

# Making BESA Essential: Strategy Overview and Five-Year Vision

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Championing the UK's trusted,  
quality educational suppliers



# Contents

History .....	2
Our mission .....	5
Where we are now .....	7
The challenge .....	10
Diversifying revenue streams.....	13
Five-year goals .....	14
Measuring success .....	31



# History

For over eight decades, the **British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA)** has been at the forefront of transforming education. We are the collective voice of the UK's trusted, quality educational suppliers, committed to shaping the future of education by ensuring that every learner and teacher has access to the best resources.

BESA is not just a trade association; we are the catalyst that connects innovative suppliers with the needs of educational institutions. Our impact is felt in every classroom across the UK, influencing policy, supporting new innovations, and fostering a community that drives the educational agenda forward.

We take pride in our heritage of collaboration, innovation, and excellence. From our early beginnings in 1933 to our current status as a cornerstone of the UK education sector, BESA's achievements are rooted in our dedication to making a real difference. Through our tireless advocacy, research, and events, we have consistently empowered our members to succeed in an ever-evolving educational landscape.

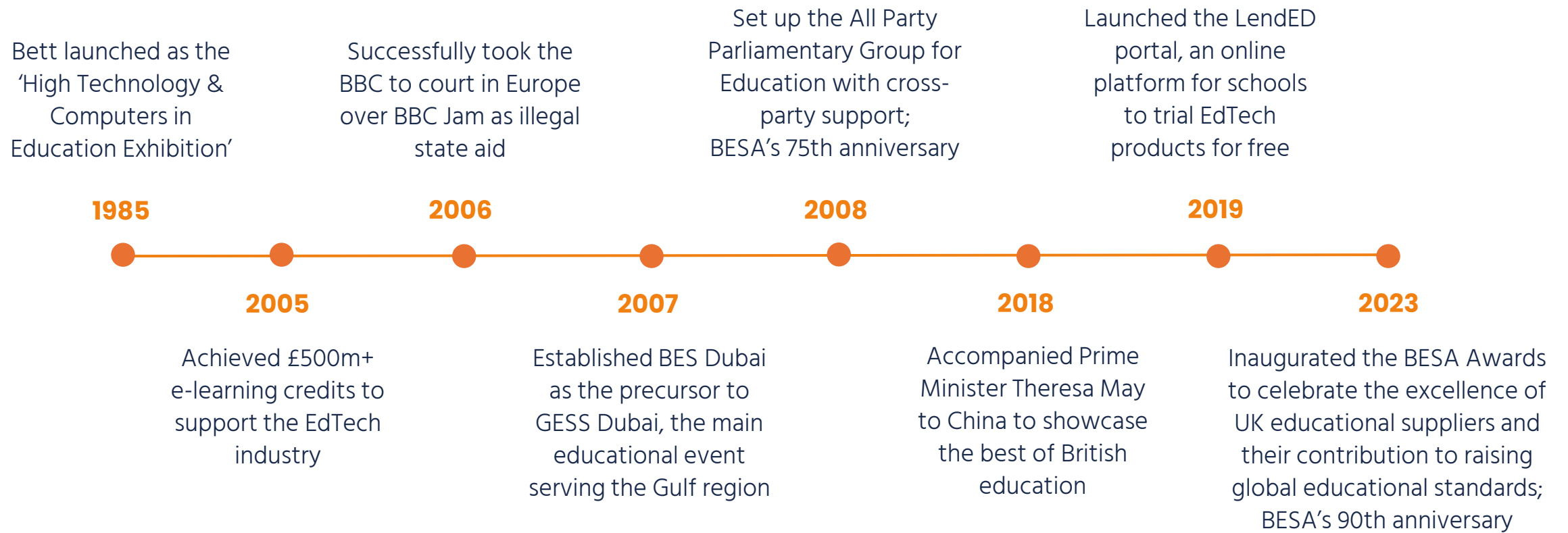
Our new 5-year strategy will see us build on this heritage to grow the association both in size and scope, ensuring we continue to be the voice of the industry reflecting the needs of the sector and advocating for our members, whilst making BESA membership essential for any company wishing to do business with early years providers, schools, colleges and universities.





