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RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL

BUSINESS GROWTH FUND 2024-2025

GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

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What is the Business Growth Fund?

Rugby Borough Council's Business Growth Fund aims to support both start-ups and established businesses borough wide. We are keen that successful projects support our wider themes of creating a better, fairer and greener economy. The scheme is funded by UK government.

The fund can be used to:

- support the growth of your business through the purchase of capital items (e.g. Machinery, furniture, property improvement or other major material purchases)
- support in establishing a digital presence through website development, digital marketing campaigns, branding, or social media management by increasing visibility and credibility.
- provide access to professional service (e.g. accounting, legal advice, business consulting), if not available through partners.
- implementing environmentally sustainable practices, waste reduction measures or eco-friendly product development.

For startups, high scoring projects will be those:

- with a clear understanding of their target market and business strategy
- demonstrating a clear purpose in delivering their business strategy
- that demonstrate potential for long-term sustainability and scalability.
- that can articulate a clear competitive advantage.

For established SMEs, high scoring projects will be those:

- that demonstrate potential for long-term sustainability and scalability.
- that can articulate a clear competitive advantage and demonstrate an understanding of their competitive landscape (e.g. IP protected, strategic partnership, unique feature, or niche service).
- where the applicant pledges match funding.

For those applicants seeking a grant of up to £7,500, projects will need to demonstrate how the use of this funding would give a wider benefit for residents or other businesses in the borough.

Specifically, the project should demonstrate how would it improve one or more of the following:

1. the profile or range of services of the town or borough (Better);
2. accessibility and inclusivity of your services or employment (Fairer);
3. the natural environment or sustainability (Greener).

Examples of projects:

- Acquiring software to support your activity in delivering services and/or goods more efficiently.
- Growing your online business by developing a marketing strategy.
- Running a marketing campaign to increase the number of potential customers and build a brand for your shop.



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- IP protection consulting.
- Acquiring machinery to support your activity.
- Develop eco-friendly products, such as biodegradable packaging alternatives.

Please note this list is not exhaustive.

It is highly advisable to engage with our partners at the Coventry & Warwickshire Growth Hub to explore free programmes and general business guidance.



1. HOW MUCH FUNDING IS AVAILABLE?

The amount of funding available for grants through this fund in 2024/25 is £136,000.

Grants can range from:

- a. up to £2,000 for sole traders, start-up micro and small businesses, and social enterprises (as defined in 3 below.).
- b. up to £5,000 for established micro and small businesses (as defined in 3 below).
- c. Up to £7,500 for larger projects that would give wider benefit for residents and other businesses in the borough.

Match funding will be required as per the table below:

TYPE OF BUSINESS/PROJECT	GRANT OFFERED	MATCH REQUESTED
Start-up businesses, sole traders, social enterprises	100%	0%
Established micro and small businesses	90%	10%
Larger project	80%	20%

Each business can only receive one grant in this programme.

We are looking for projects that can be delivered by December 2025. This avoids applicants benefitting from allocations of funding only to return them unspent as they are unable to deliver. This is in no-one's interest and is something we would wish to avoid.

2. WHO CAN APPLY FOR A GRANT?

Eligible organisations:

Sole traders, micro and small businesses, and social enterprises, both as start-up and established businesses, which are registered and/or trading within the Borough of Rugby.

- > A **start-up business** is a business that has been registered for less than 24 months, with less than 10 employees. It can be either a sole trader or, a micro or small business.
- > A **micro business** is a business that has less than 10 employees and whose annual turnover OR balance sheet does not exceed £2 million (about £1.6 million).
- > A **small business** is a business that has less than 50 employees and whose annual turnover OR balance sheet does not exceed £10 million (about £7.9 million).
- > An **established business** is a business that has been registered for more than 24 months, irrespective of the number of employees. It can be either a sole trader or, a micro or small business.



- > A **social enterprise** is an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives.

To be eligible to apply for the grant:

1. Start-up sole traders must:

- a) be registered and/or trading within the borough of Rugby; **and**
- b) have a UK bank account in the trading name of the business; **and**
- c) provide financial records (a summary of their financial situation regarding cashflow, profit and loss and assets) for the entire period they have been trading.

