

North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund (£1,000 to £25,000)

Guidance Notes

The following guidance notes provide information to those interested in applying for funding from North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund.

North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC) are launching a Rural Business Grants Fund to fund capital projects for small businesses that will help to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy.

This programme will provide capital grant funding for eligible businesses by providing one off grants of between £1,000 and £25,000 at a 50% intervention rate.

All grants are available at a 50% intervention rate. This means you will be required to pay for at least half of the costs of the project that you are applying grant funding for.

These grant values are approximations. The actual value of grant awards made may be reduced depending on the number of applications received.

The total grant pot for North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grant Fund is a maximum of £117,272 for financial year 2023/24.

Will my business be eligible to apply for a North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund?

To meet the eligibility criteria, your business must be:

- A Small /Micro /SME mid-sized enterprise employing between 1 and 249 staff;
- Based in North West Leicestershire i.e. you must pay business rates and/or council tax to North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC);
- Located in “**A RURAL AREA for the purposes of REPF**”, as defined by the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs Rural England Prosperity Fund eligibility [MAGIC map](#), (Please note that businesses in parts of Bardon, Coalville, Hugglescote, Thringstone and Whitwick do not qualify as rural and will not be eligible for North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund - Further advice on using MAGIC map are included at the end of these Guidance Notes);
- Be trading as a business whose company type is either: Limited Liability, Limited Liability Partnership, Partnership, Sole Trader, Franchise, Social Enterprise or Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee;
- Not have applied for other UK Shared Prosperity Funding for your project;

And

- Be in good standing with NWLDC. For example, fully paid up on any money owed to the Council such as business rates.

Farm businesses may be eligible to apply for diversification projects away from traditional farming activities.

Note that this grant cannot be used to fund projects or investments that would be eligible for funding under the following DEFRA programmes:

- [DEFRA: Farming in Protected Landscapes programme](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Investment Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Equipment and Technology Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Transformation Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund](#)
- Any other DEFRA funded programmes for direct farming activities including contractors that carries out an agricultural or horticultural as a service.

Please contact the Economic Regeneration Team on email at businessgrowthgrants@nwleicestershire.gov.uk if you would like to discuss your eligibility.

Will I need to create new jobs?

No, the North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund does not require applicant to create new jobs.

However, applications that do create new rural employment or apprenticeship opportunities will be looked upon favourably. Equally grant funded projects that contribute to carbon reduction, increased tourism (including day trips and overnight stays) and nature recovery will be encouraged.

Who can apply?

Any individual, company or partnership that meets the Eligibility Criteria can apply. If a company or partnership is making the application, the person completing the form must be authorised to apply on behalf of that business.

If the grant application is successful the applicant will enter into a legal agreement which will set out specific and general terms and conditions relating to the North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund. This agreement will be between the business and NWLDC.

When can I apply?

The North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund will open for applications from Tuesday 2 August 2023 for four months and will close to new applications at 17:00 on Thursday 30 November 2023. The scheme may close early, subject to the availability of funding.

We expect all projects to be completed as early as possible following you accepting your grant offer. At the latest, all grant awards must have been claimed within 12 months or no later than **31 January 2025**.

Any grant claims after this date will not be paid.

How can I use the money?

Grants are intended to fund investment projects that can demonstrate business growth, tourism and visitor economy development, contribute towards net zero or rural diversification. You will be required to demonstrate how the planned investment will support your business to grow. Examples of what the grant could be used for include:

- Purchasing new equipment to modernise and improve the efficiency of your business
- Increasing energy efficiency or increasing productivity through automation
- Improving to your business premises
- Creating event venues or farm tourism facilities such as accommodation, wedding venues and leisure facilities
- Developing a local tourist attractions and local visitor experiences
- Investing in energy efficiency or achieving zero carbon
- Investing in new technology, innovation, IT or telecommunications
- Diversification of farm businesses outside of agriculture to other commercial or business uses.
- Creating of multi-functional rural business hubs providing shared workspace for rural businesses.

