

## Huntingdonshire District Council Rural England Prosperity Fund Business Grants Application Guidance

Part 1: How to complete your application	Page 1-2
Part 2: How to submit your application	Page 2
Part 3: Guidance to support a successful application	Page 3-12
Appendix 1 : Procurement Guidelines	Page 13-14

### Part 1: How to complete your application

We strongly recommend you read through this guidance along with the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) before you start an application form.

**You must check your postcode before starting an application.** This is to ensure that the project is taking place in an eligible rural area as defined by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and set out on their mapping portal. For Rural Fund purposes, rural areas are:

- towns, villages and hamlets with populations below 10,000 and the wider countryside.
- market or 'hub towns' with populations of up to 30,000 that serve their surrounding rural areas as centres of employment and in providing services.

You can find a link to [Defra's Magic Map](#) and how to use it.

The FAQs include important information, including what costs you can include in your application, and what can not be funded. Please check that all of the items that you wish to include in your application are eligible for funding.

If you are satisfied your project is eligible and meets all of the criteria, please ensure that you have all of your supporting evidence and paperwork ready to upload in the Evidence section. This will save you time. You can save your application as you submit it, please make a note of your submission reference.

The application form will not allow you to submit until all mandatory fields and document evidence have been completed.

The Council is expecting high numbers of applications and we cannot seek clarifications/additional information from applicants after the application has been submitted.

If you are unsure on what information to provide, or how to answer a question, please contact [ruralgrants@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:ruralgrants@huntingdonshire.gov.uk)

#### **Fraudulent Applications**

By submitting the application form, as the business owner, you are signing a declaration form to confirm that you are the liable party, that the business is eligible in accordance with the scheme conditions and to confirm the accuracy of all information within the application form.

The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud. Any business caught falsifying their records to gain additional grant money will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to claw back as may any grants paid in error.

## Part 2: How to submit your application

Please complete the REPF Grant Application Form hosted on the HDC website.

For those applying for >£50,001 you will be required to attend (virtually) the Grants Panel Review Meeting to present your project and answer questions the panel may have. The Grants Manager will contact applicants for whom this is applicable.

This is a rolling application process until the fund is fully allocated. You may submit your application as soon as you have all the required information for your application.

We cannot accept incomplete applications and we strongly encourage applicants to speak with the Grants Manager prior to starting an application.

## Part 3: Guidance to support a successful application

### About you

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You will be asked to enter details about your company including the Companies House number, VAT or Unique Tax Reference, Business Rates number if you have along with your sector and industry classification code.

There are additional questions relating to the REPF including Subsidy Control and being a Linked Business.

#### ***Subsidy Control***

You will need to declare all grant funding received in the last 3 years.

The Subsidy Control Act 2022 (the “Act”) came into force on 4 January 2023. The Act sets out the UK’s prevailing subsidy control rules.

Payments received by the applicant from any business grant schemes administered by local authorities or anything similar from the government, for all business properties they are responsible for, counts as Subsidy Allowance.

Full details can be read here [UK subsidy control statutory guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/uk-subsidy-control-statutory-guidance)

To qualify for this grant your business must not have received more than £315,000 of subsidy allowance in the last three years.

#### ***Linked Business***

Businesses are considered to be linked when:

- one business holds a majority of the shareholders’ or members’ voting rights in another business.
- one business is entitled to appoint or remove a majority of the administrative, management or supervisory body of another.
- a contract between the business, or a provision in the memorandum or articles of association of one of the businesses, enables one to exercise a dominant influence over the other.
- one business is able, by agreement, to exercise sole control over a majority of shareholders’ or members’ voting rights in another.

You will need to provide this information for your business and all linked businesses:

- 1 Number of employees
- 2 Turnover; and

- 3 You must submit latest financial accounts for all linked businesses. If you are part of a group structure (a parent or subsidiary company) you must also provide consolidated group accounts.

## About your project

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When answering the questions, please be succinct. There is a maximum of 500 words to enable us to easily read what you are applying for and why.

Your answer here will help us understand exactly what your project is, how you intend to deliver it within the timescales, how you are match-funding the 50%, how you have considered the environment and what your project will deliver.

