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UK Government



Rural England Prosperity Fund

Rural Swale Small business grants

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Rural Swale Small Business Grants 2023

1. Background

1.1 Using money allocated from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) this funding is available to support small rural businesses to make small capital investments to support growth and carbon reduction measures **or** support capital projects which help develop the local visitor economy.

1.2 For the purposes of this grant, the investment should be outside the principal urban areas of the Borough and within one of the following wards

- Bobbing, Iwade & Lower Halstow
- Borden & Grove Park
- Boughton and Courtenay
- East Downs
- Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch
- Sheppey Central
- Sheppey East
- Teynham and Lynsted
- West Downs

1.3 If a project is located outside of these wards (but within the Borough) and can demonstrate it is specifically designed to support businesses in rural Swale, this may be considered. Please contact the grants team for a discussion if you believe this to be the case, on the email below.

1.4 The scheme will prioritise capital projects that:

- improve the environmental and financial sustainability of the business through carbon reduction measures or;
- supports more than one business and helps safeguard or increase rural employment

1.5 It is intended that this scheme will operate in the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years, although funding beyond for the current financial year has yet to be confirmed by Government. Full eligibility criteria and grant funding levels for this scheme are detailed below. It should be noted that this is a **discretionary** grant scheme and all decisions are based on Swale Borough Council's assessment of applications, to determine if the required criteria is met.

1.6 *If you would like further advice on this scheme and how it will be applied, please contact the grants team at prosperityfund@swale.gov.uk*

2. Who and what will be eligible for the grants?

2.1 This Grant scheme is open to small businesses located in the wards identified at 1.2. Small businesses are defined as having less than 50 employees and an annual turnover under £10 million. Businesses will normally be expected to have been trading for at least 12 months.

2.2 Projects that will be supported must not have already commenced (generally defined as purchased goods or contracted and/or commenced works) at the point the grant is awarded. Applicants should clearly demonstrate the grant allows the project to proceed. Any funding sought should be for investments to be made within the Borough. It is acknowledged that mobile assets may spend time out of Borough, but they should normally be based within Swale.

2.3 Against the priorities for which the grant has been set up, examples of projects include

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- Investments which support carbon reduction and support the future financial and environmental sustainability of the business
 - Improving or creating business or visitor accommodation, venues and facilities that support the rural economy
 - The purchase of new equipment that support business growth and productivity, for non-farmer owned businesses.
- 2.4 The Fund shall not be available for projects that
- solely seek to repair, maintain or renew
 - are focused on securing compliance with legal requirements
 - are focused on improvements to car parking
 - benefit a property which is not wholly for non-domestic use.
- 2.5 In addition to defining the nature of the capital investment, applicants will be asked to set out what outputs/outcomes are expected from the investment supported by the grant and how these will be measured over a period of time. This might include the number of jobs created or safeguarded or improved productivity, turnover or profitability.
- 2.6 Projects that are seeking funding from more than one source must declare other funding being sought for the project and demonstrate that the elements of the project being funded through this scheme are not 'double funded'. Projects which are already in receipt of other DEFRA funding cannot be supported.
- 2.7 Grants for the acquisition of vehicles will not normally be considered.
- 2.8 Applicants will generally only be awarded one grant from this fund, unless there is an identified potential underspend for the funding allocation for a particular year.
- 2.9 Grants should not support political or directly religious activity. For the avoidance of doubt, organisations that are in administration, insolvent or where a striking-off notice has been made, are not eligible for funding under this scheme.

Compliance

- 2.10 Applicants/applications will be subject to due diligence checks including legal entity checks, bank account verification, the financial viability of the organisation and compliance with subsidy control regulations. It is therefore important to respond to the information requested in the application form and any further requests arising from an application made.
- 2.11 Projects that are funded will need to comply with the rules of the scheme. These will be set out in a sealed grant agreement and failure to comply may lead to any funding issued becoming subject to claw back.

Procurement

- 2.12 In order to ensure that value for money has been obtained in the procurement of goods funded by the Grant, Government rules requires the following minimum procedures for recipients. To optimise local benefit we would also encourage the use of local suppliers.

