



APPLICATION GUIDANCE NOTES – SMALL GRANTS FUND

FUND AIMS

The Small Grants Fund is designed to support SME businesses in the borough of Telford & Wrekin by providing financial assistance for eligible capital investment projects that promote business growth. This includes:

- Expanding into new markets
- Adopting new technologies or processes
- Improving productivity
- Launching new products or services
- Creating jobs

SUPPORT PROVIDED

The fund offers **match-funded grants** ranging from **£500 to £2,000** for businesses aiming to grow or expand through capital investment projects.

- The fund covers up to **100% of project costs**, up to a maximum grant award of **£2000**. Any expenditure **over the initial £2000 is to be funded by the business** through company reserves, bank loans, or overdraft facilities.
- **Excluded funding sources:** Credit cards, hire purchase, lease purchase, or asset finance models.
- **Retrospective projects are not eligible**—only purchases made **after grant approval offer letter has been issued** qualify.

Example Scenarios

- **Company A** wants to buy new equipment costing **£2,000**. It can apply for **100% funding (£2,000)**, leaving the business to contribute **£0.00**.
- **Company B** is purchasing a new software for **£5,000**. It can apply for **£2,000 (the maximum grant amount)**, covering the remaining **£3,000** independently.

GRANT PAYMENT PROCESS

The fund operates on a **defrayal basis**, meaning:

1. Once a Grant Offer Letter has been issued, signed, and returned businesses **purchase goods/services** after receiving grant approval.
2. They **provide evidence of purchase and delivery**.
3. The grant is **reimbursed upon verification**—payments are **not made upfront**.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible to apply, applicants must meet **all** the following:

- The business must be **based in or relocating to** Telford and Wrekin.
 - Check your location by entering your postcode here: <https://www.gov.uk/pay-council-tax>



- If relocating, evidence of a signed lease agreement (signed by both parties) must be included with your full application.
- The business must have been **trading for a minimum of 6 months** at the time of the full application **OR** if you are a Pre-start / less than 6 months trading, you must have successfully completed the FREE Start Up Telford start up programme - <https://startuptelford.co.uk/apply/>
- The business must qualify as an **SME**—fewer than 250 employees, and either:
 - Annual turnover ≤ £36 million, or
 - Annual balance sheet total ≤ £18 million.

Priority funding will be given to applicants who can financially complete their project by **December 2025**

Both **B2B and B2C businesses** may apply. However, priority will be given to businesses in the following sectors:

- Manufacturing
- Engineering
- Digital
- Professional or Office Services
- Logistics and Distribution
- Wholesale
- Construction
- Environmental

ELIGIBLE PROJECT CRITERIA

Projects must meet at least one of the following objectives supported by the Large Grant Fund. Applications addressing **multiple objectives** will be rated more highly.

1. Create new, additional permanent jobs (FTE/PTE)

- All jobs must be created by **February 2026**. Priority is given to roles created within 12 months.
- "New" means the job did not exist before the grant.
- "Permanent" means it lasts at least 12 months.
- **Zero-hour contracts and subcontractor roles do not count**, though converting them to FTE roles does.

2. Adopt new-to-firm technologies or processes

- Must be new in functionality or fundamentally different from current systems.
- Can be either **tangible** (equipment) or **intangible** (software/systems).

3. Improve productivity

- Measured as gross value added per worker or per hour worked.

4. Engage with new markets



- Launching new products/services into new domestic or overseas markets.
- Includes market research or event attendance to support market entry.
- "New markets" refer to new product/service types or new regions/countries.

5. Introduce new products or services to market

- Products/services must be **new to the company's offering**.

Projects addressing **multiple objectives** and demonstrating value for money will be prioritised.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

All applicants must provide baseline data aligned with their project objectives, detailing:

- Current FTE/PTE count
- Existing production capacity
- Market activity and reach
- Current technologies and processes
- Product/service portfolio

Following project completion, applicants will be required to submit *post-intervention data* demonstrating growth aligned with the chosen objective(s).