### **Please describe your company activity and the objective of your project and what you are seeking to achieve. How does this meet the Rural England Prosperity Fund?**

Tell us about your business; what services/products do you currently offer? How do you operate? Describe your project to us; for example, what will you buy with the grant, and what will it enable you to do differently? What impact does your project have on the natural environment?

Your application must clearly explain and demonstrate what your project is for, what is the need for this project and how you have evidenced the need.

As a reminder, examples of projects that meet the priorities of the grant are given below with the following example case studies provided by Defra:

#### ***Farm diversification - development of glamping site on farm***

A former LEADER farm diversification project received £15,500 for glamping facilities. This capitalised on the growing demand for tourism in natural locations. It led to extra business for local pubs, restaurants, and rural tourist attractions. It also had positive environmental impacts, showing visitors the local wildlife. The accommodation was low impact, using renewable energy and tents made from natural materials. The new stream of income meant the farm employed seasonal workers, supporting the local economy.

#### ***Expanding furniture making business***

A former Growth Programme project received funding of £40,000. This funded new machinery to meet increasing demand. The furniture making business increased in-house manufacturing and gained new contracts. This led to the creation of 2-3 full-time equivalent jobs.

Note that this list is indicative only and not exhaustive.

Explain how the purchase of the grant items will result in **at least** one of the priorities below for the REPF being met:

REPF Investment Priorities	Intervention	Project Examples	Indicative Outcomes to include in your application
<p><b>Supporting Rural Businesses</b></p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <p><b>Creating and safeguarding jobs</b></p> <p><b>Increasing private sector investment in growth enhancing activities</b></p>	<p>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</p> <p>Funding (capital grants) for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas.</p> <p>To develop and expand sustainable rural tourism and visitor economy through experiences</p>	<p>Farm shop expanding their retail area, to allow them to offer a wider selection of fresh produce, or home delivery service.</p> <p>An agricultural business that has planning in place to offer tourism facilities that may have been delayed owing to Covid or lack of capital funding.</p> <p>A manufacturing business that is able to offer a different service or product line by purchasing a new piece of machinery for their factory.</p> <p>Purchase of equipment for food processing for non-farmer-owned businesses. For example: purchasing new process and packaging machinery such as brewing equipment and onsite vending machines.</p> <p>A leisure provider purchasing new equipment/machinery to offer a new experience to local customers.</p> <p>An existing tourism business purchasing a Shepherd's hut to complement and enhance their existing service.</p> <p>Creation and expansion of rural leisure and tourism businesses. For example: creating event venues or farm tourism facilities such as accommodation, wedding venues and leisure facilities.</p>	<p>Jobs created;</p> <p>Jobs safeguarded;</p> <p>Number of new businesses created;</p> <p>Number of businesses adopting new products</p> <p>Number of businesses with improved productivity</p> <p>Number of businesses experiencing growth</p>

### **Other businesses in the local area**

You must consider the local implications and whether your project would directly take business away from other local businesses. We may not be able to fund your project if we believe it will have a negative impact on other local businesses.

You should identify any other local businesses offering the same or similar activities, services or products proposed by your project. Tell us if your project will offer something different to what is already available or whether it will generate new trade and not simply displace their business.

### **Please describe how you intend to deliver the project before 31 March 2025**

Describe the timescales of delivering this project, eg when you plan to start your project. This will usually mean when you plan to purchase the items with the grant funding. Remember that we are unable to fund anything that has been purchased prior to a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) being issued and signed, and you will need to provide evidence that the items you use the grant for have not been purchased prior to this at your final claim stage.

You should tell us here when you expect that your project will be complete and you are able to submit a claim for your grant.

Your project will be classed as 'complete' when you have purchased the items which have been approved for grant funding, paid for them, and the payment can be seen as being paid on a bank statement.

If you have a project plan then please consider uploading this as additional supporting documentation.

### **Does your project require planning or licences?**

#### ***Statutory consents***

Please ensure that you have the permission and consent in place to carry out your project.

If you have less than 12 months left on a lease, we may ask you to contact your landlord to confirm that a further lease will be made available.

