

Central Bedfordshire Start Up Grant Criteria

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Key Features

The Central Bedfordshire Grant Fund is a grant offering between £300 and £3,000 to start-up businesses based within Central Bedfordshire, funded by UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) & Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). The aim of this grant is to help new businesses to establish and grow, by assisting with start-up costs. You must be able to demonstrate a need for the grant and specify how it will be used.

Eligibility

The business must be based in Central Bedfordshire and must be less than **3 years old** (from date of incorporation/registration).

- All clients must be signed up to be part of the Central Bedfordshire funded Start-Up Programme and must have completed to 12 hours advice/training.
- The applicant must provide evidence that the business has been registered:
 - if you are a limited company, you must be registered with Companies House
 - if your business is a partnership, you must have a copy of your Partnership Agreement
 - if you are a sole trader, you must be registered as self-employed with HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)
- Applicants must be aged 18 years and over.
- Clients must submit a basic outline business plan including financial projections.
- Any business activity that is illegal or deemed unsuitable for public support by Central Bedfordshire Council will not be eligible for consideration.
- There are two grant funds available the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) please use Defra's magic map to confirm area for application: <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx> . Please call Wenta on 01438 310020 if you need assistance with this.

Eligible Expenditure

The grant can only be used for capital expenditure that are associated with the business; examples may include but are not restricted to:

- Website Expenditure
- Tools
- Machinery
- Office Equipment (Excluding IT)
- Commercial Vehicles
- Advertising materials (banner stands, business cards, leaflets)
- Branding & logo design
- Purchased software licenses (They must be intended for use on a continuing basis in their activities and have more than short term value (i.e., they must have a useful economic life of more than one year).
- Software developed internally - All expenditure is classified as capital expenditure, provided the software has a readily ascertainable market value. This means there should be similar software products available for purchase on the open market.



- Domain hosting – this must be for longer than one year.
- Patents
- Licenses, trademarks, and artistic originals
- Development expenditure

What we cannot fund: Grants cannot be used for certain cash flow related expenditure or general running costs i.e:

- IT equipment including (but not limited to) laptops, computers, monitors, peripherals, servers, phones, tablets, screens, scanners, printers, photocopiers, network devices and physical storage. This list is not exhaustive.
- General business set up costs or core running or staff costs or working capital e.g. to buy stock, pay wages or salaries, reduce debt or support utility bills; or expenditure to comply with statutory regulations.
- Items not directly needed to deliver the proposed projects nor non-business expenditure.
- Costs on the project incurred before a grant offer is made or that cannot be evidenced within the grant scheme end-date.
- The direct like-for-like replacement of items for an existing purpose e.g. to replace broken, worn out or outdated equipment (i.e. not driven by energy efficiency / carbon reduction considerations), or the routine replacement of items and consumables including laptops and software licences.
- The purchase of land and/or buildings or improvements to domestic or private dwellings
- VAT, even where it is a non-recoverable cost.
- Repeat applications including from linked companies, nor more than one application from a Group of linked enterprises.

Please talk to Wenta if you need clarification in this area.

Fees

There is no fee payable for joining the programme or at any point thereafter.

Grants

The grant amount of between £300 and £3,000 must be 'matched' by a minimum of **25%** from the proprietor/business meaning that the purchase needs to be a minimum of £375 (excluding VAT). Loans, overdrafts, savings, or company funds are considered to be eligible cash matches.

Once a grant is agreed an offer of grant will be issued and the applicant would then be expected to purchase the goods and provide proof of payment. The grant monies will only be released once a receipt and proof of payment have been provided.

You must be able to obtain 3 competitive quotes for each item. You are not obliged to accept the lowest quotation received, but a written explanation of the rationale behind any such decision will be required which demonstrates the chosen supplier's experience and/or value for money.

We do not accept applications for working with suppliers which are closely associated with the applicant's business.

