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UK Government



Warwickshire County Council

Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) Business Grants

Guidance for Applicants

July 2025

1. Introduction

The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) supports the aims of the government's Missions and Farming and Countryside Programme. The Business Grant element helps to fund capital projects for small businesses in rural areas. This will help to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy. Warwickshire County Council has a limited amount of funding for business grants in two areas of the county.

REPF can provide capital funding for rurally based projects, such as farm diversification projects outside of agriculture, or small-scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas.

The aims of the fund include supporting new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of a wider benefit to the local economy. Specific eligibility criteria and local priorities have been agreed for the REPF business grants in Warwickshire.

The REPF funding is part of a package of business loans and grants funded by, or managed by, the County Council to support Warwickshire's businesses.

This document provides more information about the REPF business grant scheme and explains how to apply.

For more information on the REPF and to view the fund prospectus, please follow this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

2. Who can apply?

Micro and small enterprises can apply. Defining a micro or small business:

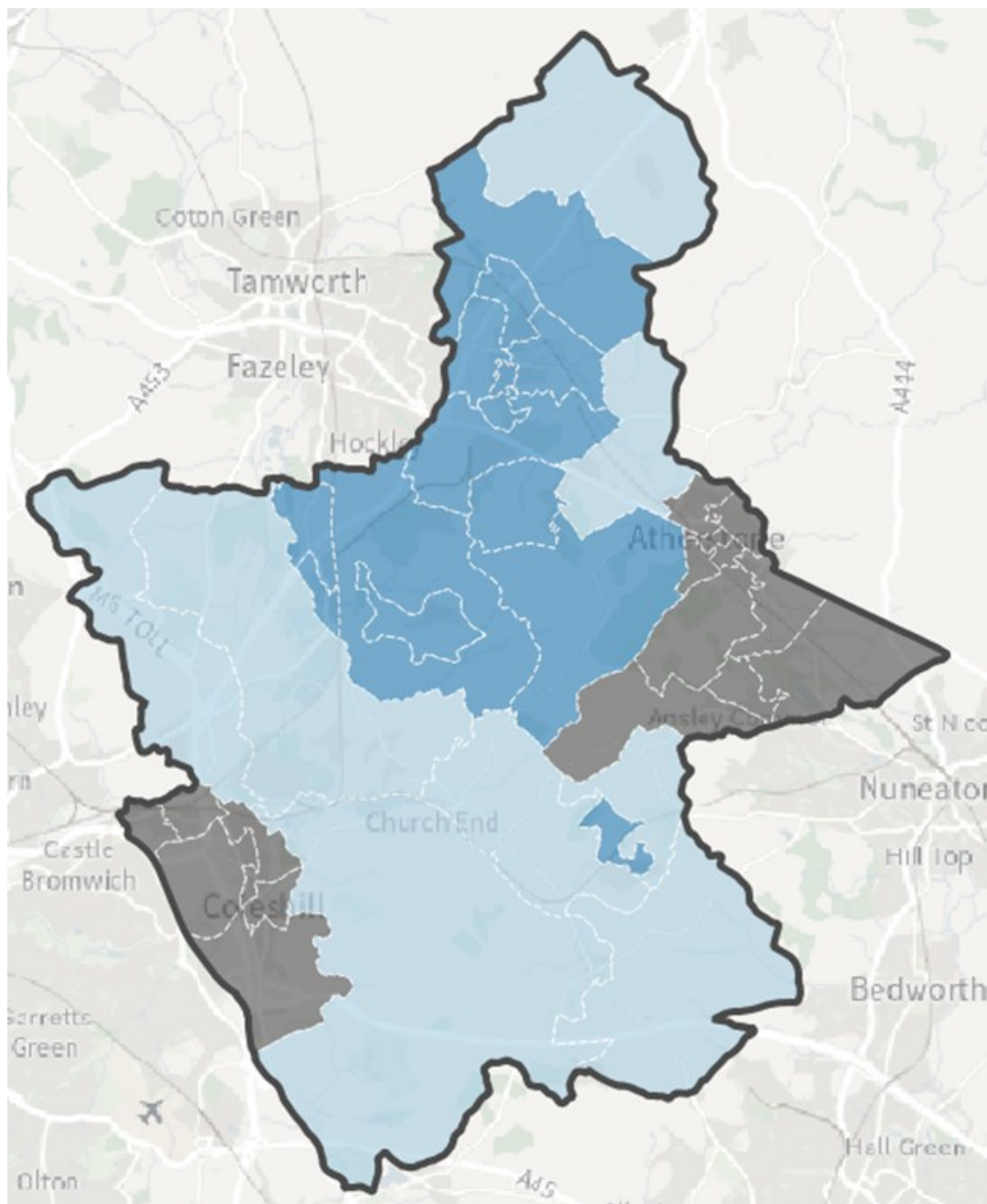
Turnover or balance sheet total	Headcount	Business size
Turnover less than £15 million, or balance sheet total less than £7.5 million.	Fewer than 50	Small
Turnover less than £1 million, or balance sheet does not exceed £500,000.	Fewer than 10	Micro