The BESA logo is the mark of a trusted, quality supplier. It is a mark of quality assurance that is relied upon by schools and educators across the world. All BESA members are vetted on application, and agree to comply with our Code of Practice in order to use the BESA logo.

# BESA highlights



# Our mission

Championing, empowering and connecting BESA members, building a thriving membership community and enabling the provision of outstanding products and services to educators and learners worldwide.

Members are at the heart of everything that we do. Our strength is our ability to connect people and organisations: member to member; supplier to school; country to country.

Underpinning all of our work are our organisational values, that each member of the BESA team strive to uphold.



## Integrity

We are honest and ethical. We uphold the highest standards of honesty and ethical conduct in all our interactions.

## Fairness

We treat everyone equally, providing a level playing field to succeed. We provide a voice for all members regardless of size or length of membership.

## Quality

We strive to deliver outstanding quality. We are committed to delivering exceptional value and excellence in everything we do.

## Collaboration

We are cooperative and welcoming. We believe in the power of working together, both within our organisation and with our members and partners, to achieve common goals.



BESA is a highly valuable and totally engaging trade association. Its value comes in networking, engagement and insight."

**Chris Mahady**  
Managing Director  
Findel Education



# Where we are now

BESA has grown over the years into a thriving community of around 400 members, representing all corners of the industry. From startups to multinationals, we have companies in membership spanning curriculum providers, furniture manufacturers, EdTech developers, playground equipment, publishers, distributors and management solutions. Our members produce materials to support multi-academy trust leaders, head teachers, curriculum leads, classroom teachers, teaching assistants and parents; from early years to higher education, STEM, SEND, IB, core curricula, tutoring, home learning and more.

## Financial performance

Our financial key performance indicators focus on growth in membership numbers and income, growth in other income, and delivering an end of year surplus to be reinvested into the association for the benefit of our members.

	2024	% change on 2023
Membership income	£736,677	21%
Membership numbers	400	-0.7%
Other income	£919,826	-2.7%
Surplus to add to reserves	£37,802	1217%