Limitations

- Only one application per business or individual can be made.
- Retrospective applications will not be acceptable. If you have already agreed or paid for a project, you will not be able to apply for funding. You must wait to receive an approval letter from Wenta before paying the supplier invoice or we will not be permitted to fund your project.
- There is an allocation of grants each month and if the month's allocation has been taken up in full then the applicant will be given the opportunity to submit their grant application for the following month's allocation.
- You will not be permitted to change supplier once your application has been approved. Please contact us to discuss any issues with this.
- Please note that the grant is discretionary and subject to the availability of funds.
- Funded assets may be subject to an asset tag and need to be kept for a minimum of 3 years by the grant recipient/enterprise.
- Applications close in November 2024 or when all the funds have been allocated. Any approved grant spend must be drawn down by 31st March 2025.

Before starting to complete the application form please ensure you have the following available:

- A copy of the latest bank statement for the account used to operate the business, clearly showing the account number, name and sort code. If the business is already trading this statement should evidence business income and expenditure.
- A basic outline Business Plan – [template available here](#) your Business Advisor can offer guidance on how to complete it.
- A cash-flow forecast for the next 12 months for your business – [template available here](#) your Business Advisor can offer guidance on how to complete it.
- A copy of either your company's Certificate of Incorporation, VAT Registration, or letter from HMRC confirming your UTR number (Unique Tax Reference)
- Your Council Tax reference number (for your home address)
- Your Non-Domestic rates number (if you have business premises)
- A copy of photographic ID confirming your name (either your passport or driving license)

Timescales

The Grant administrator (Wenta) will appoint an advisor to work with you at Wenta on your grant application. There is no limitation on the time that can be taken to complete an application within the timescales of the business, which the allocated business advisor must sign off alongside the applicant before submission. A basic business plan should be submitted with the application including numbers indicating the projected growth in sales/income.

Wenta's intention is to consider any grant application within 15 working days of submission. During busy periods this may take longer. A second assessor will consider the application and countersign if approved. Wenta will then pass your application for approval or rejection by an independent Panel from Central Bedfordshire Council. The grant panel will review the application and respond within 3/4 weeks. The Panel may request further information before making a final decision.



The Panel will assess each application on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the following criteria:

- Clarity of proposition – how the funding aligns with the UKSPF support intervention.
- Value for money – and a realistic forecast
- The impact on the enterprise and the local economy – an assessment of the scale and ambition of the proposal.
- The need for financial support – why does the enterprise need the grant funding.
- Deliverability – the likelihood of growth plans being realised in the timescales set out.
- Financial viability of the enterprise – each applicant will be subject to a credit check.

The Panel has the right to refuse grant assistance or decide on the percentage of grant awarded against eligible expenditure. The Panel's decision is final.

Applicants will be informed in writing of confirmation of the decision. Successful applicants must not instruct a supplier, until this letter has been received. Once the grant offer has been made it will be valid for 3 months from the date of the offer letter, if the spend is not completed in this time the offer will be withdrawn and you will have to reapply.

The Grant Recipient will then be expected to pay 100% of the invoice costs. Proof of purchase and payment (as detailed in the offer letter) must then be provided to the Grant Administrator (Wenta) along with any evidence required to ensure any grant conditions have been met. The Grant Administrator (Wenta) will then reimburse the applicant once payment has been released from Central Bedfordshire Council.

Guidelines for submitting invoices to receive matched funding

1. Supplier Invoices can only be submitted to us once you have received a letter from Wenta confirming that they have accepted your grant application.
2. Supplier Invoices must be dated after the date of the letter from Wenta and need to clearly show that they have been paid (i.e. ask the supplier for a receipt) or provide separate proof of payment.
3. Provide proof of the money going out of your account - a certified redacted Business account bank statement.
4. Invoices for the total amount (excluding VAT) must be submitted all together, so Wenta will make one payment into your bank account
5. Provide us with your bank account name, sort code and number.
6. Please note: If you have paid your suppliers using a credit card, we will be unable to process your claim without a certified redacted business bank statement showing full payment to the credit provider.

To apply for the grant you must first complete the CBC UKSPF / REPF Supporting Local Businesses Expression of Interest Form which you can do [here](#). If you have already signed up for the programme please email info@wenta.co.uk or call 01438 310020.

If you have submitted an application and not heard from us within 20 working days please contact us at info@wenta.co.uk or call 01438 310020.