Relationships with other enterprises are also taken into account, when determining whether you or not you meet this criteria.

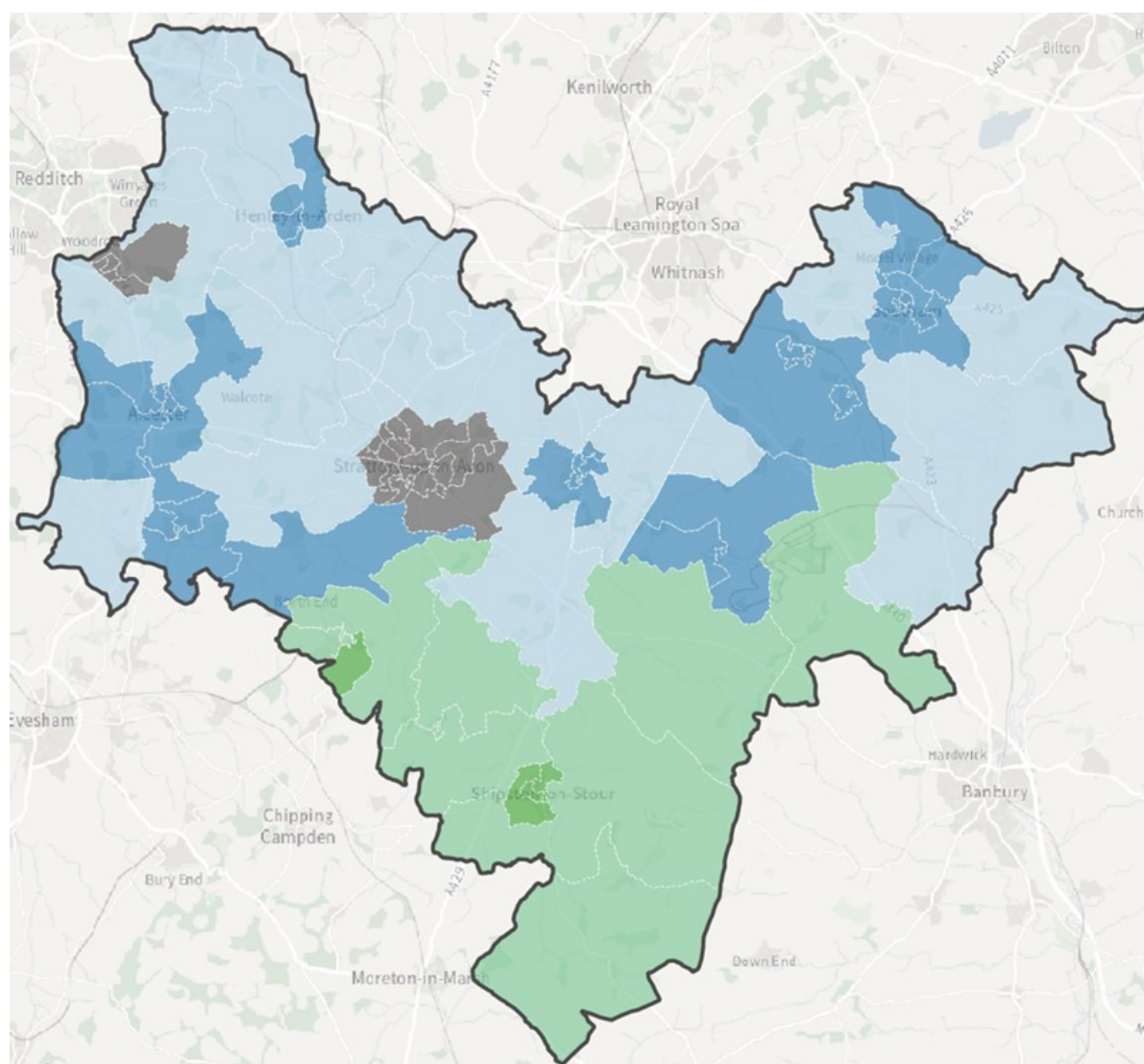
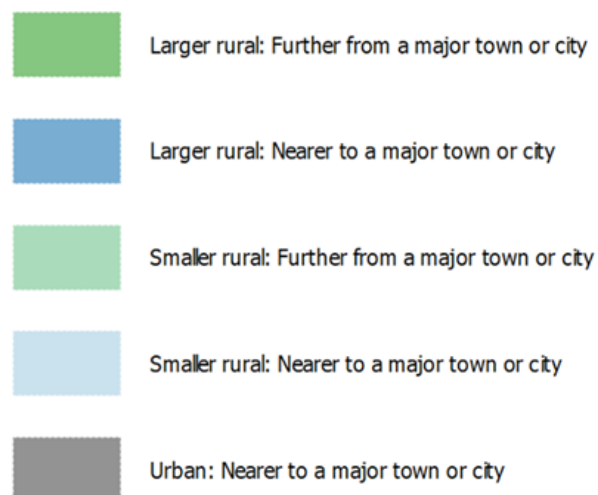
[Supplementary information: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises definition \(HTML\) - GOV.UK](#)