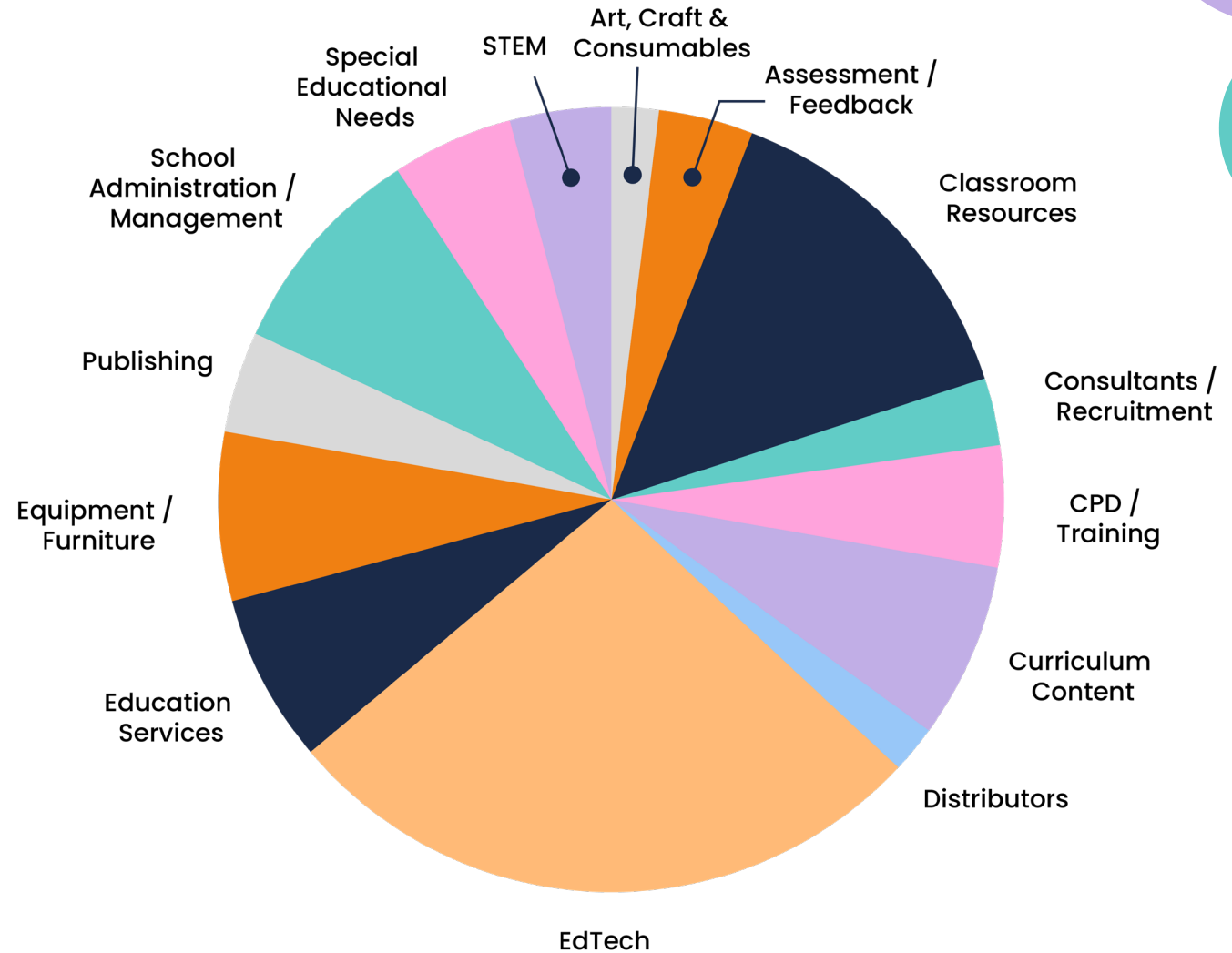


# Where we are now

## Membership a glance

### Members by category

Category	Percentage
Art, Craft & Consumables	2
Assessment / Feedback	4
Classroom Resources	14
Consultants / Recruitment	3
CPD / Training	5
Curriculum Content	7
Distributors	2
EdTech	27
Education Services	7
Equipment / Furniture	7
Publishing	4
School Administration / Management	9
Special Educational Needs	5
STEM	4

