

Business Recovery and Growth Fund

Guidelines for Applicants 2022-23

A) OVERVIEW

The Business Recovery and Growth Fund (BRGF) is a competitive, discretionary grant fund targeted at new and existing businesses based in North Lanarkshire to support their strategic, longer term sustainability and growth. BRGF grants will provide 50% of eligible project costs (excluding VAT), up to a maximum grant award of £20,000 to fund specific activities to help businesses recover, adapt, and diversify their operations.

Businesses can apply for grant support towards the following project types:

- **Capital Expenditure**
- **Infrastructure Improvement**
- **Consultancy Support**
- **Exhibition Support**
- **Training Support**

B) OBJECTIVES

The key aims of the BRGF are closely aligned with the Council's "Plan for North Lanarkshire", and in particular Ambition Statement 5: *Grow and improve the sustainability and diversity of North Lanarkshire's economy*. Specifically, the BRGF seeks to:

- i. **Support business growth** – by helping the business implement projects which increase turnover and increase or safeguard employment, through improvements in productivity, competitiveness or innovation. For example, we encourage applications which will :-
 - introduce new and/or improved products, processes or services
 - assist growth into new domestic and/or international markets
 - support the adoption and integration of digital technologies and ecommerce

The funding should lead to a sustainable improvement in the business and should achieve additionality by way of completion of the project on a larger scale, more quickly or to a higher standard.

- ii. **Support key sectors** – the types of applicant businesses and industry sectors we propose to consider for grant support will be exclusively aligned to the Council’s “Plan for North Lanarkshire” (<https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=26904>) and the Economic Regeneration Delivery Plan. Therefore, priority will be given to businesses operating in the following sectors:

- Manufacturing
- Logistics
- Food & Drink
- Health & Social Care
- Life Sciences
- Creative Industries
- Tourism
- Construction
- Social Enterprise
- Energy

Note that applications from businesses out with the above industry sectors will be considered if the local economic benefit arising from the project seeking support is forecast to be significant. Applications from business operating in the Gambling and Betting and Drinking Places (Bar/Public houses) sectors and large retail businesses will generally be excluded. Note for the purposes of this application large retail is defined as business in the retail sector operating in premises with a rateable value of £51,001 or over.

C) ELIGIBILITY OF BUSINESS

In addition to the sectoral restrictions outlined in Section B ii above, applicant businesses must comply with the following eligibility criteria. The Council may carry out further checks on the applicant business by consulting sources of business information such as Companies House, Mint, Business Gateway, Scottish Enterprise and similar databases:

- i. **Business type & location:** The applicant business must be either a start-up or an existing business based in North Lanarkshire and operating within a recognised legal structure (see www.gov.uk/business-legal-structures/overview). Private individuals cannot apply for grant support. Ventures at the pre-start/pre-trading/feasibility stage are typically ineligible.

- ii. **Place of business:** If the applicant business only has a 'registered office address' or a 'virtual office address' within North Lanarkshire but conducts its actual business or trade from an operational base outwith North Lanarkshire, then the business is not eligible to apply for a grant from North Lanarkshire Council. The company's invoicing and business correspondence address must be within North Lanarkshire. The business must also be able to demonstrate that it pays non-domestic rates (if applicable) to NLC.
- iii. **Business size:** The fund is aimed micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's) defined by the European Commission as by enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 Million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.
- iv. **Sectoral exclusions:** Please refer to the list of eligible sectors provided in Section B ii.
- v. **Business structure:** If the applicant is part of a larger group of businesses or franchise with a headquarters out with North Lanarkshire, or has direct/indirect links to other businesses, it can only apply if it is a wholly autonomous cost/profit centre responsible for its own day-to-day management and producing its own management accounts and audited accounts. Applicants which fall into this category may be asked to produce evidence of their autonomy from the parent company/group.
- vi. **Business turnover:** Applications will only be considered where the business turnover is expected to reach a minimum level equivalent to the current VAT registration threshold of £85,000 (at least) within 12 months of the date of application. Where the current business turnover is below this level, financial projections and evidence of pending orders/contracts/letters of interest from customers will be required to support the anticipated increase in turnover.
- vii. **Need for grant:** Applicants must be able to demonstrate a funding gap that is preventing, delaying or limiting business growth. We would also actively encourage other sources of funding to be explored first - Council funding should be regarded as a 'last resort' once all other funding options have been exhausted. Other funding routes can be investigated at www.mygov.scot/funding-opportunities.
- viii. **Business premises:** Applicant businesses can be home-based or operating from dedicated commercial premises. In the case of rented commercial premises a minimum 12 month lease is preferred, although month to month or