Eligible areas are subject to Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) criteria, which means that a limited amount of funding has only been made available to the North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC) and Stratford on Avon District Council (SDC) areas.

The large majority of these two lower tier local authority areas are eligible. However, WCC is proposing to give priority to businesses in the rural areas according to Defra's Rural Urban Classification (2025).



Rural urban classification



In addition, Defra have classed the Birch Coppice Business Park, Hartshill and Ansley Common areas of North Warwickshire as **ineligible**. Defra have also classed parts of Gaydon, Lighthorne and Long Marston in Stratford District as only eligible “on application” or under certain circumstances. Applicants from those areas should contact WCC at the earliest opportunity.

Only businesses in the following priority sectors are eligible to apply:

- Farm Diversification – outside of Agriculture,
- Food & Drink,
- Local Arts, Cultural Heritage and Creative,
- Visitor Economy (Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality).

The programme is open to micro and small businesses, as well as business start-ups that have a sound business plan and are classed under one of the priority sectors shown.

Priority will also be given to businesses in rural areas, according to Defra’s Rural Urban classification (2025).

Any business or individual with a legal or personal connection to a business who has had a funding offer withdrawn or terminated with any outstanding repayments due to Warwickshire County Council or another public sector body or a publicly funded programme is **ineligible** to apply.

3. How much funding is available?

The scheme will provide support for eligible projects requesting between **£2,500 and up to £25,000 of grant**.

Grant support up to a **maximum of 40% of the total eligible costs** is available. Match funding must be monetary (rather than ‘in kind’) and from private sector sources.