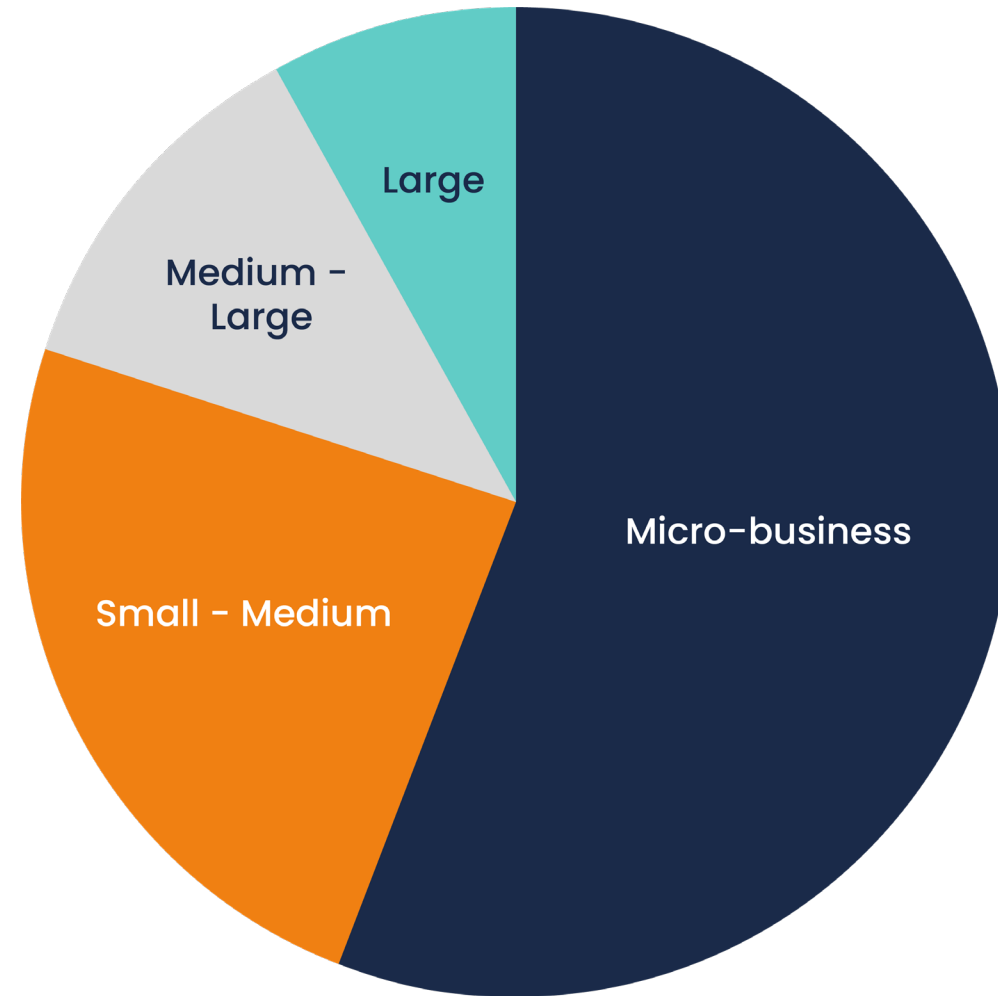


# Where we are now

## Membership a glance

Members by size

Category	Percentage
Micro-business	56
Small - Medium	24
Medium - Large	12
Large	8





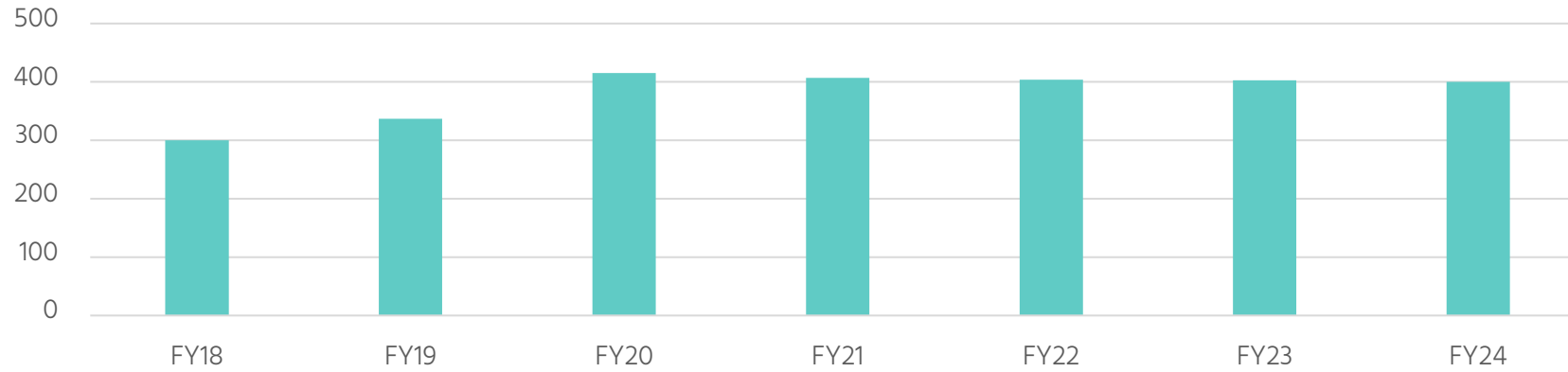
# The challenge

Membership grew steadily between 2010 and 2019. During the pandemic we focused on delivering the best possible support for our existing membership rather than seeking to attract new members. Economic uncertainty and market consolidation has led to a contraction of membership numbers in recent years, despite an increase in membership revenue.