2. Established sole traders must:

- a) be registered and/or trading within the borough of Rugby; **and**
- b) have a UK bank account in the trading name of the business; **and**
- c) provide financial records (a summary of their financial situation regarding cashflow, profit and loss and assets) for the previous *two years*.

3. Start-up micro and small businesses, and social enterprises must:

- a) be registered and/or trading within the borough of Rugby; **and**
- b) have a UK bank account in the registered or trading name of the business; **and**
- c) provide annual accounts/financial records for the last financial year (for businesses that have not yet submitted their first set of accounts we will accept a summary of their financial situation regarding cashflow, profit and loss and assets for the entire period they have been trading).

4. Established micro and small businesses must:

- a) be registered and/or trading within the borough of Rugby; **and**
- b) have a UK bank account in the registered or trading name of the business; **and**
- c) have sufficient funds to match fund the project; **and**
- d) provide annual accounts/financial records for the last two financial years (for businesses that have not yet submitted their accounts for the previous financial year we will accept a summary of their financial situation regarding cashflow, profit and loss and assets for the previous financial year and full accounts for the year before).

Ineligible organisations:

- Businesses whose business activity is illegal or deemed unsuitable for public support by Rugby Borough Council
- Not for profit-making organisations
- Individuals who are not sole traders
- Betting shops
- Vape shops
- National chain stores



PLEASE NOTE – WE WILL PRIORITISE ORGANISATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE TOWN CENTRE IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, THEN TOWN CENTRE BUSINESSES WHO DID NOT RECEIVE FUNDING FROM THE TOWN CENTRE FUND IN 2023/2024.

4. WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING?

Eligible activities:

- Improving brand awareness through marketing
- Developing new product/service ranges (including market research)
- Consulting activities aimed at supporting your business.

Ineligible activities:

- Activities aiming to train up or up-skill or otherwise develop the workforce.
- Religious or political activities, or activities promoting religious or political beliefs.
- Activities taking place outside the borough of Rugby.
- Activities that took place before the project began or after the project ended, as detailed in the Grant Offer Letter
- Activities that have already been funded through other public funding sources.
- Illegal activities
- Activities deemed unsuitable for public funding by Rugby Borough Council.

5. WHAT COSTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING?

Eligible costs:

- Equipment purchases
- Publicity, marketing, branding, public relations services costs
- Consultancy costs
- Entrance costs to relevant sales conferences
- Any other revenue costs relating to eligible project activities.
- VAT (Value Added Tax) that **cannot** be recovered (i.e., if your business is not registered for VAT then the entire value of your project purchases is eligible for funding).

Ineligible costs:

- Travel and subsistence costs.
- Overhead costs
- Business rates, bank fees, penalties or similar
- Costs relating to the day-to-day activities of the business.
- Costs relating to services/activities already funded from other public sources.
- Costs incurred before the start of the project, or after the end of the project, as detailed in the Grant Offer Letter
- Costs relating to ineligible activities.



- VAT that **can** be recovered (i.e., if you are registered for VAT, then only the net value of the project costs is eligible for funding)

6. HOW TO APPLY FOR A GRANT?

The closing date for applications is 30/09/2024.

Applications will **not** be accepted after the closing date.

To apply for a grant:

1. Download the application form available on the RBC website.
2. Fill in the application form.
3. Gather your supporting documents.
4. Submit your application form together with supporting documents by
 - a. Email to ProjectsTeam@rugby.gov.uk or
 - b. Post to Rugby Borough Council, Town Hall, Evreux Way, Rugby CV21 2RR for the attention of **Economic Development** or
 - c. Hand in at the reception desk in the Town Hall at **Rugby Borough Council, Evreux Way, Rugby CV21 2RR** for the attention of **Economic Development**.

Typed applications are preferred.

After you have submitted your application, you will receive a submission confirmation email or letter from our team. If you have not received this within 2 working days, please reach out to us via email ProjectsTeam@rugby.gov.uk.

SUPPORT WITH WRITING YOUR APPLICATION

Rugby Borough Council will run two free grant application drop-in sessions:

Thursday 22nd August, from 6pm till 8pm at Council offices;
and

Thursday 5th September, from 6pm till 8pm at Council offices

If you are a start-up, please note that the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce and the Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub may be able to provide support with developing your project idea through their non-financial start-up business support programme.