Grant applications will not be considered for:

- Non capital expenditure
- Salaries / wages
- Agents and legal fees
- Consultancy fees
- Rent or rates
- Council fees
- Stock
- The purchase of vehicles

Applications for retrospective projects are also not eligible for funding.

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- [DEFRA: Farming Investment Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Equipment and Technology Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Transformation Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund](#)
- Any other DEFRA funded programmes for direct farming activities including contractors that carries out an agricultural or horticultural as a service.

What will the application process involve?

Applications for the grant will be a simplified one stage application which can be found [here](#).

Once you have submitted your application we will review it to make sure what you are proposing meets the agreed eligibility criteria.

The application will ask you to provide some details of your business and the nature of the investment project that you are proposing. You will also need to provide a breakdown of the costs involved in the project, the sources of finance for the investment and what economic benefits your project will achieve.

In line with Subsidy Control Act 2022, we will ask you whether you have received financial support from any public sector organisation within the last three years. There are limits to the financial support that can be offered to individual private sector organisations and we need to make sure that you and the council stay within the law.

For further information on the Subsidy Control Act 2022 is available to view online:
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/23/enacted

The application will ask you to clarify your project costs and ask you to outline a plan for the investment project, such as:

- Stages in the project and dates
- How the project will meet the criteria of the grant fund
- The key people involved in your business and in the investment project.

You will be asked to provide copies of a number of documents that will be important during the review of your application such as:

- Financial accounts
- Confirmation of other sources of finance.

We will also ask to see copies of documents related to your business premises, such as your lease agreement or title document.

All applications must be completed in full and all of the required information supplied. Incomplete applications will be rejected.

Can the grants help pay for a project or investment that has already started?

No. The application process will require you to describe the nature of the investment project that you are planning.

You will need to be able to show that the project could not go ahead without the financial support from NWLDC.

How do I submit my application?

Please send your completed application to businessgrowthgrants@nwleicestershire.gov.uk.

Is there support filling in my application?

For more information please contact the Economic Regeneration Team on email at businessgrowthgrants@nwleicestershire.gov.uk.

How will North West Leicestershire District Council decide whether my application is successful?

Your grant application, along with all of the requested supporting documentation, will be reviewed by a grants' assessor. We will check to make sure your business meets the agreed eligibility criteria and that your investment project is in line with the intended purpose of the grant scheme.

Your application will be considered by a grants officer who, if your application meets the criteria of the fund, will present your application on your behalf to a panel for determination.

There will be frequent panel meetings scheduled to help speed up the grant application process.

The decision of the panel will be final. There is no opportunity to appeal against the panels' decision. If your application is not successful, we will give you feedback on the reasons behind the panels' decision.

We will keep you updated on the progress of your application throughout the assessment. We aim to give you a decision on your application within four weeks (twenty working days) of receiving your full and complete application.

Should we require any further supporting information for your grant application we will notify you as early as possible. While waiting for you to provide any additional information required this may delay us determining your application.

When will the grant be paid?

Once your application has been reviewed and approved by the grants' panel, you will be asked to sign to confirm your acceptance of the conditions that will apply to the grant offer.

Once you have signed the grant agreement, we will expect the project to go ahead. Grant funding will only be paid once we have received evidence of eligible expenditure related to project.

This will be set out in your grant offer letter and will include, but not limited to, quotes, invoices and bank statements evidencing payment.

Will you pay VAT?

If your business is VAT registered, the grant can not be used to pay for VAT.

If your business is not VAT registered and you are including VAT in your grant request, you will need to provide a letter from a professionally qualified independent accountant to confirm that you are not VAT registered alongside your application form and as part of your supporting documentation.

What records do I need to maintain?

In addition to your usual accounting, you will be required to maintain complete financial records of your project. We will use the records as evidence to pay you the grant and monitor how your project is progressing.

As a minimum, for the duration of expenditure on your project, we insist that you maintain records of all of the following items associated with your project:

- Quotes for works/items
- All invoices
- All receipts of payments including any credit card payments.
- Bank statements showing payments associated with your project.
- Presentation of these documents must be produced in a clear and satisfactory manner and must be related to the project being funded.