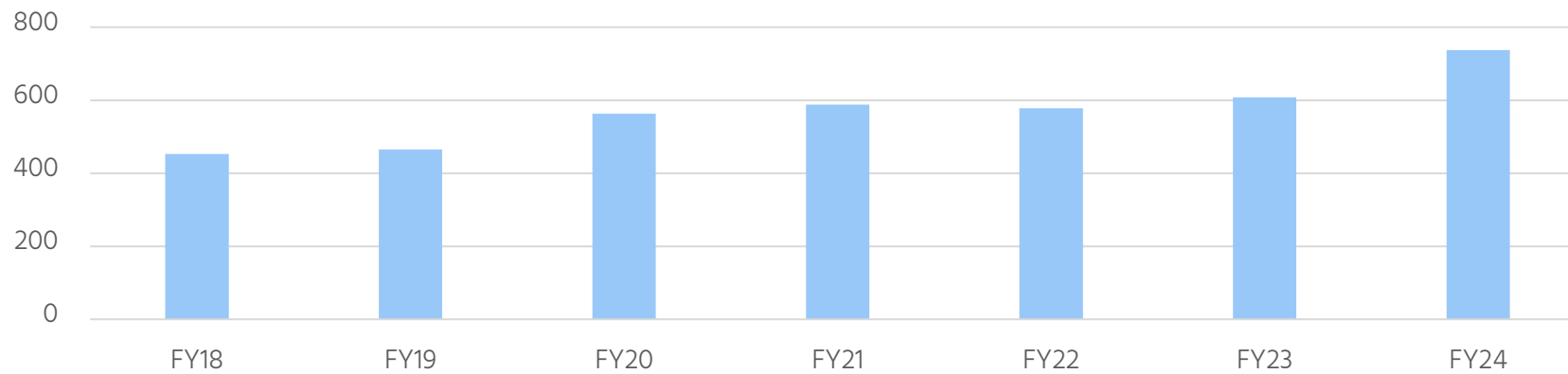
As we look to the future, our vision is clear: making BESA essential in the UK education landscape. Our strategy is anchored in the belief that BESA must continue to evolve to meet the needs of our members and the broader educational community.

The next five years will see BESA expanding its influence, deepening its partnerships, and driving innovation at an accelerated pace.

### Membership Numbers



### Membership Revenue (£k)





BESA membership gives us instant external credibility as a company that has passed the entry criteria and accepted the Code of Practice, which is especially important as a disruptor brand in international markets.”

**Matthew Koster-Marcon**  
CEO, Learning Ladders



# Diversifying revenue streams

BESA has always balanced membership fee income with healthy revenue from events. We established a number of large, successful tradeshows including Bett and GESS Dubai with whom we continue to partner, whilst running our own conferences and exhibitions. Additionally, we will foster innovation to adopt entirely new revenue streams to further offset risks.

But the events landscape is changing and revenues from in-person events are no longer as reliable. We seek to address these challenges by diversifying our revenue streams, broadening our collaborations and seeking new, innovative partnerships that reflect the changing nature of the industry.

In addition we will innovate and seek entirely new revenue streams to further offset the risks.

Our members are also in need of different types of support and services from us as the education landscape changes. With trading conditions and school funding remaining challenging, and with the rise of procurement professionals and centralised buying in multi-academy trusts, we are increasingly being asked to provide direct connections with schools. We will begin exploring solutions to plug this gap.

## Reasons for joining membership

- To be seen as a trusted supplier
- To be connected with school business leaders and buyers
- To learn more about how to sell to schools
- To network and learn from companies who are similar to us
- To gain support with exporting overseas
- To have a voice with government
- To track and benchmark the sector's performance

# BESA's five-year goals

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To achieve our vision, we have set out ambitious goals that will guide our efforts over the next five years. These goals are designed to ensure that BESA remains an essential partner for educational suppliers, schools, government, and international partners.