To contact the Chamber for more information via businesssupport@cw-chamber.co.uk

To contact the Growth Hub for more information via support@cwgrowthhub.co.uk

IMPORTANT NOTE: If your proposed project involves the Council's land or assets in any way, you should contact the following, for advice, ahead of making your application:

Corporate Property Unit:

Email: corporateproperty@rugby.gov.uk or telephone (01788) 533558

IMPORTANT NOTE: Your organisation shall have regard to and comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and all other relevant Acts, Regulations and Directives.

Please note that there is no guarantee that your application will be successful, or if it is that you will receive the full amount applied for.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS LIST:

You will need to submit copies of the following along with your completed application form:

All applicants: if you are registered for VAT, you will need to submit a copy of your VAT Certificate.

1. Start-up sole traders:

a. HMRC (HM Revenue & Customs) registration letter

We will need a copy of your HMRC registration letter from when you first notified HMRC that you began trading.

The letter must clearly display your UTR number and the date the letter was issued (this will be considered the date of registration for your business).

The address mentioned on the letter will be considered your registered address.

b. Proof of Rugby trading address (if not registered within the borough of Rugby)

If you are not registered at an address within the borough of Rugby, you must send us proof that you are trading within the borough, such as a copy of your most recent invoice/receipt for premises rent in the borough, or other documents showing you regularly trade within the borough.



c. Bank statement

We will need evidence that your business has a UK bank account open in its trading name.

Please send us a copy of a bank statement from the current or previous month showing the trading name and bank details.

d. Annual accounts/financial records

You will need to send us a summary of your business's financial situation (regarding cashflow, profit and loss and assets) for the entire period you have been trading.

2. Established sole traders:

a. HMRC registration letter

We will need a copy of your HMRC registration letter from when you first notified HMRC that you began trading.

The letter must clearly display your UTR number and the date the letter was issued (this will be considered the date of registration for your business).

The address mentioned on the letter will be considered your registered address.

b. Proof of Rugby trading address (if not registered within the borough of Rugby)

If you are not registered at an address within the borough of Rugby, you must send us proof that you are trading within the borough, such as a copy of your most recent invoice/receipt for premises rent in the borough, or other documents showing you regularly trade within the borough.

c. Bank statement

We will need evidence that your business has a UK bank account open in its trading name.

Please send us a copy of a bank statement from the current or previous month showing the trading name and bank details.

d. Annual accounts/financial records

You will need to send us a summary of your business's financial situation (regarding cashflow, profit and loss and assets) for the previous two years.

3. Start-up micro and small businesses, and social enterprises:

We will need a copy of your Certificate of Incorporation. The date on the certificate will be considered as the date of registration. The address on the certificate will be considered the address of registration. Social enterprises may



present alternative governance documents, such as, but not restricted to, a formal constitution.

If you are not registered at an address within the borough of Rugby, you must send us proof that you are trading within the borough, such as a copy of your lease contract or most recent invoice/receipt for premises rent in the borough, or other documents showing you regularly trade within the borough.

c. Recent bank statement

Please send us a copy of a bank statement from the current or previous month showing the registered name and bank details.

d. Annual accounts/financial records

You will need to send us a copy of your annual accounts/financial records for the last fiscal year (for businesses that have not yet submitted their first set of accounts we will accept a summary of their financial situation regarding cashflow, profit and loss and assets for the entire period they have been trading)

4. Established micro and small businesses:

We will need a copy of your Certificate of Incorporation. The date on the certificate will be considered as the date of registration. The address on the certificate will be considered as the address of registration.

If you are not registered at an address within the borough of Rugby, you must send us proof that you are trading within the borough, such as a copy of your lease contract or most recent invoice/receipt for premises rent in the borough, or other documents showing you regularly trade within the borough.

Please send us a copy of a bank statement from the current or previous month showing the registered name and bank details.

d. Annual accounts/financial records

You will need to send us a copy of your annual accounts/financial records for the last two financial years.

If you have not yet submitted your accounts for the previous financial year, you need to submit a summary of their financial situation regarding cashflow, profit and loss and assets for the previous financial year, and full accounts for the year before.



e. Evidence of match funds

You must send us a copy of either a bank statement, a loan letter/statement, or a grant letter reflecting the amount of match funding for your project.