rolling leases will be considered by exception based on merit. A copy of the lease agreement may be requested in support of the grant application. Home-based businesses are generally ineligible for Capital Expenditure or Infrastructure Improvement grants except where a dedicated manufacturing unit exists on-site which is separate from the residence.

ix. **Previous grant support:** Applicants can only apply for and receive one BRGF grant per category within a rolling 24-month period, as follows:

• Capital Expenditure	1 successful application	£20,000 (max)
• Infrastructure Improvement	1 successful application	£20,000 (max)
• Combined Capex + Infra	1 successful application	£20,000 (max)
• Consultancy Support	1 successful application	£5,000 (max)
• Exhibition Support	1 successful application	£4,000 (max)
• Training Support	1 successful application	£4,000 (max)

Commencing from the launch of the 2021/2022 BRGF grant scheme, the maximum cumulative BRGF grant awarded to any business within a 24-month period is limited to **£20,000**. Note that this includes all capital expenditure, infrastructure, consultancy support, exhibition support and training support funding for which the applicant may apply. Requests for additional funding will be considered based on merit, for example where exceptional growth in turnover or jobs is predicted to arise from the proposed project. The total amount of public sector funding support for the project in question must not exceed 50% of total project costs (exclusive of VAT).

D) ELIGIBILITY OF PROJECT

Projects seeking grant support must demonstrate the following:

- **Contribution to business sustainability or growth** – the project must clearly demonstrate a significant contribution towards sustainability or growth in relation to business turnover and employment within 12 months of project completion. This should be explained in the application and backed up by supporting financial information where required.
- **Alignment with one the following key themes** –
 - sustain or create employment and/or training opportunities
 - supporting innovation to develop new and/or improved products, processes or services
 - assisting growth into new domestic markets

- assisting export development and internationalisation
 - supporting the adoption and integration of digital technologies and ecommerce in line with the Council’s Digital Economy and Place Ambition
 - encouraging the adoption and integration of green technologies and low carbon products, processes or services
 - Supporting the transition to a zero-carbon economic model and facilitate sustainable change and growth
- **Evidence of need** - the applicant must explain why external financial assistance from North Lanarkshire Council is necessary to enable the project to proceed. The Business Recovery and Growth Fund will only provide the minimum grant necessary to make the project happen, up to a maximum of 50% of eligible project costs (excluding VAT). The majority of the project funding requirement should be met by the applicant business or come from other sources in the private sector, for example bank borrowings, equity or loan finance. Furthermore the maximum total public sector funding support cannot exceed 50% of project costs.
 - **No indication of prior commitment** – in order to be considered for grant support, no work must start on the project in question and no expenditure should be incurred until after the applicant company has received a formal decision from the council regarding their grant application. Projects which commence before a grant decision is made indicate that grant support is not essential to the project proceeding. Such applications may be cancelled and/or grant awards withdrawn.

E) SUPPORTED PROJECT TYPES

Applicants can apply for grant funding in support of the following project types:

- Capital Expenditure
- Infrastructure Improvement
- Consultancy Support
- Exhibition Support
- Training Support

Please note that:

- BRGF funding cannot be used to provide working capital.
- All projects that have been awarded grant support must be completed within 12 months of the award date stipulated in the grant award letter received by the applicant company. Grant awards may be cancelled or withdrawn if supported projects are not completed within 12 months, unless a robust explanation for the delay can be provided.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

Outright purchase of plant, equipment or machinery as part of a growth project

Grant rate = **up to 50% of eligible (ex VAT) cap-ex costs.**

Maximum grant **£20,000**, Minimum grant **£1,000**.