# Our five-year goal is to make BESA essential

- **Essential** to educators so they only want to buy goods and services from BESA members
- **Essential** to suppliers because educators demand BESA quality assurance, and because we deliver outstanding service and benefits
- **Essential** to the sector because we shape policy, provide essential insights and act as the voice of the industry



# We will succeed by:

- 1 Growing the BESA member community. Expanding our membership base, focusing on attracting leading suppliers and diversifying our reach into new sectors of the market
- 2 Improving member engagement and collaboration with BESA's activities and services by providing unparalleled support and resources to our members, including cutting-edge research, networking opportunities, and professional development programs
- 3 Increasing the impact and recognition of BESA across the education sector. Increasing our advocacy efforts, ensuring that educational suppliers are at the heart of policy-making decisions that affect the future of education. Working to improve recognition of the BESA quality mark amongst educators
- 4 Securing BESA as a financially sound and sustainable business. Maintaining a strong financial position whilst leading the sector in the move to Net Zero, ensuring that our members contribute to a greener, more sustainable future for education





To achieve our vision of making BESA essential, we have identified five key strategic pillars. Each pillar represents a core area of focus that will drive our efforts and ensure we deliver maximum impact for our members, partners, and the broader education community. These pillars are designed to align our activities with our overarching mission and goals, and provide a clear roadmap for the next five years.

# Our Strategic pillars

## Our People

Investing in our people, providing opportunities and support to develop professionally, individually and as part of the wider BESA team

## Our Community

Fostering and amplifying connections amongst members and beyond to showcase industry best practice and collaboration

## Our Voice

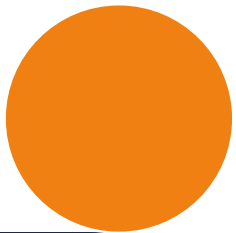
Championing BESA and our members, embedding our role as the voice of the education industry

## Our Services

Providing outstanding insights, events and training opportunities for members that underpin BESA's role in education, assuring and certifying quality, trusted UK education suppliers

## Our System

Embracing customer-first systems and processes to deliver a best-in-class experience for our members





# Pillar one: Our people

Investing in our people to build a high performing team that delivers exceptional value.

Empowering our team to perform at the highest level.

Our people are at the heart of BESA. We are committed to investing in our team, fostering a culture of continuous learning, and providing the tools and support necessary to excel in a dynamic environment. By building a motivated, knowledgeable, and high-performing team, we will ensure that BESA continues to be the trusted partner our members rely on.

# Pillar one: Our people

## What we will do:

Recruit high calibre staff and offer fair wages and remuneration

Benchmark BESA's HR and staff policies against industry standards to ensure we are best in class

Offer an enhanced programme of benefits, training, mentoring and career development opportunities

Monitor staff sickness and ensure sufficient support measures are in place to support the team with their physical and mental health

## How we will be measured:

Improve staff well-being metrics annually and with monthly check in monitoring

Increase staff retention and maintain low levels of staff absence

Enhanced professional development opportunities taken by staff

Achievement of team-specific performance goals linked to strategic outcomes

## How we will report success:

Monthly check-ins and annual employee surveys with published results

Increase member satisfaction score in annual surveys, ensuring all interactions with members meet their needs

Regular performance reviews and transparent reporting on team achievements

Case studies showcasing staff contributions to member success



# Pillar two: Our community

Building a vibrant, connected network of educational suppliers to share best practice, encourage collaboration and positively impact member performance.

Community is at the core of BESA's identity. We will focus on strengthening connections amongst our members, creating opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and mutual support. By nurturing a strong, engaged community, we will enhance the value of BESA membership and ensure a thriving network of educational innovators.

We have already demonstrated that a focus on engagement is key to retaining members over the long term, and we plan to use new CRM tools to rebuild our retention rate and lengthen the average membership period. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that once a company comes into membership they never leave – BESA membership will be so embedded in their organisation at every level that renewal becomes automatic and assumed.

# Pillar two: Our community

## What we will do:

Develop relationships with every key stakeholder within each organisation – main contact, CEO, sales, marketing, and finance

Provide more opportunities for members to connect with each other online and in person including revitalised and realigned Special Interest and Working Groups

Target sectoral leaders and bring into membership, to ensure full representation

Offer greater opportunities for member-generated content on our channels and provide marketing support to drive traffic

Use our new CRM to monitor progress and identify at-risk members

## How we will be measured:

Membership figures and number of sectoral leaders acquired

Growth in member participation in events and networking activities

Increase in cross-member collaborations and partnerships

Higher member satisfaction and engagement scores

Improved engagement with BESA's social media channels and user generated content online

## How we will report success:

Monthly membership reports

Report on Special Interest Group membership and attendance rates

Detailed event attendance and participation metrics

Social media and web analytics

Member testimonials and success stories highlighting collaboration



# Pillar three: Our voice

Championing the needs of educational suppliers at the highest levels.