#### ***Freeholder permissions***

If you are undertaking works on a building that you are the leaseholder for, you must provide two pieces of evidence with your application:

- A copy of your tenancy or leasehold agreement
- A letter or email from the freeholder to confirm that the works are allowable.

### **Planning or Licences**

You must ensure you have any necessary statutory consent in place that are required to complete your project. This could include (but is not limited to):

- Full Planning Permission
- Change of Use permission from the Local Planning Authority
- Building control
- Environmental Health consent
- Licencing
- Listed Building Consent (where applicable)

Applicants must ensure that any necessary building/ planning or other statutory consents are obtained prior to commencing the project.

We are unable to process grants where planning permission is required and has not yet been approved by the Local Planning Authority, or a decision is imminent but not final.

If your application involves changing the use of a building, or eligible building works, you should provide a letter or email from the Local Planning Authority to confirm that planning permission is not required for the works. If you are doing any works to a Listed Building, you must provide a copy of the Listed Building Consent for the works.

**Please describe the outcomes and outputs that will be delivered as a result of this project. Please refer to the outcomes and outputs guidance and detail the numbers of jobs created or safeguarded, how it will benefit other businesses or suppliers or the local community.**

Use this space to explain to us what impact the project may have on your business. There are many outcomes that your project could include, but you should focus on the **economic** outcomes to your business and the local community. You should think of your own answer, however some examples include:

- An increase in turnover or profit in the business
- Employing a new Full Time Employee (FTE)
- Enabling staff to learn new skills
- Making significant cost savings to the business, that therefore increases profit
- Increasing the number of customers or visitors to the business
- Demonstrating an impact on the supply chain in the local rural economy
- Increasing visitors and tourism to Huntingdonshire
- Increasing footfall
- Providing a better quality of product/service (explain what the improvements will be)
- Increasing the amount of product you can produce, or customers you can serve.
- Implementing new innovative processes or technologies to your business.

Please give us as much information as you can about the outcomes it will provide, including any financial projections, increase in customers, or percentage increase in production.

Please provide the number of jobs and outputs clearly as these are used to evaluate any grant we offer achieves value for money. For job creation, the explanation and examples are below.

1 x FTE is a minimum of 30 hours per week.

For example, a person working 15 hours a week would be 0.5FTE and a person working 30 hours a week for 3 months would be 0.25FTE.

FTEs include business partners and directors.

View the [REPF Outcomes and Outputs Guidance](#).

### **Why is a grant required to deliver this project?**

Please explain why you have decided to do this project. Is grant funding the only reason why this project has not progressed? How will this grant enable you to provide a new product line or service and support your business growth? How have you identified a customer need? What additional services or products will it enable you to deliver to your customers? Has Covid-19 prevented you from growing your business?

This funding is for new and additional products or services. It is not funding to pay loans, debts or ongoing costs incurred by the business due to loss of income.

### **What will you purchase with this grant?**

For each item that you wish to purchase using grant funding, complete the table using information from the quotes you have obtained.

The quote reference should be used to label each of the quotes you submit to us, so we can clearly see which quote relates to each item. You may wish to do this by changing the file name of the quote to the quote reference. Please make sure it is clear to us which quote relates to each item in your application.



Example:

Item	Item Name	Quote Ref	Supplier Name	Cost (exc VAT) £	VAT amount £	Preferred supplier	Hunts supplier
1	New egg vending machine	Q1-1	ABC Catering supplies LTD	799.99	159.99	Yes	Yes
		Q1-2	Smith and Jones Catering	849.50	169.9	No	No
		Q1-3					
2	New signage for farm shop	Q2-1	XYZ Signs Ltd	125.00	0	Yes	Yes

**Please note the following information about your quotes in the evidence section, you must:**

- Upload 2 or 3 quotes depending on the value of each item from different suppliers, independent to your business. See Appendix 1 for procurement values.
- Ensure quotes have details of the supplier, a full description of the items, VAT breakdown, and be dated within the past 3 months. They need to be on supplier headed note paper, signed and dated. We will carry out a desk review of all suppliers to verify their existence and business.
- Ensure all quotes are 'like for like'. If delivery charges are included in one quote, they should also be specified on the other(s).
- You should aim to have at least one quote from a Huntingdonshire based business, where possible.