Examples of eligible projects include:

- mobile or hand-held equipment which will significantly benefit business growth in terms of increased turnover and job creation, or which will help overcome a technological barrier enabling new or existing markets to be fully exploited. This includes certain mobile ICT equipment such as tablets where a case can be made which shows the direct benefit to the business.
- investment in servers or cloud-based systems.
- purchases made via hire purchase, lease or other finance agreement can be considered, but grant support can only be given towards the deposit made against the proposed purchase. If the finance agreement contains no deposit contribution then the purchase cannot be considered for grant support and is ineligible.
- purchase of machinery or equipment (new or used*)

* The purchase costs of second-hand equipment are eligible for co-financing by European Structural Funds under the following conditions:

- the seller of the equipment provides a declaration stating its origin, and confirm that at no point during the previous 10 years has it been purchased with the aid of national or Community grants;
- the price of the equipment should not exceed its market value and is less than the cost of similar new equipment

Exclusions:

- purchase of vehicles - vans, pick-ups unless it has been extensively customised and used specifically for the sole use of the business. Note that the vehicle would need to be kept for at least 3 years and North Lanarkshire Council may require proof of ownership.
- upgrading or replacement of general office IT equipment (monitors, hard drives, printers, scanners, laptops, telephony systems, smartphones, other office equipment).
- purchases made via hire purchase, lease or other finance agreement.
- replacement of equipment/items 'like for like'
- items replaced due to 'wear and tear' or which are faulty or obsolete.
- items purchased via finance agreement where no deposit contribution has been made – see above.

Equipment purchased with grant support should help introduce new and/or improved products, processes or services into the business and assist growth in new or existing markets.

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT

Expansion, conversion, sub-division or other improvement to the physical infrastructure of business premises as part of a growth project

Grant rate = **up to 50% of eligible (ex VAT) infrastructure costs.**

Maximum grant **£20,000**, Minimum grant **£1,000**.

Examples of eligible projects include:

- construction/installation works associated with expansion or conversion of office/work space
- cabling and ICT infrastructure (eg. network installation, three-phase power supply)
- construction of walls or fences
- security systems

Grants will be subject to the necessary granting of statutory consents (including consent of the landlord where the property is not owned by the business). A copy of the premises lease may be requested in support of the grant application.

Premises improvements carried out with grant support should help introduce new and/or improved products, processes or services into the business and assist growth in new or existing markets.

Exclusions:

- cosmetic or non-essential improvements (eg. painting, floor coverings, landscaping etc)
- temporary or removable improvements
- repairs required to ensure premises are watertight or draught proof/insulated, or repairs required to ensure premises are compliant with relevant Health & Safety Regulations or Building Regulations

CONSULTANCY SUPPORT

Commissioning of external consultancy services to support the development of a growth project

Grant rate = **up to 50% of eligible (ex VAT) consultancy costs.**
Maximum grant **£5,000**, Minimum grant **£490**.

Examples of eligible projects include:

- production of a marketing strategy
- development of e-commerce capacity to enable online trading and help the business sell into wider domestic and/or international markets (retail or wholesale)
- achievement of quality accreditations and technical certifications
- preparation of feasibility studies, business plans and financial projections
- development of bespoke business software/IT systems, or the customisation and integration of 'off the shelf' business software and systems

We encourage applications which will introduce new and/or improved products, processes or services into the business and assist growth in new or existing markets.

The maximum permissible rate for consultants is £490/day (£70/hour).
Projects with a higher rate may not receive the maximum 50% grant.

Exclusions:

- in-house consultancy is ineligible for grant.
- development of information websites/brochure websites which lack a clear focus on e-commerce development.
- purchase and installation of off-the-shelf software packages (eg. Microsoft Office software, standard Sage packages etc)

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

**Attendance at an industry exhibition or trade show
within the UK or overseas either as an Exhibitor or Visitor**

Grant rate = **up to 50% of eligible (ex VAT) exhibition costs.**

Maximum grant **£4,000**, Minimum grant **£245**

i) Attending an industry exhibition as an EXHIBITOR (UK & Overseas)

Grant support is available to help businesses **exhibit** at domestic or overseas trade shows or industry exhibitions. The Council will contribute towards the costs incurred in renting, setting up and running an exhibition stand at trade events in the United Kingdom and abroad (including the cost of exhibition space, stand, electricity, and marketing costs such as production of banners, brochures or other promotional materials).