BESA's voice is critical in influencing education policy, driving positive change and growing membership. We will amplify our advocacy efforts, ensuring that the perspectives of our members are heard and valued by policymakers and stakeholders. Our goal is to be the leading voice representing the interests of the UK's educational suppliers.

BESA already has strong relationships with Government, policy makers and external stakeholders but we will build on this to ensure we retain our prominence. BESA will be the undisputed voice of the industry, the thought leader offering guidance on future direction and the source of research and insights that shed light on those areas that matter. We will build new and stronger external partnerships for research and projects that enable us to broaden our reach and raise our profile particularly in new sectors of the markets such as Higher Education.



# Pillar three: Our voice

## What we will do:

Baseline stakeholder survey of brand awareness

Engage with new government to establish strong working relationships with incoming ministers and their teams

Run a comprehensive and long-term marketing for the educator audience championing BESA's Code of Practice and the work of our members

Increase our thought leadership work on social media

Establish new partnerships for research and policy work

## How we will be measured:

Increased engagement with policymakers and stakeholders

Growth in media coverage and mentions in key educational forums

Measurable impact on policy decisions favouring the educational supply sector

BESA research being used by government, purchased by third parties or quoted in media

## How we will report success:

Quarterly reports on advocacy activities and outcomes

Media monitoring summaries and impact assessments

Member satisfaction survey showing response to lobbying/influencing/voice impact.

Annual survey of BESA brand recognition



# Pillar four: Our services

Delivering best-in-class services and insights that support, train, and guide our members so they might further their commercial opportunities.

BESA is dedicated to providing exceptional services that meet the evolving needs of our members. From insights and research to events and training, we will continue to innovate and enhance our offerings. Our services are designed to help our members stay ahead of the curve, drive growth, and achieve their goals which in turn leads to higher member retention and revenues.

We will transition our webinar schedule to on-demand training modules complete with micro-credentials and badging in key areas so suppliers can further demonstrate their expertise.

## Enhanced research

Our research will be refocused around the provision of core market performance data that provides unrivalled insights into market demand, sales trends and school spending behaviour. We will augment this with commissioned reports focusing on areas of key significance either due to their timely nature, or their wider impact on the industry.

# Pillar four: Our services

## The BESA Accreditation Scheme

We will drive our mission of making BESA essential through the introduction of membership accreditation, moving our kitemarking from compliance with our Code of Practice to full accreditation aligned with a higher set of standards. This will enable us to provide further certainty to educators on the quality and reliability of the supplier they have selected. It will also enhance the desirability of accreditation, thus driving up membership.

School leaders need to be actively seeking out the BESA logo when dealing with suppliers or making purchasing decisions. Our baseline survey will be carried out in Autumn 2024 and will identify the current norm, so we can benchmark progress over the next 5 years. We seek to move the dial so that BESA membership becomes a non-negotiable pre-requisite for doing business in the sector. This will be a challenging goal but one that is achievable within the timeframe.



# Pillar four: Our services

## What we will do:

Introduce an externally validated member accreditation scheme leading to enhanced level of membership that will underpin our commitment to making the BESA quality mark a pre-requisite in purchasing decision making

Focus on those services that are of most importance to members, engage members on key issues impacting BESA membership.

Continue our outstanding events and webinars, whilst transitioning to on-demand content and training that leads to certification – badges and credentials – in key areas

Use time-limited task and complete groups to engage members on key issues impacting BESA members

## How we will be measured:

Accreditation scheme application metrics

Member satisfaction ratings for services provided

Increased utilization of BESA's resources, events, and training programs

Positive feedback on the quality and relevance of BESA's insights and research

Number of procurement agencies setting BESA membership as a pre-requisite for participation

## How we will report success:

Service usage and satisfaction metrics published quarterly

Annual member feedback survey with published results

Case studies demonstrating the impact of BESA services on member success

Accreditation application metrics quarterly.



