



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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West Oxfordshire 'Business Boost' Grant

Helping Your Business Go Further

Grant Agreement Guidance Notes

The **West Oxfordshire 'Business Boost' Grant** supports businesses in West Oxfordshire to grow, diversify, and build resilience through capital investment. This programme is funded by the **Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)** under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Key objectives

- Drive growth and productivity in enterprises
- Support diversification and innovation across sectors
- Promote environmental sustainability and low-carbon practices
- Stimulate job creation and strengthen the workforce
- Improve access to markets, infrastructure, and digital tools

Funding overview

- **Total Grant Fund:** £25,000
- **Grant Range:** up to £5,000
- **Match Funding Requirement:** Minimum 25% (means that if you apply for a grant, you must contribute at least 25% of the total project cost yourself)
- **Project Deadline:** All works must be completed by **28 February 2026**
- **Location:** Businesses must be based within **West Oxfordshire District**

What we will fund

This is a **capital-only grant scheme**. Funding is available for tangible, long-term assets that:

- Support business productivity, diversification, or innovation
- Have a minimum 5-year lifespan
- Offer clear benefits to the rural economy.

Examples of eligible capital costs

- Upgrades to IT infrastructure or digital tools (e.g. servers, POS systems, automation tech)
- Installation of energy-efficient lighting, insulation, or HVAC systems
- Accessibility improvements to premises (e.g. ramps, lifts, adapted workstations)
- Equipment for creative industries (e.g. printing presses, audio/visual gear)

- Tools and machinery for trades (e.g. carpentry, metalwork, vehicle repair)
- Cold storage or refrigeration units for food and drink businesses
- Facilities for training or community engagement (e.g. classrooms, demo kitchens)
- Sustainable transport solutions (e.g. electric delivery vehicles, bike fleets)

For more examples, please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

What we cannot fund

- Revenue/operational costs (e.g., salaries, utilities, consumables)
- Retrospective costs (projects already started)
- Planning permission or building regulations fees
- Projects not demonstrating secured match funding (unless exempt)
- We cannot support projects that have received funding from other **Defra** schemes. This includes:
 - **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
 - **The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund** - grant funding over 3 years (to 2025) to support capital improvement projects for village halls, covering extending buildings and modernising facilities. More details on how to apply will be available shortly

Who can apply?

- Sole traders, micro and small businesses
- Community enterprises with economic objectives

What documents will I need to apply?

Before the application opens, we thought it would be useful to let you know which documents you'll need (alongside your project details) to apply for the grant.

- A copy of recent statements for any bank/building society accounts in the name of the organisation, as identified in the application and on the constitution or company documentation.
- Three quotes for project items or a professional estimate for any building work.
- A breakdown of the total cost for the project (including match-funded contributions).

- Evidence of secured match funding for the project (if applicable). This could be bank statements showing the funds available, or grant offer letters showing the amount of funding offered.
- Private sector companies and sole traders must provide a UTR number.
- Private sector companies must provide a company registration number and evidence they are actively trading (this may include evidence of recent invoices, a website or similar digital presence, business rates bills or other formal business documentation – due diligence checks are undertaken).
- If your organisation is registered for VAT, you must provide your VAT registration number. Please note: if you are VAT registered and can recover VAT for grant-funded projects, please ensure VAT is not included in your costs.
- For applications concerning land or buildings, confirmation of property ownership - either a freehold interest or a current lease.

Terms and conditions

Appropriate consents and permissions, for example, from the landlord, listed building consents, planning permission, etc. must be obtained where applicable and are the applicant's responsibility. The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud and any business caught falsifying their statements or evidence to gain grant money will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to clawback, as may any grants paid in error.

We will confirm receipt of your application via email. We are expecting a high level of demand and not all applicants will be successful. We will notify you of the outcome by email.

All projects must complete before 28 February 2026.

Exclusions

The following businesses are not eligible for the grant:

- Businesses that are in administration, are insolvent or where a striking of notice has been made.
- We cannot support projects that have received funding from other Defra schemes. This includes:
 - The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme
 - The Farming Investment Fund
 - The Platinum Jubilee Village Halls Fund
- Cost accrued before the approval of the grant funding
- We cannot support projects or costs where there is a statutory duty to provide them.
- Businesses which have received grant payments that equal the maximum subsidy levels as set out in the Subsidy Act 2022.