7. HOW ARE GRANTS AWARDED?

Each application goes through several stages:

Stage 1 – Completeness and Eligibility Assessment

Your application will be assessed to check if:

- all the required supporting documents have been submitted with the application **and**
- the applicant (your business) is eligible.

If you have not submitted all the required documents i.e., your application is not complete, we will write to you to ask for these to be submitted within 5 business days or the application will be rejected. All applicants will be offered the same opportunity. **Please note that only complete applications will be placed in the queue for eligibility assessment and project appraisal.**

If you do not send us the missing documents in time, we will regrettably have to reject your application on the grounds of it not being eligible. We will write to let you know your application has been rejected and why.

If your business is not eligible, we will inform you straight away and the application will not be progressed.

Stage 2 – Project Scoring/Appraisal

After your application has passed the first stage, it will enter the appraisal stage.

A Council officer will score the project against the published appraisal criteria for the Fund. The appraisal criteria and associated scores will be published together with this document.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Please note that your project must include only eligible activities. If your project includes ineligible activities, it will be deemed ineligible. Please check the list of ineligible activities in Section 4 of this document or contact us in advance to check the activities you want to include are eligible.



Projects can score a maximum of 100 points. Your project must score above 60 points. Below 60 points the project will be automatically rejected. Projects will be ranked from the highest score to the lowest above 60 points in the two categories of start-ups and established SMEs. Grants will be awarded from highest to lowest scoring until funds are exhausted.

Projects will be scored based on:

- how well they meet the aims of the Fund.
- how well they demonstrate an effective business strategy and an understanding of the target market.
- how well they show longer lasting impact of the project.

For those applicants seeking a grant of up to £7,500, scoring will also include how well projects demonstrate the use of this funding to give a wider benefit for residents or other businesses in the borough.

Specifically, the project will be scored on how the project will improve one or more of the following:

1. profile or range of services of the town or borough (Better);
2. accessibility and inclusivity of your services or employment (Fairer);
3. the natural environment or sustainability (Greener).

After the project has been appraised by a Council officer against the appraisal criteria, the Grant Appraisal Report will be reviewed and then approved by a Council Manager and the Growth and Investment Chief Officer.

Stage 3 – Grant Offer Letters

After approval,

- A Grant Offer Letter will be sent to you. To accept the grant, you will need to read, sign, and return a copy of the letter to us within 3 business days. If we do not receive this from you, we reserve the right to offer the grant to another applicant. After you have accepted, the project will be added to the *Awarded Grants List*.
- **If your project has scored less than 60 points**, it will regrettably be rejected. If this is the case, we will write to let you know as soon as possible after the appraisal process for your project has finished. Your project will be added to the *Projects Not Funded List*. The decision is definitive.



Publication of appraisal results

We will publish appraisal results.

Two lists will be published:

- **Awarded Grants List**, which will include all the projects that have been awarded grants.
- **Projects Not Funded List**, which will include all the projects that have not received funding, irrespective of the reason.

8. OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

Grant outputs and outcomes

- Capital Items
 - Productivity and efficiency – The project will allow you to improve business processes, increase efficiency or provide a new service or product.
 - Competitiveness – The project will allow you to innovate and stay competitive in the market.
 - Quality improvement – The project may allow you to improve the quality of your service or products.
- Marketing initiatives
 - Brand visibility and reach - Increase presence across relevant channels, reaching a wider audience and boosting brand recognition.
 - Customer Acquisition – Through social media advertising or content marketing creation
 - Consultancy services
 - Guidance – Tailored support specifically designed to guide your project (e.g. Accessing new markets, investment plan, IP support etc.)

Outcomes to be evidenced (E16 Investment priority)

Outcomes	
Jobs created	
Jobs safeguarded	
Number of new businesses created	
Increased footfall	
Increased visitor numbers	
Reduced vacancy rates	
Improved perception of markets	
Increased business sustainability	
Increased number of businesses supported	



It is highly recommended to engage with Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub to inquire about the business support services that are available before applying for consulting services.

9. MINIMAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (MFA)

Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) is a mechanism put in place by the UK Government after the 4th of January 2023, through The Subsidy Control Act 2022, to allow public authorities to provide grants that are considered small enough to support individual businesses without giving them an unfair advantage.