Example Scenarios:

- **Company A** currently employs 3 FTEs. As part of their application, they provide payroll/HR documentation. With grant support, they plan to create 1 additional FTE, taking the total to 4. Post-project, evidence such as employment contracts and updated payroll records must confirm this growth.
- **Company B** outsources a large volume of work. They provide data showing the value and extent of outsourcing. With the grant, they will purchase machinery to bring this work in-house, introducing a new or fundamentally different technology. They will need to evidence this implementation.
- **Company C** produces 50 units daily. They provide proof of this baseline via machine specifications or production records. The project aims to double output to 100 units through new machinery or improved systems. Post-project evidence should confirm the increase.
- **Company D** plans to expand into a new geographical market (e.g. Germany or Wales), where they currently do not operate. They provide baseline sales data and detail how the grant will fund market research or exhibition attendance. Evidence of new market activity will be required.
- **Company E** will launch a product distinct from their existing range. They supply current product line information and show how the new offering differs. They propose purchasing machinery to enable production. Evidence of the product launch must be submitted post-completion.

These examples are illustrative, not exhaustive. All projects must be aligned with the fund's objectives. Therefore, all applicants must first discuss their project with the Invest Telford team.



APPLICATION PROCESS

The application consists of a **two-stage process** to assess project viability and alignment with fund goals. All submissions must be completed **online**—paper applications will not be accepted.

Stage 1: Expression of Interest (EOI)

- Submit an EOI form to register interest.
- Provide the following:
 - Applicant and business details
 - Project description and estimated value
 - Intended fund objective(s)
 - Previous funding history
- EOIs will be reviewed against eligibility, scheme requirements, and fund objectives.
- Applicants will be notified whether they are invited to Stage 3 or unsuccessful.

Stage 2: Optional Project Scoping Meeting

- Eligible applicants will have the options to discuss the following with the Invest Telford team to:
 - Explore the project in depth
 - Confirm alignment with fund objectives
 - Clarify submission requirements
- Questions and support options can also be explored at this stage.
- Meetings may be held in person or via Microsoft Teams.
- **Note:** While third-party consultants may assist with applications, their cost is not eligible for grant claims. A representative from the applying business **must attend all meetings**.

Stage 3: Full Application

- Applicants will receive a **unique link** to submit the full application form online.

FULL APPLICATION INFORMATION & GUIDANCE

The application consists of **10 sections**. Your progress will be saved automatically, so you don't need to complete it in one sitting.

To save time, we recommend preparing your responses in a Word document beforehand. This allows you to copy and paste your answers into the online form in one session.

When submitting a full application, **businesses must provide all the following information:**

SECTION 1 – APPLICANT AND BUSINESS CONTACT DETAILS

Requirement	Guidance
Business Details	Business name, address, postcode, company registration or UTR number, VAT (if applicable), SIC code



Applicant Contact Details	Full name, job title, contact information, company website (if applicable)
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SECTION 2 – BUSINESS INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND

Requirement	Guidance
Business Entity Type	Select from: Sole Trader, Partnership, Limited Company, LLP, Other
Business Sector	Select from: Manufacturing, Logistics, Food & Drink, Engineering, Professional/Office Services, Wholesale, Construction, Distribution, Environmental, Other
Main Business Activity	Briefly describe the core function of the business (25 words max)
Trading Start Date	Date business commenced operations
Number of FTE Employees	Enter number of full-time equivalent staff
Number of Part-Time Employees	Enter number
Number of Apprentices	Enter number
Zero Hour / Agency / Subcontracted Staff	Enter number
Current Turnover	State current annual turnover
Business History	Summary from business start to present (50–200 words)
Business Activity Description	Describe the services/products offered (50–300 words)
Current Market Information	Sectors served, notable customers, geographical spread, export activity (50–300 words)
Declarations	6 Yes/No declarations

SECTION 3 – PROJECT AND IMPACT

Requirement	Guidance
Grant Usage	Describe what the funding will purchase
Project Justification	Explain the business need for this project
Jobs Created	State the number of new jobs (if applicable)
Job Creation Details	For each job: Position, skill level (unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled), hours, salary, start date
Jobs Safeguarded	State the number of jobs at risk that will be retained (if applicable)
New Technologies / Processes	Detail any new or fundamentally different technologies/processes (50–400 words, if applicable)
Productivity Increases	Outline current vs expected production capacity (20–400 words, if applicable)
Market Expansion	Describe current and new markets targeted (50–400 words, if applicable)
New Products / Services	Explain what new offerings will be launched (20–400 words, if applicable)
Grant Justification	Explain why funding is necessary to deliver the project
Environmental Benefits	Describe environmental improvements and alignment with the UK Net Zero Strategy
Additional Benefits	Highlight any wider business or community impacts
Project Start Date	Proposed start date
Project Completion Date	Expected financial completion date



SECTION 4 – BUSINESS RELOCATION OR EXPANSION

Complete this section only if your project involves moving to new premises within the next 6 months.

