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Business Growth Fund

Guidance for Applicants

Contents

Introduction	3
Business Growth Fund	3
About this guide	3
Making an application	3
How is funding paid?	3
What funding is available?	3
Grant Process	5
Preparing an Application	6
Initial Engagement	6
Eligibility	6
Eligible Projects and Funding Levels	8
Capital Expenditure	9
Infrastructure Improvements	9
Workforce/Skills Development	10
Exhibition Support	10
Application Form	11
Evidence	11
Evidence of Incorporation	11
Evidence of Business located in North Lanarkshire	12
Supporting Documents	12
Suppliers	13
Appraising your application	14
Appeal Process	14
Project Execution	15
Payment and Receipts	15
Methods of Paying Suppliers	15
Changes to Project Specification and/or Costs:	16
Grant Claim	17
Project Monitoring, Reporting and Follow-up	18
Subsidy Control	18
Further Information	18

Introduction

Business Growth Fund

The Business Growth Fund is a competitive, discretionary grant aimed at supporting new and existing SMEs (with fewer than 250 employees) towards achieving long-term sustainability and growth. The fund prioritises projects that boost turnover, create jobs, enhance productivity, promote environmental sustainability, and advance digital capabilities.

The fund is available to businesses operating in key sectors, including:

- **Construction**
- **Manufacturing**
- **Life sciences**
- **Transport and logistics**
- **Tourism**
- **Food & Drink**
(Manufacturing/Processing)
- **Creative industries**
- **Digital**
- **Renewable energy**
- **Health and social care**
- **Social enterprises.**

If your business does not fall within these sectors, but is proposing priority or strategic projects which demonstrate high growth potential (particularly in terms of turnover and job creation), and which are aligned with key council priorities, you may still be considered for funding by exception. Please discuss your project and eligibility with your Business Gateway Lanarkshire adviser.

About this guide

This guide will help you successfully complete your Business Growth Fund application. It is important that you refer to all available guidance whilst completing your application. This will help avoid delays in processing your application.

Making an application

To apply for the Business Growth Fund you must be actively working with a Business Gateway Adviser. Funding panels to decide on grant application outcomes are held monthly. A schedule of panel meetings, including monthly submission deadlines, is available on the [Business Growth Fund](#) page on the council website.

How is funding paid?

The Business Growth Fund is paid retrospectively. This means, that following a successful award, the applicant will need to complete the project and pay all suppliers in full before then submitting a Claim for Grant Payment in order to draw down the grant funds.

Grant funding is only available for up to 50% of net costs (excluding VAT and delivery costs, which are ineligible). This means applicants must secure the remaining 50% (or more) through private sector funding.

What funding is available?

Businesses can apply for up to £20,000 in grant funding per grant application. A maximum of 2 grant applications can be submitted to the Fund within a 24-month timeframe.



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Businesses can receive a maximum of £40,000 in total funding over a 24 month period. Any funding received from the Business Growth Fund within the last 24 months will count towards this limit. This period starts from the date of the last Business Growth Fund grant award letter being issued.

Grant Process

Business Growth Fund



Preparing an Application

Initial Engagement

It is a prerequisite that all applicants must engage with a Business Gateway Adviser before they can apply for grant. They will discuss the eligibility of your business and the project which you wish to put forward for funding. Your Business Gateway Adviser will help you identify the potential funding opportunities and determine whether the Business Growth Fund would be appropriate funding programme.

Council Officer Visit (pre-application)

In addition, it is a requirement that a Council officer must carry out a site visit to the applicant business's premises and meet with the key personnel (directors/owners) before the applicant completes the application form. This visit may take place in conjunction with a Business Gateway Adviser. This is to discuss the business and the proposed project before you prepare and submit your application, to ensure that both meet the Business Growth Fund eligibility criteria and that an application can be considered in principle.