Projects that include energy/building improvements to premises that also function primarily as domestic accommodation cannot be supported.

Subsidy control

Grants are subject to UK Subsidy Allowance rules.

To be eligible for a grant, all applicant businesses must demonstrate that they meet the UK Subsidy Allowance rules by completing the MFA declaration – grants can only be awarded to compliant businesses.

It is a requirement of UK Subsidy Allowance rules that a grant may only be awarded when it produces an incentive effect. The grant is considered to have an incentive effect if it enables the beneficiary to carry out activities or projects which would not have been carried out in the absence of the grant aid. Grant funding may only be awarded if it has an incentive effect. It shall be considered to have an incentive effect if, before work on the project has begun, the intermediary has verified that documentation prepared by the applicant establishes one or more of the following criteria:

- A material increase in the size of the project due to the aid.
- A material increase in the scope of the project due to the aid.
- A material increase in the total amount spent by the beneficiary on the project due to the aid.
- A material increase in the speed of completion of the project concerned;

or;

- That the project would not have been carried out in West Oxfordshire in the
- absence of the aid.

Business identified in which are not compliant with UK Subsidy Allowance will not be awarded a grant, even if their project proposal is eligible.

Data protection statement

The Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA18) contains six data protection principles with an overarching accountability responsibility for data controllers to demonstrate compliance with these principles. This means personal data must be processed:

- Lawfully, fairly and transparently
- For specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not processed in a manner other than the purpose it was collected
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Accurate and where necessary kept up to date Not kept longer than necessary
- With the appropriate security and protection

Please read the data protection statement below and then tick to confirm you have read and understood.

By completing and submitting an application form you are agreeing for the data in the application form to be stored and processed in accordance with the current data protection legislation. The Council will use your information for the purpose of the Rural England Prosperity Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The Council may publish details about this application on our website (this

may include all or some of the project and applicant details) as part of our efforts to promote the scheme to others.

Your information may also be shared with other government departments and agencies for the purpose of fraud prevention. The application and evaluation of grant funding is also subject to audit and reviews by internal auditors who may need to access the information you submit in your application.

The Council will not give or use information about your company for any other purpose, unless the law allows the Council to do so. For further information please see our Privacy Notices. We will not hold your information for longer than is necessary. We will hold the majority of your information for three years after the programme closure (currently expected to be 2028), unless we have a legitimate reason to hold this for longer, for instance in defending any legal proceedings brought by any person or body in relation to your application or any funding we have provided, or as required by law or any relevant code of practice.

If any information that we hold about you is, or becomes, inaccurate or incomplete, please tell us and we will correct it.

Application process

Submit an application form outlining:

- Answer all the questions as fully as possible.
- Project aims and challenges addressed
- Alignment with REPF priorities, outcome and outputs -
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus-updates-for-2025-to-2026>

Application checklist

Please prepare the following documents in advance:

- At least three written quotes for each capital item
- Company's details on letter-headed paper
- Business account details and the six most recent months of bank statements (which you would like the grant paid into)
- For new businesses or self-employed applicants:
 - Latest tax return,
 - Management accounts, or
 - A statement from an accountant outlining expected income and operating expenses
- Tenancy or lease agreement and written consent from the landlord (if applicable)
- Schedule of proposed works
- Business rates account number (if applicable)

- VAT registration number or Unique Taxpayer Reference (UTR)
- Business rate number
- Evidence of secured match funding (bank statements or offer letters)
- All relevant permissions (e.g., planning, listed building, leaseholder consent)

Stage 1 – Submit Application and Documents

The application window will be open from **Monday 15 September 2025 – Friday 26 September 2025**

Applicants should complete the online application form and supporting documentation listed above.

Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Stage 2 – Assessment

- Applications will first undergo an initial sift by the Economic Development Team. We may contact you if we need to clarify any information. Please note that not all applications will progress beyond this stage.
- Those that pass the initial sift will be reviewed by an Assessment Panel, which includes specialist officers and the Executive Member for Economic Development (see scoring matrix below).
- Decisions are final and cannot be appealed.

Stage 3 – Grant Offer

- Successful applicants will receive a grant agreement.
- You must not begin any work before receiving this agreement.