Procurement guidance is set out in Appendix 1.

If your business is VAT registered, or VAT is recoverable from HMRC for another reason, you must **not** include VAT in your grant amount requested.

If your business is not VAT registered, you can include VAT in your grant amount requested.

You must ensure that the total grant amount requested is between the minimum and maximum values of grants available. The minimum is £5,000 and maximum is £75,000.

The grant can only fund items that are purchased in full by the applicant, and therefore payments towards deposits or hire purchase are not eligible.

If you are uncertain if your expenditure counts as one item please contact the Grants Manager [ruralgrants@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:ruralgrants@huntingdonshire.gov.uk)

# Evidence Section

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There are 7 questions where you are required to complete – not all are mandatory and these are detailed below.

You must tick each box in the question to confirm that it has been provided or not. The boxes are either mandatory or optional and the form will not allow you to proceed if you do not have the documents required for that field.

## 1 Quotations (mandatory)

Ensure you have uploaded all supplier quotations detailing what the grant will purchase as set out in the question 'what will you purchase with this grant'.

## 2 Financial accounts (mandatory)

We require the last two years of full audited or unaudited accounts.

You must make sure that you upload the full set of accounts, including profit and loss, balance sheet and cover, title and introduction pages.

We can also accept your latest tax returns.

## 3 How is this project being funded? (mandatory)

You need to provide evidence of the match funding with your application. Match funding can be from a variety of different sources; your business current or savings account, personal savings, a business loan or a personal loan from family/friends.

Acceptable evidence of match funding includes; a copy of a bank statement or savings account (online screen grabs are acceptable) or a loan agreement. Please detail:

- Where the funding is coming from (e.g. the bank)
- How much is available (this must be a minimum amount required to complete your project)
- Include the date it is available
- Be clear that this funding is available for your business, (e.g. a letter of authorisation)

The match funding must be secured and in place by the time you submit your application. It cannot come from future sales turnover that you haven't yet generated or from the proceeds of a future transaction eg selling some equipment or land.

## 4 Permissions, Consents and Licences (optional upload)

If your project requires these then please upload the relevant consents as set out in the above guidance.

If your project requires planning permission and you have not yet submitted a planning application to HDC, do not submit your grant application until you have done so as we are unable to commit funds to projects that are dependent on planning permission to proceed.

### **5 Case Studies, Market Research or Feasibility Studies (optional upload)**

Returning to the why your project is needed - upload any documentation you have to support your application

### **6 Project Team Experience (mandatory field)**

Please describe the people managing and delivering this project and what their experience and success in delivering these type of projects is. Remember this is part of the scoring assessment.

If you have any documentation to support this, please upload it here (documents are not mandatory however the completion of this field is)

### **7 Plans, Photographs, Maps and Drawings (optional upload)**

If you have any of these documents to support your project then please upload them here

## **Finance Section**

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Please complete the name, account number and sort-code of the business bank that the grant will be paid into. **Please note we will only make payment into a Business Account and not a Personal Account**

These details will be credit and fraud checked for audit purposes.

## **Declaration**

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By submitting the application you are declaring that you:

1. Are in agreement with and can meet the requirements of the REPF grant.
2. Are the business owner, partner or company director with due authority to submit the application.
3. Have fully completed the application form and submitted all additional documents as requested
4. Will enter into a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) with HDC to deliver this project.
5. Will complete the project and grant funds are spent in the timelines submitted within this application and defined in the GFA or grant funding will be withdrawn.
6. Retain all documentation relating to the REFP Programme for a period of 6 years, providing us with any documentation, information or explanations as we may reasonably require in order to establish that the grant has been used only for the purpose specified in the GFA.

The Council reserves the right to recover all or part of the grant it has provided if:

- The business is sold or ceases to trade for whatever reason within a 6 month period from receipt of the grant
- The business relocates outside the boundaries of the Council within a 6 month period from receipt of the grant
- Information provided in the application form or other correspondence including invoices, is found to be substantially incorrect, misleading or incomplete.
- Project monitoring Reports are not completed as per the Grant Funding Agreement
- Funding is not accounted for and used by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025.
  