For example:

Project A costs £16,700.00 gross and the business that are completing this project are not VAT registered, so this is the cost including VAT, which they can claim as part of the overall spend. This means that at a maximum intervention rate of 40%, the business can apply for a grant of £6,680.00

Project B costs £100,000.00 gross and the business that are completing this project are VAT registered. This means the grant will be calculated on the net value of the project as they will

be able to claim back the VAT. The net value is £83,333.33 so the maximum intervention rate of 40% would take the grant value over the maximum allowed of £25,000.00.

In this case we would automatically reduce the intervention rate to 30%, which then means the maximum grant amount available is £25,000.00. Applicants would also need to be able to demonstrate the need for a grant at this level.

Applicants need to demonstrate the need for the requested level of public funding and how their project will comply with the new UK Subsidy Control Rules.

For full UK subsidy guidance please visit the website for [Guidance on UK Subsidy Control Rules](#).

Applying is a competitive process, and value for money/ impact will be a key factor when projects are appraised and selected.

4. What activities are eligible?

The scheme can only support **capital costs**. It is designed to help **micro** and **small** businesses put in place the full funding package needed for capital investments that will diversify or modernise their operations, leading to economic growth. Grants are only available towards the costs of tangible capital assets including:

- The refurbishment or extension of property, for the purposes of expanding the business, not a move to like-for-like premises,
- Creating event venues or farm tourism facilities, such as accommodation, wedding venues and leisure facilities,
- Purchasing new process and packaging machinery, such as brewing equipment or onsite vending machines,
- Equipping development kitchens, or modernising existing, for increased energy efficiency or productivity.

Grants are not available towards the costs of buying land or property. The speculative conversion of buildings into business premises also will NOT be supported.

There is a list of ineligible activities and costs which cannot be claimed in **Appendix A**.

5. Previous Grant Recipients

Businesses who have already received a grant from Warwickshire County Council or another public sector funded programme can apply. However, such applicants will need to provide additional evidence in their application for why they need a further grant from the public sector.

6. The Application Process

The application process is competitive and those projects offering the greatest return on investment are more likely to be supported. As this is a competitive process, there is no guarantee that your application will be successful.

There is a short online eligibility form to fill in and once this check has been undertaken there will be an online application form to complete. This is to allow us to ensure that your project meets the eligibility criteria and application requirements.

Applications will open on the 31st July 2025 and run until 23:59H on Monday 15th September 2025, (6 weeks). All projects must be completed and claimed in full, by 31st March 2026. Grants are claimed in arrears.

As part of your application, you will need to demonstrate the need for your project in the marketplace and the demand that has been identified. You will need to explain how the project will enable significant change in your business.

Applications will be competitively ranked against each other. The assessment will consider the extent to which a project supports the objectives of the REPF Business Grant, the need for a grant from the public sector, the number of measurable outputs and outcomes to be created, value for money and deliverability.

A range of supporting documentation is required along with other information depending on your project. For example, you will need to demonstrate that you have the relevant statutory approvals or permissions required for your project to be able to proceed (such as planning permission). You will also need to meet the Procurement Requirements in Section 8.

All projects must be completed and claimed in full, by 31st March 2026. Grants are claimed in arrears.

7. UK Subsidy Control

Your project must comply with the UK Subsidy Control Rules. Before the Council decides to provide a grant, to ensure compliance, it will assess whether the grant will fall within the minimal financial assistance exemption in the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

The exemption applies provided the total amount of minimal financial assistance given to the business, from all sources, within the applicable period (the elapsed part of the current financial year and the two financial years previously) does not exceed £315,000.

Before giving minimal financial assistance, the Council will give the business, to which it is considering making a grant, a minimal financial assistance notification. The grant cannot be made until the recipient provides written confirmation that the total of £315,000 will not be exceeded by the business receiving the proposed assistance from the Council.

This may reduce the amount of grant available to support your project.

For full UK subsidy guidance please visit the website for [Guidance on UK Subsidy Control Rules](#).

8. Procurement

To ensure best value for money, all goods and services claimed for as part of the project need to be openly and fairly procured.

