



## **REPF Business Grant Scheme eligibility criteria and guidance**

**Please read this form carefully before you apply**



# 1 Rural Business Grant scheme

- 1.1 The rural business grant scheme can provide funding to micro and small businesses located in rural areas across West Berkshire to help facilitate growth, diversify, and support the rural economy.
- 1.2 Essential criteria, to apply for this grant businesses must:
- Be a limited company, LLP or sole trader that is registered within West Berkshire.
  - Be a micro or small business (see Section 1.3 for further details)
  - The funded project and business must be located within a rural designated area (see Section 3).
  - The business has been trading before January 2022.
  - The business is compliant with UK subsidy law and has not exceeded or will not exceed, because of this fund, the £315,000 MFA subsidy limit (see Section 4.3).
  - The project has not received funding from any other DEFRA scheme (see Section 1.5)
- 1.3 Rural small and micro businesses located in West Berkshire with less than 50 Full-time or Equivalent (FTE) employees are eligible to apply for the business grant scheme.
- 1.4 Applicants can apply for between £10,000 – £40,000 of funding. This funding must be spent on capital cost, as outlined in section 2 eligible costs. Bids for larger grant value can only be considered where applicants can provide evidence of very significant benefits for the local rural economy.
- 1.5 Applicants will need to submit the accompanying application form, which includes details of how their proposal meets the evaluation criteria below and a cost breakdown of how the funding will be spent, to the Economic Development team at [economicdevelopment@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:economicdevelopment@westberks.gov.uk).
- 1.6 Applicants must provide proof that they have initiated the project and begun spending the funding within 3 months of receiving it. Failure to provide this could result in clawback of funding.
- 1.7 Below are some examples of the types of projects that may be funded as part of the scheme (please note this is not an exhaustive list, it is meant to inspire ideas):

Project examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Capital funding for diversification of farm businesses outside of agriculture to encourage start up, expansion or scale up of these businesses where this involves converting farm buildings into other commercial or business uses.</li></ul>

- Capital funding to support agritourism and other event related space e.g. provision of tourist related accommodation, wedding venues and leisure facilities
- Capital funding for net zero initiatives for rural businesses e.g., energy saving equipment, improving energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, and on-site electrical vehicle charging points.
- Capital funding for the provision of facilities for pet and equines such as kennels, livery, and pet health venues.
- Capital funding for the purchase of equipment for food processing for non-farmer-owned businesses e.g. purchasing new process and packaging machinery such as brewing equipment.
- Capital funding for resilience infrastructure and nature-based solutions that protect local businesses and community areas from natural hazards including flooding.

1.8 Projects that have received funding from other DEFRA schemes are ineligible for funding from the business grant scheme, as listed below:

- [The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme](#) - funding for farmers and land managers to work in partnership with National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty bodies to deliver projects on climate, nature, people, and place.
- [The Farming Investment Fund](#) - grants to improve productivity and bring environmental benefits, covering 2 funds - the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund and the Farming Transformation Fund.

1.9 Note that the fund is unable to finance the purchase of equipment for food processing for farmer owned businesses. Support for farmer owned businesses is available under the Farming Investment Fund (FIF).

## 2 What costs are eligible?

2.1 The minimum request per application is £10,000, with a maximum request of £40,000 per application.

2.2 It is advised that businesses engage with the Economic Development Team early to ensure that applications meet the goals of the scheme.

2.3 While match funding is not required for applications to be successful, schemes that include match funding will receive additional scoring during the allocation process.

2.4 We will not fund purchases that have already taken place before funding has been awarded to successful applicants.

2.5 We can **only** provide funding for capital projects. We are not able to fund revenue projects or provide revenue funding to support a capital project. Capital funds can be used to acquire, build, or upgrade physical assets, including:

- A one-time purchase of a fixed asset
- Building and Construction costs
- Plant, machinery, and equipment (excluding vehicles)

2.6 The following costs are considered **ineligible** and must not be included in application:

- VAT reclaimable from HMRC.
- Debts, costs resulting from the deferral of payments to creditors, or winding up a company.
- Expenses in respect of litigation, unfair dismissal, or other compensation.
- Costs incurred by individuals in setting up and contributing towards private pension schemes.
- Improvements to residential properties – all sites must be registered for commercial uses.
- Purchasing/leasing vehicles.
- Any payments where West Berkshire Council (or other local authorities) are the direct recipients.
- Employee wages.
- Business as usual costs e.g. contributing towards the cost of fertiliser, covering electricity and water bills, and paying for the upkeep of fences or walls.

### 3 Where in West Berkshire is considered rural?

3.1 Not all areas of West Berkshire are eligible to receive funding as they are not determined as rural by DEFRA. The main areas of West Berkshire that are not eligible for funding are Newbury and Thatcham.

3.2 To see whether you are located within an eligible area for REPF, open the link to [DEFRA's Magic Map](#) and follow the instructions below:

- DEFRA Map to show REPF eligible areas: Magic Map Application.
- Under 'Table of Contents' select 'Administrative Geographies' then 'Other Administrative Boundaries' then select 'Rural England Prosperity Fund'.
- Search for the location by entering your postcode within the search bar (top left of page) or manually zoom in on a location.
- You will find a toolbar of icons above the map. Select the 'Identify' icon and click on the location of your project on the map. A pop-up box will appear notifying you if the area is considered rural for the purposes of REPF.

