

Sevenoaks District Business Improvement Grant Scheme Guidance and application form

This scheme offers eligible organisations in the Sevenoaks District the opportunity to apply for capital grants of between £2,000 and £8,000. Only capital expenditure can be considered for this funding, which is made available through the UK Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

Capital expenditure refers to the purchase of fixed assets for long-term use and can include equipment and machinery, upgrades and improvements to buildings. It cannot include ongoing operating costs such as staffing, expenses for activities or repairs and maintenance. You may find this guide helpful to assist you to work out your eligibility.

To apply for one of these grants, please read all the below sections in full before proceeding to the application form at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/big.

Eligibility: who can apply?

A business that can demonstrate three years of trading. This can be a company registered at Companies House (including social enterprises), or a sole trader. Companies will need to provide their registration number and sole traders may be subject to checks such as registration for rates or council tax. Your VAT registration number will also be needed as recoverable VAT will not be paid.

OR

A charity registered with the Charity Commission (registration number will be needed).

You cannot apply if:

- The organisation is not registered and trading in the Sevenoaks District – you can check your local authority area at www.gov.uk/find-local-council
- The company is in liquidation, administration, insolvent or subject to a Striking-Off Notice.
- The company has started or entered any form of administration or insolvency process (including CVA/CVL).

The following organisations are also not eligible:

- Multinational businesses, national chains or franchises, nor businesses that have more than five properties irrespective of locations.
- Businesses that have already received Public subsidy Grant payments that equal the maximum permitted subsidy allowances, or would do so if awarded. You will need to tell us via a separate declaration about any other grants received from public authorities in the last three financial years.

Eligibility: requirements for proposals

Proposals will only be eligible if:

- They will complete by 28 February 2025 (extensions cannot be given due to funding restrictions).
- All relevant permissions such as planning have been secured when an award is made (if this is not so then any award will be conditional upon these being secured).
- The costs exclude recoverable VAT.
- They are not for any works that have already started or assets already purchased prior to a formal award.
- They are not for works to a residential property.
- The application includes the required supporting evidence (quotes, bank statements covering at least the previous three months).
- They meet the assessment criteria outlined below

Assessing Your Application: key criteria

The scheme will remain open until all available funding is allocated. There will be regular assessment panels and each application will be assigned to the next panel following the date of its receipt, subject to internal checks having been undertaken. Early submission is therefore highly encouraged.

We aim to let applicants know the outcome of their application within four weeks of submission but cannot guarantee this.

Applications will be assessed on the following:

Confirmation that the applicant is eligible as outlined above and confirm their acceptance of the terms and conditions outlined below.

Provides a clear rationale for the need of the intervention proposed and the opportunity it presents to the applicant.

That the applicant contributes to at least two of the key outcomes stated below, and clearly outlines how the outcome will be measured and evidenced.

The outcomes are:

- A positive impact on environmental sustainability such as reducing energy costs and / or carbon footprint
- Creation and/ or safeguarding of jobs.
- Increased efficiency / productivity.
- New business activity is enabled.
- Increase in customers/orders/revenue.

Payment of your award

Applicants will ordinarily be paid in full upfront, however we retain discretion over this. Applicants will confirm their agreement to the below terms and conditions which make clear that funds awarded must be spent on the purposes outlined in the grant application, and that in various eventualities Sevenoaks District Council will have the right to seek recovery of the funds. Successful applicants will be required to submit evidence of payments being made to support the activity being funded.

Terms and Conditions

Please read all the below terms and conditions fully Businesses/organisations accepting grant offers from this Scheme will be required to abide by and agree to the following terms and conditions:

1. The approval or refusal of a grant is at the absolute discretion of Sevenoaks District Council ('the Council') and there will be no right to appeal process. Complaints can, however, be made via our complaints policy.
2. You will be required to sign the Council's standard Grant Agreement before any payment will be made.
3. Grants will not be given for expenditure incurred prior to the grant offer being made and the Grant Agreement signed.
4. The grant is not payable to an un-discharged bankrupt, or is subject to administration, insolvency or winding up proceedings.
5. The grant must be used only for the purpose intended as outlined in the Grant Offer Letter. Any works are to be undertaken strictly in accordance with the specification and schedule of works agreed with the Council.
6. The Council's written approval must be obtained in advance of any amendments to the approved specification and schedule of works. Amendments include the omission or variation of the agreed works and the execution of additional works. Failure to comply with this condition may invalidate the grant offer even if the additional work is not grant aided.

7. Please note that:
 - a. The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud.
 - b. Any organisation caught falsifying their records to gain grant money may face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to recovery in these circumstances.
 - c. A serious misrepresentation in supplying the required information may have the following consequences for the signatory that made the misrepresentation. The Council may sue the signatory for damages under the Misrepresentation Act 1967. This may also result in your future exclusion from public contracts under regulation 57 (8) (h)(i) of the Public Contract Regulations 2015.
 - d. If fraud, or fraudulent intent, can be proved, the signatory may be prosecuted and convicted of the offence of fraud by false representation under s.2 of the Fraud Act 2006, which can carry a sentence of up to 10 years or a fine (or both).
8. The award of grant funding may have tax implications – it is the responsibility of the applicant to investigate this and pay tax as appropriate.
9. If the applicant is registered for VAT this must be declared on the application form. If at any point the business/organisation becomes VAT registered, the applicant must inform The Council and discuss repayment of VAT expenses claimed.
10. Where the grant is to be used for alterations/ modifications to a building or land not in ownership of the applicant, payment of grant requires the building owner's approval and providing proof of a minimum of a two-year lease for the building.
11. If the business/organisation ceases trading/operating within two years of the payment of the grant or no longer occupies its building, the applicant must notify the Council within 14 days and in such circumstances The Council may require the applicant(s) to repay, in whole or part, the grant paid.
12. The grant must not be used for improvements to residential property, external security features, CCTV systems or recoverable VAT.
13. The Grant will only be paid to proposals which, where required, have been granted all relevant permissions (Planning/Advertising etc.)
14. Nothing in the agreement or negotiation of the grant will affect the Council's decision over planning permission. Failure to provide satisfactory proof will result in a delay in payment being made and could result in Grant forfeiture.
15. There is no obligation on the Council to increase the grant if the costs of works increase, or if any additional work is undertaken.
16. The applicant must inform the Council of any changes to the business/organisation or changes of business address and/or telephone number.

17. Any grant must be taken up within the period stated in the Grant Offer Letter or the offer will lapse.
18. Grants are dependent on applicants being required to complete a short questionnaire evaluation 6 months after the receipt of the grant, or to the best of their ability by 31 March 2025, whichever is sooner.
19. The Council reserves the right to publish illustrations, photographs or other details of your project in promotional literature and other documents associated with Council grant schemes.
20. Successful applicants are required to register their organisation on the [Sevenoaks District Business Directory](#) as a condition of receipt of their funding.
21. The council reserves the right to withhold any outstanding payment and seek recovery of payments made should any of the terms and conditions not be complied with.
22. Your information will be treated in accordance with the Sevenoaks District Council's [Privacy Policy](#).