How to Apply

To apply for the Business Growth Fund you **must** :-

- i) be considering a project that will help your business grow, develop or improve (see "Eligible Projects & Funding Levels").
- ii) be actively working with a Business Gateway Adviser.

- iii) Once you have confirmed your eligibility to apply for a BGF grant with your Business Gateway adviser, you will be issued with a web link that will enable you to complete your online application form via your Bisaccount.

Eligibility

To apply for the Business Growth Fund you must meet the following requirements:

- **Location:** Business must be based in North Lanarkshire.
- **Funding Limit:** Businesses can receive up to 50% of eligible project costs (excluding VAT and delivery costs), up to a **maximum of £20,000** funding per application.
- **Application Limit:** Businesses can apply for a **maximum of two projects**.
- **Application Frequency:** Businesses can receive a **maximum of two** Business Growth Fund grant awards within a rolling 24-month period up to a maximum of £40,000 total funding.
- **Item Limit:** Businesses can apply for a **maximum of ten individual items** per grant application.
- **Project Start:** Businesses must not have commenced or paid for any of the activities for which they are applying for funding.
- **Funding Sources:** The majority of project funding should come from the applicant business or other private sector sources, such as bank loans or equity investments. The total public sector funding contribution cannot exceed 50% of project costs.



- **Business Bank Accounts:** Applicants must have a business bank account. All transactions relating to the grant award must be conducted through this account.
- **Project Completion:** Applicants must purchase and receive goods or services for which they have applied for funding within six months or by the date specified in their award letter, whichever comes first.
- **Real Living Wage:** Businesses employing staff must pay the Real Living Wage. If your business does not pay the Real Living Wage please discuss with your Business Gateway Adviser.
- **Community Benefit:** For funding applications over £10,000 applicants must demonstrate how they will deliver community benefit in North Lanarkshire. See [Working with communities | North Lanarkshire Council](#)
- **Trading Length:** To be eligible, the applicant business must have been trading for at least 12 months, and turnover must have reached VAT threshold as a minimum. If your business has been trading for less than 12 months, but is proposing priority or strategic projects which demonstrate high growth potential (particularly in terms of turnover and job creation), and which are aligned with key council priorities, you may still be eligible considered for funding by exception. Please discuss your project and eligibility with your Business Gateway Lanarkshire adviser.
- **Suppliers:** The Council reserves the right to decline an application if it is not satisfied that a supplier meets its compliance requirements.

Eligible Projects and Funding Levels

The Business Growth Fund aims to support projects that help businesses in North Lanarkshire:

- Create or sustain employment and/or create training opportunities.
- Support innovation to develop new and/or improve products, processes or services.
- Assist growth into new domestic markets.
- Assist export development and internationalisation.
- Support the adoption and integration of digital technologies and ecommerce in line with the Council's Digital Economy and Place Ambition.
- Encourage the adoption and integration of green technologies and low carbon products, processes and services, or support the transition to a zero-carbon economic model to facilitate sustainable change and growth.

Applicant businesses must clearly demonstrate in their application how their proposed projects will drive additional growth and create value for their business.

Applicant businesses can apply for funding under one or more of the following project categories: **Capital Expenditure, Infrastructure Improvements, Workforce/ Skills Development and Exhibition Support.**

Information

Please note that funding is not available for projects that have already started or for orders placed/supplier payments made (including deposits) before the application decision. All supplier invoices must be dated after the award date. Ensure your project and purchases are planned accordingly to qualify for funding.

For projects that require planning or building warrants, or approval/certification from other council services (eg. licensing, environmental health) the applicant must be able to demonstrate they are engaged with appropriate council services.

Capital Expenditure

Businesses can apply for between £1,000 and a maximum of **£20,000** of Business Growth Fund support for Capital Expenditure projects. Examples of eligible projects would be:

- Bespoke software
- E-commerce platforms
- Bespoke ICT Equipment
- Machinery or equipment
- Green capital projects - such as renewable energy technologies/equipment.
- Servers or cloud-based systems
- Custom/bespoke vehicles may also be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Renewables/Net Zero and ICT/Digital Capital Expenditure projects

Applicants must discuss these types of Capex projects with their Business Gateway adviser before proceeding with an application.