Value of Contract	Minimum procedure required
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Value of Contract	Minimum procedure required
£0-£24,999	A minimum of 1 quote. Further quotes may be requested when your application is assessed to ensure value for money.
£25,000-£99,999	Please discuss with the team by emailing prosperityfund@swale.gov.uk .

Branding & Publicity

- 2.13 Grant recipients will need to comply with Government requirements for branding and publicity, which can be found [here](#). This covers both press activity and printed and online materials and activity. Examples of how this has been followed will be collected by Swale Borough Council as part of its evidence to demonstrate compliance.

Planning and Other Permissions:

- 2.14 Where an applicant requires planning, building regulations or any other approvals to deliver their proposal, but has not yet secured it, any award from this scheme will be 'subject to securing the necessary permissions'. In short, failure to demonstrate that the necessary permissions have been secured within an agreed timescale (set out in the grant agreement) will mean any grant offer may be withheld or withdrawn and any grant paid be potentially repayable to Swale Borough Council.

3. Funding Levels and expenditure timeframe

- 3.1 Grants of between £1,000 and £7,000 will be awarded to successful applicants, to cover no more than 50% of the costs of the project for which the application has been made. Where other funding is secured for the same project this should be declared. Match funding secured may enhance the value for money assessment made against applications.
- 3.2 If an organisation is VAT registered, the scheme will not consider VAT when calculating the grant offer.
- 3.3 Recipients of grants received in any financial year will normally be expected to complete spend of the grant on the intended investment/project within the same financial year as the award has been made.

Please note, Swale Borough Council has a fixed amount of funds available for this grant scheme. If the number of eligible applications exceeds the funds available, we reserve the right to close the scheme and/or alter these funding levels accordingly.

4. How do I apply?

- 4.1 Applications can be made using the attached form or via an online form available [here](#). If you require assistance in completing the form, or need to make an application through an alternative format, please contact the grants team on 01795 417398.
- 4.2 **All applications for this funding should be received by no later than the published date for each funding round. This will be publicised and published on Swale Borough Councils website.** If the fund is substantially over-subscribed, the Council reserves the right to close the scheme prior to this date. Subject to the availability of further funds and the number of applications received, further funding rounds may be held, but this is not guaranteed.

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- 4.3 You may be contacted by a member of the Economic Development and External Funding team who will advise if any further information is required after your application has been reviewed and what the next steps will be. This may include a virtual or in person appointment with a Council officer or an appointed expert contractor to discuss the proposal. **This may be a necessary step for the application to proceed** and is intended to both help assess the suitability of the proposal on behalf of the Council, and also provide any further guidance or advice required by the applicant organisation.
- 4.4 Eligibility checks will also be carried out including an independent security and fraud check by an external company as required by Government. If an application is received from an organisation that does not meet all the required criteria, they will be informed as soon as possible of this and the reason(s) they are not eligible.
- 4.5 The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud. Any organisation or individual caught falsifying their records to gain grant money may face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to claw back.
- 4.6 Depending on the proposal, payment schedules will be agreed with successful applicants. It is anticipated initial payments to successful organisations will be made as soon as is reasonably practical after a decision has been made and the relevant grant agreement has been returned. The nature and scale of the project and the applicant will determine whether payment will be made in full, in advance or in stages.
- 4.7 No grants will be awarded without an application being made and considered.

5. Decision Making and Appeals

- 5.1 Applications received will be reviewed by any relevant officers of the Council and/or its appointed expert. A recommendation of award will be made to responsible Swale Borough Council for approval.
- 5.2 The Council will operate an internal review process and will accept an applicant's request for a review of its decision. All review requests must be made in writing to the Council within 14 days of the Council's decision and should state the reasons why the applicant is aggrieved with the decision of the Council. New Information may be submitted at this stage to support the applicant's appeal.
- 5.3 The application will be reconsidered by a senior officer of the Council, as soon as practicable and the applicant will be informed in writing or by email of the decision. As a discretionary scheme, any decision made will be final.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 6.1 Successful applicants will be expected to comply with monitoring requests for the projects delivery and any evaluation of outputs and outcomes required. This will include evidence of spend and compliance with the terms of the grant. It will also mean that data will need to be collected, before, during and after the project has been delivered. Failure to comply with his may result in the Council seeking to recover some or all of the grant that has been paid.