Applicants need to provide written quotes, references to catalogue listings or formal tenders as part of their application. A minimum of one quote should be from a Warwickshire-based supplier where possible and we encourage applicants to seek as many local quotes as possible.

The following table sets out the requirements depending on the value of an individual item.

Contract (expenditure) value	Minimum requirement per expenditure item.
£0 to £2,499	One written quote or catalogue listing.
£2,500 to £24,999	Three written quotes or reference to catalogue listings, with at least one of those quotes being from a supplier with a business address in Warwickshire, if possible.
£25,000 to £214,903	Three written quotes, with at least one of those quotes being from a supplier with a business address in Warwickshire, if possible.
*£214,904 or over (including VAT)	Formal tender process – please contact WCC if you need to carry out this process.

Supplementary guidance on the requirements expected from quotes and ensuring value for money is included on Appendix B.

**Projects involving goods and services above the EU threshold, £214,904 (Indicative value excluding 20% VAT £179,086), should be discussed with Warwickshire County Council at the earliest opportunity.*

Advice on procurement and the requirements is available as part of the application process, or by email: business@warwickshire.gov.uk

9. Permissions and Consents

If your project requires permissions or consents (e.g. planning permission or landlord consent), you can still apply but you will need to Evidence that you already have these in place.

Grant funding is not available towards the costs of getting any permissions or consents.

10. Rural Fund Indicators

All projects will be assessed on the number, type, and quality of output and outcomes they will deliver. Applicants should refer to the list of objectives, outputs and outcomes published as part of the REPF prospectus. This should be used to help determine the outcomes and outputs for your project. Should your project be approved, then the outputs included in your application will form part of the grant agreement. The realism of your outputs will be tested as part of the assessment process.

See the new [list of objectives, outputs and outcomes](#) that are linked to REPF interventions for the fund indicators.

Jobs created (Employment increase in supported businesses): Jobs created are where new, permanent, and paid jobs are created. Date of creation is the day the new employee starts work in the business. The job should not have existed before. Jobs should also have a life expectancy of at least 12 months. A full-time equivalent (FTE) job created can still be counted even if it does not last for 12 months provided there is contractual evidence that the intended life expectancy of the job was 12 months.

Full time equivalent: Paid work of 36 hours or more per week. Part-time jobs should be treated on a pro-rata basis. Seasonal jobs can be counted where this is normal practice for an industry. The job must exist for a minimum of four weeks per annum, and it should be counted on a pro-rata basis. E.g. a three-month job = 0.25 FTE or two part-time jobs = 1 FTE (if no other information is available).

All jobs created will also need to be reported on the basis of gender, age, disability, and ethnicity.

Jobs safeguarded: A job is considered as 'safeguarded' if a job which was considered at risk when a business applied for the grant is still in existence at the time of counting and is no longer at risk of being lost within a year. The job must not be counted again if it is filled over time by different individuals. Jobs safeguarded are also counted as full time equivalents as per the guidance above.

Jobs supported: Jobs supported are staff members within the organisation that benefit from the grant funded project. In some cases, this can be all employees within the business (if the project has an overall supporting outcome to the business)

Enhancing/improving rural visitor economy and rural leisure opportunities: measurable by an increase in visitor numbers/visitor spend, prompting increase in turnover and profitability.

Number of new to the market/ new to the firm products introduced: If the project involves new products, either new to the market or new to the firm, these should be also reported. Products can be tangible or intangible (including services and processes).

A new to the market product is one where there is no other product available with the same functionality or it is fundamentally different in design or technology to already existing products. A new to the firm product is one where there is no other product available at that business with the same functionality or it is fundamentally different in design or technology to already existing products at that business.

Increase in efficiencies: Improvements must be measurable and demonstrable. For example: implementation of automation in areas of repetitive tasks, freeing up staff to concentrate on more strategic work, that can help the business to introduce lean principles, reducing bottlenecks in production and improve efficiencies.