The grant can also cover accommodation and air/rail travel costs, however certain exclusions apply (see below). Note that in order to qualify for support, this must be the **first time** your organisation has participated at the event in question.

Exclusions:

- trade missions which are already funded via other agencies
- staff costs
- subsistence costs (eg. food & drink, hospitality)
- hire car costs
- taxi fares, transfers and parking charges
- fuel costs
- support is not available if the business has attended the same event previously

We encourage applications which will introduce new and/or improved products, processes or services into the business and assist growth in new or existing markets.

Attending an industry exhibition as a VISITOR (UK only)

Grant support is also available to allow businesses to attend trade shows, exhibitions or other industry events as a **visitor** (within the UK only) for the purpose of developing new business opportunities, to meet potential new customers, or to investigate new markets. The grant can cover accommodation and air/rail travel costs, however certain exclusions apply (see below). The minimum grant award for this activity remains £245, therefore the minimum (eligible) project expenditure must be at least £490 (ex VAT).

Exclusions:

- fees associated with attendance as a delegate at conferences, workshops, seminars, and networking meetings
- trade shows, exhibitions, other industry events outwith the UK
- trade missions which are already funded via other agencies
- staff costs
- subsistence costs (e.g. food & drink, hospitality)
- hire car costs
- taxi fares, transfers and parking charges
- fuel costs
- support is not available if the business has attended the same event previously

We encourage applications which will introduce new and/or improved products, processes or services into the business and assist growth in new or existing markets.

Conditions on eligibility of Travel and Accommodation costs

– Air & rail fares

Grant support can only be considered as a contribution towards the cost of standard/economy class air or rail travel.

– Accommodation costs

Grant support can only be considered for a maximum of 4 days' overnight accommodation costs directly related to the exhibition/trade show in question. The grant will contribute up to 50% towards eligible accommodation costs (ex VAT) up to a maximum grant of £60/day. Note that food and drink costs and other miscellaneous subsistence/hospitality expenses (including corporate entertainment) incurred at the exhibition/show or as a result of your hotel stay are ineligible for grant.

Before applying for Exhibition Support grant funding via the Business Recovery and Growth Fund, applicants should consult the Scottish Enterprise website for information on other funding which they may be able to access in support of their internationalisation strategy (see www.scottish-enterprise.com/services/do-business-outside-scotland).

TRAINING SUPPORT

Commissioning of an external training provider to provide training for business employees as part of a growth project

Grant rate = **up to 50% of eligible (ex VAT) training costs.**

Maximum grant **£4,000**, Minimum grant **£245**.

The Training Support grant is designed to help small enterprises to grow by raising skill levels and improving competency, thereby increasing productivity and competitiveness. It enables businesses to raise the standard and quality of their products/services, develop their existing customer base or expand in to new markets.

The maximum permissible rate for training providers is £490/day (£70/hour). Projects with a higher rate may not receive the maximum 50% grant.

Key requirements:

- individuals participating in training projects must be listed on the company payroll as either full-time or part-time employees
- training must be successfully completed, and the award/qualification received, within 12 months of the training start date.
- grant applications must be submitted, assessed and a decision received by the applicant business before the training commences.

Exclusions:

- training that has already commenced
- training delivered internally by the company's own staff
- training projects exceeding 12 months duration
- any training which is a legal requirement (including training required in order for businesses/operatives to be compliant with relevant health & safety legislation)
- exam registration/certification fees

- cost of travel to and from the training venue
- accommodation and subsistence costs

F) APPLICATION, ASSESSMENT AND CLAIM PROCEDURE

1) Supporting Documentation

Applicants must submit the following documentation in order to apply for a BRGF grant:

- Completed Business Recovery and Growth fund application form
- Evidence of Incorporation - any one of the following:
 - Company (inc. SCIO): Certificate of Incorporation or Companies House registration number.
 - Partnership: Partnership agreement or HMRC registration.
 - Sole Trader Self Employed and Freelancers: HMRC registration, Self-assessment documents or valid business insurance document.
 - Community Interest Company: Certificate of Incorporation
 - Trust: Constitution documents, HMRC registration or VAT registration document.
- Evidence of ownership/commercial lease. This could be a copy of i) premises lease summary or ii) e-mail from landlord confirming duration of tenancy agreement, or iii) proof of ownership.
- Evidence of projected project costs. This should include formal supplier quote(s) for all eligible items/works/consultancy/exhibition seeking grant support.
- Bank Mandate for Payment by BACS. Appendix E Bank Mandate of the BRGF application form.