It is your responsibility to maintain these records and you may be requested to present them to the Council as evidence for your grant claim in a clear and concise manner. If you do not, we look to clawback any grant payment.

We will also issue you with a letter informing of you of your Subsidy Control obligations.

We will monitor the progress of your project and the impact on your business and the economy. You may be required to participate in press and media coverage to promote the grant and the support you have received from NWLDC.

Is there a deadline?

Yes, as mentioned earlier the North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund will be split into two rounds. The fund will open for applications from Tuesday 1 August 2023 and close to new applications at 17:00 on Thursday 30 November 2023.

Applications received after this date will not be considered.

The scheme may close early, subject to the availability of funding.

Up-to-date information about this deadline for submission of applications will be provided on our website [here](#).

Applications will be considered on a 'first come first served' basis.

Can you take back the money after you've granted it?

Yes. During the application process, you will be asked to explain the nature of your investment and how it meets the eligibility criteria of the fund.

We will monitor the progress of your project to ensure the investment is made in accordance with your application and that you comply with all other conditions of the grant scheme.

We will consider whether to seek to recover some or all of the grant paid if you do not meet the conditions agreed with you when the grant was approved or if you fail to provide evidence of your projects expenditure or monitoring requirements.

Are there any other restrictions?

We've already explained that you'll be asked to confirm that the grant applied for will not result in breaking the laws about organisations receiving public money.

We will require your business and your investment proposal to comply with all regulations that apply to your business and the project for which the grant is requested.

If your project involves work on a property, in addition to planning permission, you will be expected to comply with all other usual legislation such as Building Regulations.

As mentioned previously, that this grant cannot be used to fund projects or investments that would be eligible for funding under the following DEFRA programmes:

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- [DEFRA: Farming Investment Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Equipment and Technology Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Farming Transformation Fund](#)
- [DEFRA: Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund](#)
- Any other DEFRA funded programmes for direct farming activities including contractors that carries out an agricultural or horticultural as a service.

What if I change my mind?

You will be free to withdraw from the application process at any stage.

As mentioned before, once your application has been reviewed and approved, you will be asked to sign to confirm your acceptance of the conditions that will apply to the grant offer. Once you have signed the grant agreement, we will expect the project to go ahead. Grant funding will only be paid once we have received evidence of eligible expenditure related to project. This will be set out in your grant offer letter and can include, but not limited to, quotes, invoices and bank statements evidencing payment.

Once you have received the grant you will be expected to comply with all conditions set out in the agreement between your business and North West Leicestershire District Council. As mentioned above, there will be a risk of clawback in certain situations.

Will there be further funding in the future?

Possibly.

A second and final round of North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund may be launched in 2024, subject to the availability of funds.

We will update our website should further funding become available. However, there is no guarantee that there will be future rounds of North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund.

You are advised to submit your application as early as you can to avoid missing out. This is a competitive programme and grants applications will be assessed on a first come, first served basis.

Who should I contact?

Please contact Economic Regeneration Team via email on businessgrowthgrants@nwleicestershire.gov.uk or alternatively call the team on 01530 454609.

Advice on how to use the DEFRA MAGIC map.

The following is step by step guide on how to access the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs MAGIC map to confirm Rural England Prosperity Fund eligibility status. As previously mentioned, that businesses in parts of Bardon, Coalville, Thringstone and Whitwick do not qualify as rural and will not be eligible for North West Leicestershire Rural Business Grants Fund

- Visit [MAGIC \(defra.gov.uk\)](https://magic.defra.gov.uk)
- Click “Get Started”
- Click on ‘+’ under “Administrative Geographies”
- Click on ‘+’ under “Other Administrative Boundaries”
- Select the box next to “Rural England Prosperity Fund”
- Enter your place, postcode or coordinates at the top of the page
- Zoom in to your businesses location
- Select the ‘i’ information button in the toolbar at the top of the screen
- Click the location of your business to identify if your business is based in an eligible rural area.