- Local authorities will not accept deliberate manipulation and will work collaboratively across the region and nationally to share intelligence and resources to detect fraud.
- Any business found to be giving false information in order to gain a grant will be investigated. The Council will recover money paid in error and fraudulent claims will be prosecuted in the courts.

If Project Monitoring Reports are not returned as per the GFA, the GM will request a meeting with the Grantee to understand any issues or concerns. These will need to be resolved before any invoice submitted will be paid. A deadline should be set to review these actions (this will be dependent on the length and complexity of the Project). An audit trail of emails and/ or telephone meeting notes should be kept to demonstrate that the partner has had a fair chance to resolve the issue.

The concern will be noted on the Risk Log and brought to the attention of HDC's Governance Board of the UK Shared and Rural Prosperity Fund which includes the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority.

If the issue is not resolved within the deadline as set by HDC's Grants Manager then the grant payment will be withheld.

**In the case that the problem cannot be resolved, the GFA will be terminated**

## Appendix 1: Procurement Statement

To ensure that all grant funding offers good Value for Money the Council will require applicants to obtain quotations as set out below:

Value of single item or service	Evidence required to show value for money
£0-£9,999	At least 2 quotes or screenshots of catalogue references
£10,000-£49,999	3 written quotes from relevant suppliers of goods, works and/or services required to complete the project
Over £50,000	Formal tender process will be required

**You should ensure that wherever possible one of your quotes for each item is from a supplier based in Huntingdonshire.**

Wherever possible we expect applicants to progress the best value quote – that means getting the best value on the market and so you are expected to use the cheapest supplier for each project item. Where a more expensive quote has been selected, there should be sound justification provided.

If the project requires a specialist piece of machinery or equipment where there are limited numbers of suppliers, please state this on your application.

A quote should be on headed paper from suppliers that is signed and dated. We will be unable to process your application or make an offer of grant funding without multiple quotes for each item.

All quotes or tenders **must**:

- come from different, independent suppliers who are not linked to each other or to your business through shared ownership or control;
- be sourced independently by you or your agent. A supplier cannot source quotes from other suppliers on your behalf; and

Each quote should include the following details:

- a detailed and itemised breakdown of costs;
- the supplier's business name, address (including postcode) and telephone number;
- the suppliers company number, VAT number and website;
- all quotes should be 'like for like'. This means that they are comparable with each other in terms of quality, size, quantity, units, delivery charges and specification for every item. Wherever possible, the items should be for the same specification or make and model;
- have been obtained within the last **3** months and still be valid; and
- be addressed to the applicant business (containing the business name, business or project address, if different, and postcode).

Applicants should ensure that there is no conflict of interest when selecting potential suppliers of goods and services. Conflict of interest refers to situations in which personal interest (which may include financial interests) may compromise, or have the appearance of, or potential for,

compromising the selection of a supplier. Examples of conflicts of interest include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Having a financial interest (e.g. holding share or options) in a potential tenderer, or any entity involved in any tendering consortium;
- Being employed by (as a staff member or volunteer), or providing services to any potential tenderer;
- Being a member of a potential tenderer's Management / Executive Board;
- Receiving any kind of monetary payment, or non-monetary gift or incentive (including hospitality) from any tenderer or its representatives;
- Having a close member of your family (which term includes unmarried partners) or personal friends who fall into any of the categories outlined above;
- Having any other close relationship (current or historical) with any potential tenderer;
- No prior commitment to suppliers should be undertaken prior to funding being confirmed.

Any costs that have been committed to prior to the approval date will not be eligible for support.

If the quotes or tenders don't meet the requirements shown above, your application may be invalidated completely or we may remove the item from consideration if it is not supported by valid quotes or tenders.

If you have not provided the required number of quotes or references to catalogue listings for any item included in your project costs, please explain why. **Grants will only be approved for items with less than the required number of quotes in exceptional circumstances.**

Please note that your preferred supplier should be the one that you intend to use. Should a grant award be made, no changes may be made to the preferred supplier or quoted item unless agreed in writing.

If your business is not registered for VAT, the VAT element of the item can be included in the grant award.