1.2) Additional supporting documentation depending on project type

Applicants must submit the following additional supporting evidence depending on the type of project included in the application. The Appendix documents referenced below are contained within the Business Recovery and Growth Fund application form.

Capital expenditure	i. Business Plan
	ii. Latest Management accounts
	iii. 12-month Cashflow projection

Infrastructure Improvement	i. Business Plan
	ii. Latest Management accounts
	iii. 12-month Cashflow projection
Consultancy Support	i. Appendix A Consultant's Declaration (completed by consultant)
Exhibition Support	i. Appendix B Exhibition Support (completed by applicant business)
Training Support	i. Appendix C Trainee Details (completed by each trainee)
	ii. Appendix D Training Provider Declaration (completed by training provider)

Business plan:

If a full business plan is not available, a mini-business plan consisting of a one page summary of the company setting out its plans for the future is sufficient.

Financial information:

Where required, management accounts should ideally be less than 3 months old. If the applicant business is a start-up or has a limited trading history, then the application must be accompanied by letters of intent, expressions of interest, customer enquiries, or evidence of potential orders or contracts in order to substantiate the turnover and cashflow projections. Note that only applications for Capital Expenditure grants and Infrastructure Improvement grants require management accounts, a 12 month cash-flow projection, and a business plan.

Other supporting information:

If the applicant business submits an application prior to moving into commercial premises within North Lanarkshire, any grant award will be conditional on the Council receiving a signed copy of the lease (or proof of ownership) before the business submits its Claim for Grant Payment.

2) Grant application process

Preparing and submitting your application

Grant application forms are available from the Council on request, either in electronic or paper version. However please discuss your ideas with a North Lanarkshire Council officer before completing a full grant application. This will help ensure that your business and the project seeking support are eligible to apply in principle. Guidance and advice to help you complete your application can also be provided.

Applicants may also benefit from the comprehensive range of business support available from the local Business Gateway service, which is managed by North Lanarkshire Council. Business Gateway Lanarkshire advisers offer a range of advice and expertise on a wide range of topics including business growth and development. Advisers can also help you prepare and submit your BRGF grant application. If you wish to discuss your growth plans with Business Gateway Lanarkshire contact them directly on 01236 702020 to arrange a one-to-one meeting.

How much grant can I apply for?

The maximum grant award under each grant category during 2022/23 is as follows. Note in each case that grants can only contribute **up to 50%** towards eligible project costs:

Combined Capital Expenditure & Infrastructure projects:	£20,000
Capital Expenditure projects only:	£20,000
Infrastructure Improvement projects only:	£20,000
Consultancy Support projects:	£5,000
Exhibition Support projects:	£4,000
Training Support projects:	£4,000

Note that the maximum cumulative BRGF grant that any individual business can receive within a rolling 24-month period is capped at £20,000.

3) Assessment and appraisal

Completed grant applications must be received, and a decision received by the applicant business from the Council, before any purchases are made, project works begin, or any other activity or expenditure relating to the project commences.

Any goods or services purchased, or activity undertaken before a grant decision is made will subsequently be ineligible for grant payment and may result in the entire grant award being cancelled.

4) Decision

The applicant will be notified of the decision on their grant application once the application has been processed. All applicants (successful and unsuccessful) will be notified of the Council's decision by e-mail in the first instance. Successful applicants will subsequently receive an award letter (sent to the business address specified in

their grant application), including a Grant Acceptance Form which must be signed, dated and returned to the Council.

5) Claim for Grant Payment

Applicants can submit a Claim for Grant Payment after:

- the project has been successfully completed as per the original application and
- all suppliers have been paid in full

The completed Claim for Grant Payment form must be accompanied by:

- completed Customer Satisfaction Survey (part of the Claim form)
- evidence of spend including:
 - copy invoices from all suppliers
 - copy of the company's bank statement, showing payments in respect of these supplier invoices leaving the company's bank account

Grant will not be paid out in relation to goods/services purchased which cannot be evidenced by supplier invoices matched to the business bank statement.