In particular, applicants must be able to provide evidence that a project has been adequately researched, either by internal staff, or by a suitably qualified impartial professional third party. Alternatively, the Business Gateway adviser may be able to introduce applicants to the appropriate consultancy support available via the council's "[Expert Help](#)" programme.

A copy of the audit report, detailing the justification for the proposed Capex investment, may be requested by the council.

Please note that Home Based businesses are not eligible for Capital Expenditure grant funding.

Infrastructure Improvements

Businesses can apply for between £1,000 and a **maximum of £20,000** of Business Growth Fund support for Infrastructure Improvement projects. Examples of eligible projects would be:

- Premises improvement, conversion or expansion to support growth or improve productivity
- Cabling or ICT Infrastructure linked to a major project
- Green Infrastructure improvement projects such as renewable energy infrastructure.

Please note that Home Based businesses are not eligible for Infrastructure Improvement grant funding.

Permissions, licenses and warrants

For projects that require planning or building warrants, or approval/certification from other council services (eg. licensing, environmental health) the applicant must be able to demonstrate they are engaged with appropriate council services. Applicants may be asked to provide the name of the council officer they are liaising with, and/or evidence that a formal enquiry has been submitted to the relevant council service (eg. an email or enquiry reference number).



Workforce/Skills Development

Businesses can apply for between £500 and a maximum of **£5,000** for Workforce/Skills Development projects. Examples of eligible projects would be:

- People, process and system development to improve workforce efficiency, productivity
- Courses for upskilling workforce (including ISO accreditations) such as:
 - Digital Skills Training
 - Leadership Development Programmes

Please note that training that is a legal requirement, such as first aid or fire safety training, is not eligible for support. It is recommended that applicants discuss any proposed training project with their Business Gateway adviser well before drafting an application. If necessary, the applicant should make enquiries with the relevant training provider, industry organisations or regulatory bodies to clarify whether or not the training in question is required by law, as evidence of this may be requested by the council. The applicant must be able to provide evidence that the proposed training is not a legal requirement.

Exhibition Support

Businesses can apply for between £500 and a maximum of **£4,000** of Business Growth Fund support for Exhibition Support projects. Examples of eligible projects would be:

- **Exhibitor:** Support is available to help businesses exhibit at trade shows or industry exhibitions or participate in trade missions in the UK or overseas. The fund will contribute to costs such as:

- Exhibition stand, air or rail travel, and accommodation

- **Visitor:** Support is available to help businesses visit trade shows or industry exhibitions, in the UK or overseas.

Please note that this must be the first time your business is exhibiting at or visiting the exhibition or trade show in question.

Application Form

To complete your application for a **Business Growth Fund** grant, your Business Gateway Adviser will provide you with a link to access the application form.

Evidence

All applications must be supported with the following evidence, which you must upload when completing the application form :-

- **Evidence of Incorporation**
- **Evidence of Business located within North Lanarkshire.**(Home-based businesses must provide proof of residency within North Lanarkshire.)

You must ensure you provide all of the evidence relevant to your project. If you do not, this will delay your application.

