more recognition"

Aiden Saunders - Ailey

"It's rare to find support services that are so consistent, so professional and so in tune with the needs of their customers. What better way to start and build your company with all those support services all around you!"

Phil Warnock – GingerNut Training

Our Thanks

To the Colbea Board for developing our strategy in consultation with the Colbea team. We would not be where we are today without the support from our stakeholders, sponsors, staff, and clients.

Although, as have many others, we have faced a challenging few years, we are confident our strategic plan will enable our independence and growth. Our plan gives us reassurance that as we head into our 40th year, Colbea will be here to continue to support start-ups and the people behind the brand.

Although, as have many others, we have faced a challenging few years, we are confident our strategic plan will enable our independence and growth.

Thank you to the **#ColbeaCommunity**.

Thank you

colbea.co.uk

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