### 4 What are the funding arrangements?

4.1 Grants will be allocated, based on a competitive process, to successful businesses on a rolling basis over the lifetime of the scheme, from January 2024 – March 2025.

4.2 Successful applications will enter into a grant agreement with the Council. If we approve your application, you must provide the following:

- deliver all outputs as detailed in your full application.
- supply evidence of expenditure and defrayal.

4.3 Applicants must ensure that any project/programme put forward is compliant with the [UK Subsidy Control regime](#) and will be asked to demonstrate this within the application form. Applicants will be asked to declare whether they or any businesses

they are formally linked with have received funding from EU or other public sources when they apply.

- 4.4 It is important to highlight that we are not providing any form of planning consent to the successful applications, this needs to be sought from the Planning Authority separately.
- 4.5 Where planning permission is required for a project, applicants should engage with the planning authority prior to applying to ensure the project complies with planning requirements and is deliverable, which will be reviewed as part of the due-diligence process. The Council may ask for evidence before a grant agreement is issued, however this is the sole responsibility of the applicant, and will not form part of the application process.
- 4.6 Successful applicants are required to comply with the Levelling Up branding outlined in section [7.7 Branding and publicity](#) of the UKSPF prospectus and [UKSPF additional guidance on branding and publicity](#). Further details on branding and publicity will be discussed with successful applicants.

## 5 How applications are assessed

- 5.1 All applications submitted will be assessed against the following initial eligibility criteria. Any applications that fail the initial stage will not be taken forwards for appraisal by the panel.

<b><u>Initial eligibility criteria</u></b>
Application completed in full and submitted with all supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application form</li><li>• Quotes to demonstrate project costs and value for money</li><li>• Evidence of financial activity (tax returns, etc.)</li></ul>
Business and project meet the eligibility criteria of the scheme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Size of business (small/micro)</li><li>• Location (within rural designated areas)</li><li>• Subsidy control compliant</li><li>• Meets the REPF interventions and eligibility expenditure (eligible capital spending)</li></ul>

- 5.2 The table below provides an overview of how we will score and assess applications. Each part of the application will be scored based on the quality and content of the answers and supporting evidence provided.

<b><u>Part</u></b>	<b><u>Details</u></b>
Justification of Funding	The proposal demonstrates how the funding will create additionality for the business, and the need for grant funding is clearly demonstrated.
Strategic Alignment	<p>The long-term economic benefits of the investment are clearly demonstrated and align with the priorities of the REPF; this could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of new products and entry into new markets.</li> <li>• Farm diversification outside of traditional agriculture.</li> <li>• Creation and expansion of rural leisure and tourism.</li> <li>• Adopting productivity enhancing technology.</li> <li>• Undertaking innovation.</li> </ul>
	<p>Environmental sustainability is considered as a part of the project; this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of resilience infrastructure and nature-based solutions that protect local businesses and community areas from natural hazards.</li> <li>• Investment into net-zero infrastructure (Adoption productivity enhancing, energy efficient and low carbon technologies and techniques).</li> </ul>
	<p>It is clear how outputs and outcomes will be captured, measured, and evaluated; this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of jobs created/safeguarded by the project.</li> <li>• Local businesses and communities supported.</li> <li>• Evidence of increased productivity and energy efficiency.</li> <li>• New to the firm technology or processes adopted.</li> <li>• Number of tourist activities supported.</li> </ul>
Deliverability	<p>It is clear how the project will be delivered on time and in budget.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant outlines in detail a timeline for the deliverability of the project.</li> <li>• A cost breakdown for the capital costs of the project is provided by the applicant (this should include links, quotes, emails, or screenshots which demonstrate the costs of the proposal).</li> </ul>
	<p>It is clear how risk will be managed and mitigated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant has completed a risk assessment and identified any risks related to the deliverability of the project.</li> <li>• The applicant has researched if a planning application is required for their proposal. If a planning application is required, then the applicant should provide evidence of consultation with the planning service.</li> </ul>

Match Funding	While match funding is not required for an application to be successful, we will be awarding scoring to applications that contribute funding.
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5.3 The REPF business grant scheme is a discretionary grant scheme, and West Berkshire Council has the final say over which proposals will receive funding. This is a one-off scheme, and there will be no future funding rounds after the scheme concludes in March 2025.

## 6 Grant funding timeline

6.1 Applications will be reviewed and assessed on a rolling basis, with allocations awarded every two months until March 2025. Applications that are not awarded funding will be kept and assessed, along with new applications, bimonthly until March 2025.

## 7 How can businesses apply?

7.1 To apply, please fill out the [REPF application form](#) and email the completed form to the following email address: [economicdevelopment@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:economicdevelopment@westberks.gov.uk). Applications submitted in any other form will not be considered unless Economic Development have been contacted prior to the submission.

## 8 Support

8.1 For any queries regarding the REPF business grant scheme, please email: [economicdevelopment@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:economicdevelopment@westberks.gov.uk).