Evidence of Incorporation

The required evidence of incorporation depends on the type of business. Below are the accepted forms of evidence:

Business Type	Evidence of Incorporation
Company	Certificate of Incorporation or Companies House Registration number
Partnership	Partnership Agreement or HMRC Registration
Sole Trader, Self-Employed or Freelancer	HMRC Registration, Self-Assessment Documents or Valid Business Insurance Document
Community Interest Company	Certificate of Incorporation
Trust	Constitution Documents, HMRC Registration or VAT Registration

Evidence of Business located in North Lanarkshire

Applicants must provide proof of business premises ownership or a valid commercial lease within North Lanarkshire. Home-based businesses must provide proof of residency in North Lanarkshire. The following types of evidence are acceptable:

- Businesses operating from commercial premises:
 - A copy of the **premises lease document, signed and dated by the tenant and the landlord.**
 - **Proof of ownership** (e.g. title deeds)
- Business is home-based:
 - **Mortgage Statement** (dated within last 12 months)
 - **Council tax bill from** North Lanarkshire Council
 - **An email confirmation** from the Electoral Roll

If an applicant submits an application before securing commercial premises in North Lanarkshire, any grant award will be conditional upon the Council receiving a signed copy of the evidence of ownership or lease before the applicant submits their Claim for Grant Payment.

Supporting Documents

The type of project you are seeking support for will determine the required supporting documents for your application.

Project Type	Supporting Documents
All Projects	• Evidence of incorporation • Evidence of business located in North Lanarkshire
Capital Expenditure and Infrastructure Improvement	• Business Plan • Latest Financial Accounts and Most Recent Management Accounts • 12-month cash flow projection • A formal quote from two independent suppliers.
Workforce/Skills Development	• A formal quote from two independent suppliers is required; exceptions may be made for specialist training.
Exhibition Support	• Exhibition Cost: Formal evidence of cost to exhibit at or visit the exhibition. • Travel/Accommodation/Marketing: A formal quote from two independent suppliers, where appropriate.

Suppliers

All goods or services seeking grant support must be accompanied by formal supplier quotes. Two quotes, each from a different supplier, are required for all proposed items of expenditure.

These quotes must be provided on the supplier's own headed paper (ideally in PDF format, or a scanned image of a paper quote). E-mail quotes may also be acceptable however these must clearly show that they have originated from the supplier's business e-mail address.

Quotes should be dated within the last 3 months and must cite your business name and address, as well as the supplier's contact details. Handwritten quotes are not acceptable. Quotes must provide a clear breakdown of the goods or services to be provided, and must be impartial, accurate and represent value for money.

For certain types of proposed expenditure, screenshots of online shopping baskets or the supplier's web pages may also be acceptable. The website URL, name of the supplier and cost of the item should be clearly visible within the screenshot.

If there is any personal, business or financial connection between the applicant business and your preferred supplier, this must be declared in your application and discussed in advance of applying with your Business Gateway adviser to ensure there is no conflict with the grant scheme's compliance or audit requirements. The Council reserves the right to decline an application if it is not satisfied that a supplier meets its compliance requirements.

Appraising your application

Monthly appraisal panels will be held to ensure that applications are appraised consistently and subject to peer review.

You will initially be informed of the outcome of your application by email, so please ensure the email address you provide is up to date.

If your application is successful, you will receive an award letter by email along with supporting documents. You must formally accept the grant award email and return your Acceptance to the council within 21 days.

If your application is not successful we will also inform you by email.

To avoid any delays, please ensure you provide all the necessary documents when completing your online application. If we have any queries about your application, we will contact you directly by telephone or email.

Appeal Process

Unsuccessful applicants may appeal the decision within 14 days of receiving the rejection email, stating the grounds for their appeal. The appeal will then be reviewed by the Council and a decision relayed to the applicant within a further 14 days. Refer to your grant decision letter for information on how to appeal.

Project Execution

Once the applicant receives a formal decision from the Council, they should proceed with the project as detailed in the grant award. At that stage you are then authorised to purchase the goods and services as specified in the grant award.

Payment and Receipts

Applicants must pay for goods or services and obtain formal supplier invoices/receipts.

- **Supplier Invoices:** Ensure that you obtain formal invoices on headed paper from your suppliers which detail the goods or services provided. Invoices should be dated and include your business name and address, as well as the supplier's contact details. Handwritten invoices or receipts are not acceptable.

