



Small Business Grant Scheme Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Council has been allocated funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) which are both part of the government's Levelling Up agenda. Both funds have set a framework within which the Council has some discretion over how the funds are used to help local businesses.
- 1.2. West Oxfordshire District Council has been allocated £1,716,216 of funding. While the funds are to be used to address local needs and issues, the Government published clearly defined criteria that set the context. The funds can be used for three broad themes (known as 'Investment Priorities'):
 - Communities & Place
 - Supporting Local Business
 - People & Skills
- 1.3. The Small Business Grant Scheme will focus on supporting new and small businesses within the West Oxfordshire District with capital costs.
- 1.4. The scheme will incorporate a business advice session as well as a grant for successful applicants.

2. Eligibility

- 2.1. This grant scheme funding is:
 - For small enterprises based and operating in West Oxfordshire District. West Oxfordshire District Council, for the purposes of this scheme, has defined a small enterprise as having 10 employees or under, or the full time equivalent.
 - For businesses that have been trading for a minimum of 6 months.
 - To assist with the growth of and future support of businesses.
 - For capital costs only.

3. Exclusions

- 3.1. Any business that has already applied for or received a grant payment from the following DEFRA schemes, for the project they wish to fund will not be eligible to apply for this grant scheme:
 - The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme
 - The Farming Investment Fund
 - The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund

- 3.2. The following businesses are not eligible for the discretionary grant funding payments:
 - Charities
 - Gambling establishments
 - Businesses which have already received grant payments that equal the maximum subsidy levels as set out in the Trade and Corporate Agreement with the European Union.
 - Businesses that are in administration, are insolvent or where a striking off notice has been made.

- 3.3. The grant cannot fund planning permission and building regulations. Applicants should note that they will need to acquire all the necessary consents such as planning permission, listed building consent, Diocese faculty, landlord or head lease consent, compliance with any restrictions on the property title etc. and should be able to provide these on request.

4. Application Process

- 4.1. All businesses wishing to apply for a REPF/UKSPF Business Support Grant will need to apply using the online application form and submit all of the requested supporting documentation.

- 4.2. Applicants will be required to set out how they wish to use the funds in relation to UKSPF objectives - such as the creation of or safeguarding of jobs, the creation of new enterprises and businesses, the expansion of the business's reach or increasing the number of visitors impacted.

- 4.3. An 'application window' will be given in which the Council will accept applications. All application windows will be communicated through various media platforms including the Councils Business Matters newsletter.

- 4.4. All applications will be sifted to remove any that have not set out how the funds will assist with business growth. Any concerns or issues will be raised with the applicant.

- 4.5. Each grant applicant will be required to attend a business advice session with the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

4.6. Only one application per organisation will be accepted.

5. Grant Allocations

5.1. During this scheme, businesses and organisations can apply for a maximum of £5,000.00 of capital funding. No match funding will be required.

5.2. In 2024/25, a small number of larger grants (up to a maximum of £20,000 of capital funding) will be made available. 50% match funding will be required for these larger grants to maximise the value for money and impact of the fund.

5.3. Successful grant payments will be made electronically to the business bank account provided at the time of application.

5.4. Grants will be issued as one-off payments.

5.5. The Council will only pay towards costs incurred after the date of the Council's decision to award a grant. Retrospective applications will not be eligible.

6. Monitoring

6.1. The Council reserves the right to review and monitor the progress of the applicant's project.

6.2. Recipients of the grants will be required to provide evidence of any outputs or outcomes achieved through the grant.

7. Appeals

7.1. The Council will not be required to provide a right of appeal against any decision not to award a grant payment under this policy. Businesses will not be eligible if they do not meet the criteria.

8. Fraud

8.1. The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud. Any business caught falsifying their records to gain a discretionary grant payment may face prosecution. The Council will seek recovery of any grant paid as a result of fraud or payments made in error.