Minimal Financial Assistance subsidies can take several forms, including, but not limited to grants, loans at favourable rates, guarantees, free or subsidised services, rates relief, HMRC investment schemes, etc. The MFA also includes any awards made as De Minimis under the European state aid regulations before the 4th of January 2023, or under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement from the 1st of January 2021. Any subsidy or state aid given under other schemes that do not count as De Minimis (which includes any funding provided under the Temporary Framework during the coronavirus pandemic) will not count towards your MFA total.

The MFA is subject to cumulation rules. This means that no business can receive more than £315,000 in small subsidies over 3 consecutive fiscal years.

As part of your application, we will ask you to tell us what subsidies your business has received over the last 3 fiscal (financial) years (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years). If you have received UK public sector support in the past, your award letters or other documentation should confirm if any of the funding can be considered Minimal Financial Assistance. A fiscal or financial year is a 12-month period beginning 1 April and ending 31 March, irrespective of when your own company financial year starts and ends.

We need to know this so we can make sure that the amount of grant we are offering will not take you over the limit of £315,000. This limit applies to a group of businesses that are owned or controlled by the same person or group of people, even if the businesses have different names.

If you are part of a group or company structure that is considered an enterprise, then any Minimal Financial Assistance received by other companies within that enterprise could count towards your limit. If you have questions about the Minimal Financial Assistance mechanism, please contact us.

When we send you the Final Grant Offer, we will also send you a Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) Notification letter, which will tell you how much grant we expect to give you through this Fund.

After you have finished the project, we will send you a Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) Confirmation letter, which will tell you the final amount of grant we have paid to you. This may



be different from the amount on the Notification letter. **This last letter is the one you will need to keep and use when asked in the future about what MFA subsidies you have received.**

10. PROCUREMENT

As part of your application, for all the purchases you intend to make, we will ask you to provide quotes to show you have done market research and achieved value for money with your selected product/service provider. We reserve the right to ask you to seek more quotes for larger purchases, to ensure you secure good value for money.

11. BRANDING AND PUBLICITY

All communications materials and public facing documents relating to your project activities – including print and publications, through to digital and electronic materials - will need to be approved by the Council before being used.

You will need to include the Government logo and the Rugby Borough Council logo on all your communications relating to the project, which will be supplied to you after you have been awarded the grant.

All press releases relating to projects supported by funding must include:

1. A text reference to the funding provided by the UK Government
2. The funded by UK Government logo and
3. The Rugby Borough Council logo

More detailed publicity guidance will be provided once the grant has been awarded.

12. GRANT PAYMENT, CLAIMS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- a. Grants for sole traders, start-up micro and small businesses and social enterprises

These will be paid upfront, in full.

We will then expect you to send us a 6 monthly update on the progress made by the project.

At the end of the project, you will submit a short Final Report, detailing:

- what outputs and outcomes have been achieved
- what activities have been delivered.



- if the project was delivered on time
- if the stated objectives were met
- what went well and what could have gone better.

We will provide you with templates for these short reports after you have been awarded the grant.

All projects (activities delivered and expenditure incurred) must be completed by 31/12/2025.

b. Grants for established micro and small businesses

These will be paid upfront, in full.

We will then expect you to send us a 6 monthly update on the progress made by the project.

At the end of the project, you will submit a short Final Report, detailing:

- what outputs and outcomes have been achieved
- what activities have been delivered
- if the project was delivered on time
- if the stated objectives were met
- what went well and what could have gone better

We will provide you with templates for these short reports after you have been awarded the grant.

All projects (activities delivered and expenditure incurred) must be completed by 31/12/2025.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Changes to projects can only be made with the approval of Rugby Borough Council.

If we learn that the grant was spent on activities or items/services/works that are different to those stated in the application form, we may ask for the funding to be returned. Please check with us before making any changes to your project.

All projects (activities delivered and expenditure incurred) must be completed by 31/12/2025.

13. MORE INFORMATION

If you have any queries, please contact us via email on ProjectsTeam@rugby.gov.uk

These Guidelines for Applicants and the Grant Application Form are available in electronic format at www.rugby.gov.uk/shared_prosperity.



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An FAQ list will also be published at the above internet address with answers to questions sent to us regarding this Fund.