Stage 4 – Complete the Project

- Purchases must be completed within 3 months of the grant award.
- Grants are paid in arrears, so you must cover full costs upfront.

Stage 5 – Provide Evidence of Expenditure

Submit within evidence within 1 month of purchase:

- Invoices must be dated after the grant award
- Matching bank statements
- Only listed and approved items will be reimbursed
- No cash purchases; all payments must be traceable (e.g., card or bank transfer)

Stage 6 – Receive Funds

- Grants paid via BACS to the business's commercial trading account.
- Personal or current accounts are not eligible.

Stage 7 – Feedback and Monitoring

- Successful applicants must complete a feedback survey.
- You **will** be contacted for follow-up **and** outcomes monitoring.

Scoring Matrix – Rural Enterprise Growth Grant

Category	Criteria	Weight	Scoring Guidance (0–5 Scale)
1. REPF Outputs & Outcomes	Strength and clarity of the outputs/outcomes the project will deliver; measurable impact; alignment with REPF indicators	35%	0 = None stated or unclear 1–2 = Limited relevance or weak evidence 3 = Moderate alignment with REPF goals 4 = Strong and relevant outcomes 5 = Excellent, measurable outcomes with clear delivery plan
2. Strategic Fit	Alignment with REPF priorities and West Oxfordshire District Council Corporate Plan	20%	0 = No alignment 1–2 = Weak or generic link 3 = Reasonable fit with one or more priorities 4 = Strong strategic alignment 5 = Excellent fit with REPF and Council priorities
3. Deliverability	Readiness to proceed, status of permissions/approvals, risk of delay, and ability to complete by February 2026	20%	0 = Major barriers, unclear timescales 1–2 = Some permissions missing or risk high 3 = Permissions in progress, some risk 4 = Project mostly ready 5 = Fully ready to start, low risk
4. Financial Viability	Clarity of budget, match funding status, funding shortfall, and value for money	15%	0 = No/unclear budget 1–2 = Partial budget, weak value for money 3 = Budget OK, match funding likely 4 = Clear budget, strong match 5 = Excellent financial case and value
5. Environmental & Social Impact	Contribution to Net Zero and wider environmental goals; inclusive or positive impact on protected groups	10%	0 = No consideration or negative impact 1–2 = Generic response 3 = Some benefits noted 4 = Good contribution to environment/inclusion

Category	Criteria	Weight	Scoring Guidance (0–5 Scale)
			5 = Strong dual impact (Net Zero + equalities)

Pass/Fail Criteria (Separate Check)

- Required supporting documents provided
- Planning permissions and consents (where relevant)
- Match funding at or above 25% (unless exempt)

Total Weighted Score: /100%

Applications scoring **below 60%** may be declined or subject to further clarification.

Standard conditions for all grant awards

We may add extra conditions to any grant if we consider it necessary. These conditions will be determined using a risk matrix, in consultation with the Cabinet member for any projects that appear to present a medium or high risk. They will then be presented to the head of service for consideration.

West Oxfordshire has delegated authority to remove any agreed grant conditions.

We will confirm applicants have met all the conditions before making any payment. Failure to meet all the agreed conditions may delay payment or, in extreme cases, result in us withdrawing our grant offer.

By applying, you confirm that:

- You have the authority to act on behalf of the organisation
- Your project will not commence before grant approval
- You will sign up to our standard Grant Agreement terms

Projects must demonstrate:

- Clear alignment with REPF goals
- Value for money and feasibility
- Deliverability within the REPF timeframe (deadline 28 February 2026)

Payment of grants

We will only pay towards costs incurred after the date of the council's decision to award a grant.

Grants will be paid in arrears and only upon receipt of the required evidence. You must submit your evidence within one month of making the purchase.

The following conditions apply:

- Invoices must be dated after the grant has been awarded.
- Matching bank statements must be provided to verify payment along with receipts and invoices)
- Only the items listed and approved in the grant offer will be reimbursed.
- Cash purchases will not be accepted – all payments must be traceable (e.g., by card or bank transfer).

Project Updates and Reporting

We will request a project update and will require before and after project photos to be uploaded, along with a short report on your project's outputs and outcomes.

 Email your form and supporting documentation to: **business@westoxon.gov.uk**

 **Deadline: 5pm on 26 September 2025**

For questions or further guidance, please contact:

 **business@westoxon.gov.uk**