Methods of Paying Suppliers

1. By Cheque:

- If payment is made by cheque, you must provide the business bank statement showing this transaction as evidence of project expenditure, and either:
 - A copy of the cheque, **or**
 - A receipt, email, or letter on the supplier's headed paper (stating the invoice number) confirming full payment. For email confirmations, ensure the email address clearly indicates it originated from the supplier.

2. By Credit Card:

- Payments made using a **business credit card** are eligible if the credit card has been repaid using the business bank account. You must provide the credit card statements and the business bank statement showing this transaction as evidence of project expenditure.
- Payments made using a **personal credit card are not eligible** and will be excluded from your Claim for Grant Payment.

3. Business Debit Card/Bank Accounts:

- Use a business bank account for all transactions. Payments made from personal bank accounts are not accepted.
- You must provide the business bank statement showing transactions as evidence of project expenditure.

Note: Cash payments are ineligible for grant reimbursement as they do not meet our audit trail requirements. Such payments must be excluded from the Claim for Grant Payment.



Changes to Project Specification and/or Costs:

- If your project costs are lower than anticipated in your grant application, the grant payment you receive will be reduced pro rata.
- The grant payment cannot be increased beyond your original grant award if your project costs exceed your initial estimates.
- The grant is awarded solely for the specific project and associated expenditures detailed in your grant application.
- If you wish to make changes to any of the goods or services you plan to purchase with the grant, you must first seek approval from North Lanarkshire Council. Please [speak](#) to your Business Gateway adviser or contact the Council before making any changes to your project.

Grant Claim

The grant must be claimed within 6 months of the award date or by the date specified in your award letter, whichever comes first.

Note: VAT and delivery costs are ineligible for grant and must be excluded from claims.

Applicants can submit a Claim for Grant Payment after:

1. The project has been successfully completed as per the grant award.
2. All suppliers have been paid in full.
3. The necessary evidence of payment is available (including formal bank statements and supplier invoices/receipts).

Bank Statement Requirements:

A complete bank statement must be provided, showing:

1. The business name
2. The sort code
3. The account number
4. The invoice being debited from the bank account (supplier name must be visible and amount must match)
5. Cheque/ Credit Card Payment

A Claim for Grant Payment form must then be completed and accompanied by:

- Evidence of spend, including:
 - Copies of invoices from all suppliers.
 - Copies of the company's bank statements, showing payments for these supplier invoices leaving the company's bank account.
 - Photographs of Capital Expenditure or Infrastructure Improvement projects.
(Note: business must be in receipt of the equipment purchased and works to be fully completed)
 - Certificates for any training completed and photographs of any exhibitions or similar activities, where available.

Note: Grant payments will not be made for goods/services purchased without matching supplier invoices and corresponding business bank statements. When multiple supplier invoices are paid in a single transaction, you must provide a BACS list, copies of invoices, or a similar



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breakdown of payments to confirm that the invoices included in the Claim for Grant Payment have been paid.

Project Monitoring, Reporting and Follow-up

Monitoring will occur both during the project and after completion to verify the impact of Council grant funding on business growth. In the case of Capital Expenditure and Infrastructure Improvement awards, Council officers will arrange follow-up site visits after project completion to inspect the investment and associated items purchased with grant support. In particular, we will request data on:

- Turnover growth
- Number of new jobs created
- Existing jobs safeguarded
- Other quantitative and qualitative benefits to the business (and local economy/community) arising from the investment

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be detailed in the offer of grant letter.

Subsidy Control

The Business Growth Fund award being applied for by your enterprise is considered to be a subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act (2022), and if successful will be awarded under the North Lanarkshire Business Growth Fund Grants Subsidy Scheme **SC11504**.

Further Information

For more information on the funding and other support available to North Lanarkshire businesses please contact the Business Gateway Lanarkshire on 01698 442837 or lanarkshire@bgateway.com.

Please also visit Business pages on the North Lanarkshire Council website:

www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/business