Requirement	Guidance
Current Premises	Full address including postcode
New or Additional Premises	Full address including postcode
New or Additional Premises Size	Size in square feet (sq.ft.)
Expected Completion Date	When the move/expansion is anticipated to be completed

SECTION 5 – PROJECT COST

Requirement	Guidance
Expenditure Items	List each item requiring funding, including: name/model number, cost, preferred supplier, and rationale for supplier choice

SECTION 6 – RISK MANAGEMENT

Requirement	Guidance
Project Manager	Name of the Director/Owner responsible for overseeing the delivery of the project
Risk Assessment	Identify any known risks to the project and describe mitigation measures

SECTION 7 – DOCUMENT UPLOAD

Applicants must upload the following documents as part of their submission.

Document	Guidance
Bank Statements	Provide full bank statements for the latest 3 consecutive months , clearly showing the bank name, business name, account number, sort code, and account name. Partially redacted or incomplete statements will not be accepted.
Evidence of Match Funding	Acceptable formats include: latest bank statements, loan agreements, overdraft approvals, or signed director declarations. Leased or hire-purchase assets are not eligible.
Previous Year's Annual Accounts	Required only if applying for over £10,001 . Not mandatory for grant requests of £10,000 or less.
Procurement Quotes	Must follow the guidelines detailed in the procurement guidance section.
Additional Information	May be requested on an individual basis during the assessment process.
Staff Evidence	Submit current HR/payroll documentation listing all existing employees.
Pre- and Post-Intervention Impact	Required from successful applicants. The team will assist in collecting and formatting this data.



> **Note:** Submission of false or misleading data will result in automatic withdrawal of grant and funding agreement. No appeals will be accepted. If funds have already been received, a **clawback process** will be initiated. Applicants are strongly encouraged to collaborate with the Invest Telford team throughout.

SECTION 8 – SUBSIDY CONTROL (FORMERLY STATE AID)

Requirement	Guidance
Previous Public Funding	List any public funding received in the past 3 years, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name of funding body• Date of award• Mechanism (e.g. De Minimis, GBER)

SECTION 9 – EQUALITY MONITORING

Requirement	Guidance
Completion of Monitoring Table	Applicants are required to complete four dropdown questions covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age range• Gender• Disability• Ethnicity• Religion (optional) This information is collected for monitoring purposes only and will not influence application outcomes.

SECTION 10 – DECLARATION

Requirement	Guidance
Confirmation of Accuracy	Applicants must sign a declaration confirming that all information provided is complete and accurate.

> **Note:** Retrospective applications will not be accepted. Any expenditure made prior to the issue of a formal grant offer letter is ineligible and will result in withdrawal of your funding allocation by Telford & Wrekin Council.

PROCUREMENT RULES



Total Value (per item/supplier)	Procedure	Advertising Requirement
Under £10,000	Obtain 3 informal quotes to demonstrate best value	Not required Minimum accepted item value: £500. Any proposed item under this threshold must be discussed with the Invest Telford team in advance.
£10,001–£177,897 (Supplies/Services) or £10,001–£50,000 (Works)	Minimum 3 formal quotes required	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advertise opportunity online for at least 10 days, including: Opportunity details 2. What is required 3. Evaluation criteria 4. Application process and deadline The process must be impartial and justified. Must be advertised on the applicant's website for a minimum of 10 days Over £177,897 (Supplies/Services) Over £50,000 (Works) Full tender process required. Provide detailed specification and invite competitive bids. Use consistent evaluation criteria. Must be advertised on the applicant's website for at least 35 days, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Opportunity details 6. Requirements 7. Evaluation criteria <p>Deadline and application process Applicants must document the scoring process and show rationale for awarding the contract.</p> <p> Minimum accepted item value: £500. Any proposed item under this threshold must be discussed with the Invest Telford team in advance.</p>