Key points when claiming your grant payment

- **VAT:** note that VAT is ineligible for grant and must be excluded from claims.
- **Paying suppliers by cheque:** where payment for goods or services has been made by cheque, you must enclose either i) a copy of the cheque or ii) a receipt, e-mail or letter on headed paper from the supplier (stating the invoice number) confirming that they have received payment in full. In the case of e-mail confirmation it must be clear from the e-mail address that the confirmation has originated from the supplier.
- **Paying suppliers by cash:** note that items or services paid for by cash unfortunately do not meet our audit trail requirements. As such they are not eligible for grant and must be excluded from the Claim for Grant Payment.
- **Paying suppliers by credit card:** Payments made to suppliers by a business credit card is eligible if the credit card has been repaid using the business bank current account. Therefore, the credit card statements and the business

bank statement showing this transaction will be required as evidence of project spend. Any item paid for using a personal credit is not eligible and will be excluded from your Claim for Grant Payment.

- **Business bank accounts:** applicants must have a business bank account (personal bank accounts are not acceptable).
- **Multiple payments made to suppliers in a single transaction:** where a number of supplier invoices have been paid in a single transaction, a BACS list, copies of invoices or a similar breakdown of payments must be provided to confirm that the invoice(s) included in the Claim for Grant Payment have been paid. Note that hand-written invoices or receipts suggesting payment has been received are not sufficient proof of payment and must be accompanied by bank statement evidence.
- **Changes to project costs:** if your project costs end up being lower than anticipated in your grant application, the grant payment you receive will be reduced pro-rata. However the grant payment cannot be increased beyond your original grant award in the event that your project costs end up being higher than you originally expected.

Once a grant claim is approved, payment is usually made by BACS transfer direct to the applicant's bank account within 15 working days of claim approval.

G) OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- **European funding** – grants provided to applicants as a contribution towards the cost of Capital Expenditure, Infrastructure Improvement, Consultancy Support and Exhibition Support are supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).
- **State Aid**
 - Under EC regulation No 1407/2013 (de minimis aid regulation), provision of grants for **Capital Expenditure** and **Infrastructure Improvement** is a de minimis aid. There is a ceiling of €200,000 for all de minimis aid provided to any one firm over a 3-year period. Any de minimis aid awarded to you will be relevant if you wish to apply, or have applied, for any other de minimis aid. For the purposes of the de minimis regulation, you must retain grant award letters for 3 years from the award date and produce it on any request by the UK public

authorities or the European Commission. You may need to retain the award letter for longer than three years for other purposes.

- Grants awarded for **Consultancy Support** and **Exhibition Support** are not classified as de minimus aid. Grants for consultancy and exhibition support are provided under the “European Structural & Investment Funds 2014-2020 SMART Growth” scheme (SA.43048) agreed by the Scottish Government and European Commission. Under Commission Regulation EU No. No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014, General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) applies to grants provided for Consultancy Support (Article 18) and Exhibition Support (Article 19).
- Grants awarded for **Training Support** are not classified as de minimus aid. Grants for training support are provided under the “European Structural & Investment Funds 2014-2020 INCLUSIVE Growth” scheme (SA.43103) agreed by the Scottish Government and European Commission. Under Commission Regulation EU No. No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014, General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) applies to grants provided for Training Support (Article 31).
- **Monitoring** – we are required to report on key outputs and benefits arising from grants awarded under the Business Recovery and Growth Fund. Successful applicants will be monitored both during the project and 12 months after completion to verify the impact of Council grant funding on business growth via a number of indicators, with a particular focus on turnover growth and the number of new jobs created and/or existing jobs safeguarded.

H) FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on the funding and other support available to North Lanarkshire businesses please contact either North Lanarkshire Council Enterprise Development Team on BusinessFund@northlan.gov.uk or Business Gateway Lanarkshire on 01698 756956.

Please also visit the North Lanarkshire Council website:

www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/business