Beehive.govt.nz: Government backs AI support for small business

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New Zealand's small businesses are getting a boost of AI-powered support to unlock new growth opportunities with new Government funding announced today, Minister for Small Business and Manufacturing Cameron Brewer says.

"Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and every one of them has untapped potential to grow. That's why I'm delighted to allocate and announce this funding today," Mr Brewer says.

"This is about giving them the same smart, data-driven insight the big players have always had, without the big-player price tag.

The investment backs two initiatives putting practical, modern tools into the hands of the country's 600,000 small businesses, the firms that make up 97 per cent of all Kiwi companies and employ about 680,000 people.

The Government is funding Business South to expand its AcceleratorNZ programme to a further 500 businesses, and Business Mentors New Zealand (BMNZ) to roll out AI tools that sharpen the support its mentors provide.

AcceleratorNZ uses AI to analyse a business's own data, highlight its biggest growth opportunities, and hand the owner a practical action plan they can use straight away.

"The programme has already proven itself with more than 100 businesses. This expansion will let more than 500 benefit from AI-powered diagnostics over the next year," Mr Brewer says.

BMNZ connects around 1,500 small and medium businesses a year with experienced mentors. The new funding will help develop its AI Digital Mentor tool, better matching mentors to the businesses that need them.

"This modernises a service Kiwi businesses already rely on, giving mentors smarter tools while keeping the human connection at the heart of mentoring. The technology supports the mentor, it doesn't replace them, Mr Brewer says

"These tools show how going digital can lift efficiency and help more businesses thrive. This is about fixing the basics and building the future, making sure small businesses have the practical support they need to grow, compete, and succeed."