# Pillar five: Our systems

Implementing best-in-class systems to increase return on investment, support team development and enhance member experience.

To move forward with our ambition BESA needs to become a data-driven organisation, using the latest technology to deliver workload efficiencies to support the team, and utilising CRM and website automation and integration to provide superior support and customer journeys for our members.

# Pillar five: Our systems

## What we will do:

Use CRM data and analytics to improve member engagement and enable us to focus attention where needed

Launch a new website complete with personalised member portal including e-commerce facilities, so that members can book training and events, access research reports and renew their membership from one place

Use improved workflows and back office tools including AI to streamline processes, reduce workload and enable team members to focus their skills on delivering best service to our members

## How we will be measured:

Improvement in CRM reporting and member engagement

Adoption of ecommerce functionality by members

Integration of new processes and tools by members

Website analytics

## How we will report success:

CRM reporting monthly

Website analytics monthly

Workload metrics in staff satisfaction surveys



The benefits you get extend way beyond a profile under membership - it's having access to everything you need to be successful in this sector."

Ian Hunter

CEO, Lime Education Consulting



# Measuring success

**BESA is committed to transparency and accountability. Our progress will be regularly measured against the KPIs outlined for each pillar, and we will report on our achievements in a clear and accessible manner.**



- ✓ Goals and pillar targets cascaded to departmental and individual objectives
- ✓ All activities logged in project management software
- ✓ Pillar champions appointed to drive strategy forward & provide focus during weekly team meeting
- ✓ KPI reporting embedded in monthly meetings
- ✓ Quarterly reporting using top level scorecard for Executive Council
- ✓ Annual reporting at pillar level for Executive Council



# Measuring success

We will introduce a balanced scorecard approach that will focus on no more than 5 key metrics for each strategic goal. Whilst we have more detailed KPIs for us to focus on internally, the scorecard will provide a top line measure of progress that will be reported on to Executive Council and in our annual report to members.

## BESA Strategy Scorecard



Goal 1: Grow our membership	Target	Actual	Variance	Rating
Increase conversion of launchpad membership to full members by 3% (from what base - needed for calculation)	3%			
Increase membership by 9.5% to 450 (check maths) (85 new members needed)	450			
Increase sectoral reach - 2 per sector (x6)	6			
Increase retention rate to 92%	92%			

Goal 2: Improving member engagement and collaboration with BESA's activities and services	Target	Actual	Variance	Rating
Increase no of member companies attending/engaging with at least one BESA activity/event by 3%.	3%			
Increase member/launchpad companies registered for website newsletter to 100%.	100%			
Increase number of members displaying BESA logo by 10%	10%			
increase number of companies with all key contacts registered to 40%	40%			
Increase number of members following BESA's social media channels by 3%.	3%			

Goal 3: Increasing the impact and recognition of BESA across the education sector.	Target	Actual	Variance	Rating
BESA's code of practice to be cited in 2 procurement frameworks	2			
Increase social media audience on all channels by 10%	10%			
Improve our (positive) brand awareness among stakeholders.	5%			
Increase Government engagement by 5%	5%			
Increase no. media requests and external articles/blogs/interviews by 10%	10%			

Goal 4: increasing the financial stability and sustainability of BESA	Target	Actual	Variance	Rating
Maintain reserves of 6 month run rate while investing in systems to drive growth and efficiencies	6			
Achieve 5% of income from new revenue streams	5%			
Achieve overall income target	£1.7m			
Achieve surplus of 10% turnover	10%			
Reduce % of revenue from events to no more than 30%	30%			

# Conclusion: Making BESA essential

BESA's strategy is clear: we will continue to be the dominant voice, advocate, and innovator in the educational supply sector whilst growing and enhancing our community. The measures outlined in this document will make BESA membership essential to all suppliers, whilst educators will demand BESA accreditation as a pre-condition of procurement.

This strategy serves as our blueprint, guiding our actions and inspiring our community. With your partnership, we will make BESA the essential organisation for educators, suppliers and the sector as a whole.



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