11. Grant Offer

Successful projects will be invited to enter into a grant agreement with WCC. This will explain when a project can start and all terms and conditions including any project specific conditions.

All invoices must be paid by a monetary transaction **BUT NOT CASH** – transactions for goods or services settled in cash will not be eligible for grant support

Our standard terms and conditions are available to applicants on request, and it is recommended that you familiarise yourself with them.

WCC must always be notified immediately of any changes to a project. Any failure to do so, could result in a review of the grant offer. This might involve changes to the timing or the financing of a project. All changes must be agreed in writing by WCC.

12. Publicity

The grant agreement will also explain the rules for publicising the grant support from the Rural England Prosperity Fund via Warwickshire County Council. We may ask you to acknowledge the funding in any press releases or when communicating with customers (for example on web sites). We may also ask you to display a poster or plaque (depending on the project).

Advice on publicity will be available as part of the application process and at any grant offer stage.

13. Contact

Warwickshire County Council
Business and Economy
Economy & Skills
Transport and Economy
Shire Hall, Warwick, CV34 4RL.

Email: business@warwickshire.gov.uk

Appendix A

Ineligible activities

The following activities are not eligible for support:

- The purchase of land or property,
- The speculative conversion of buildings into business premises,
- The like-for-like replacement of equipment or machinery,
- Computers and software used in the general running of the business,
- Projects which are required by law or to meet a legal requirement e.g. Disability access improvements,
- Any items classed as revenue spend,
- Projects where the applicant cannot demonstrate a market demand.

Ineligible costs

The following costs also cannot be claimed:

- **Expenditure incurred before the start date in the grant offer letter,**
- The costs of getting any permissions or consents,
- Working capital,
- Business as usual activities including salaries and marketing,
- Personal vehicles,
- Project management costs,
- Overheads allocated or apportioned at rates materially in excess of those used for any similar work carried out by the applicant,
- Notional expenditure,
- Depreciation, amortisation, and impairment of assets purchased with the help of the Grant,
- Interest charges unless under an approved State Aid scheme,
- Service charges on finance leases, hire purchase and credit arrangements,
- Costs resulting from the deferral of payments to creditors,
- Reclaimable VAT,
- Expenditure supported from other government sources, local authority grants, charges paid by leaseholders, to the extent that the combined grants and other support total more than 100% of the project or scheme costs,
- Any cost relating to insurance policies.

This list is not exhaustive. If you are concerned about the nature of your project costs and their eligibility, please email: business@warwickshire.gov.uk

Appendix B

Supplementary Guidance on Quotes

The following is provided to support quality applications and to ensure a consistent and equitable assessment of each application. Please read the following information carefully and if appropriate include details of any discrepancies with the expected norm i.e., fewer quotes or where a conflict of interest exists at the time of application. We will contact you to assess the impact on eligibility, if any.

The absence of necessary information without explanation can invalidate your application and result in it being rejected.

Undisclosed information e.g., a conflict of interest could result in the grant being recovered by Warwickshire County Council at a future point.

Quotes

Please ensure you follow WCC Procurement guidelines as listed above. Where you have been unable to provide like-for-like quotes, please explain the reasons why and you will need to show that the quotes you are providing demonstrate value for money and the items are fit for the purpose of the project.

We would encourage you to use Suppliers based in Warwickshire wherever possible.

If you are unable to provide the prescribed number of quotes/catalogue listings, as per WCC procurement guidelines, we may not be able to include the item in the grant offer if you are unable to demonstrate value for money.

If the overall project cost is over £214,904 (including VAT) you must carry out a full tender process. Please contact us before you start if you need to do this.

The following requirements apply. All quotes/catalogue listings must:

- Be independent of each other (i.e. from different suppliers that trade as standalone business entities that are not linked through shared ownership),
- Be independent of the applicant.
- Be comparable (e.g. of same or similar specification (quality), size, quantity, units),
- Include a detailed and itemised breakdown of costs,
- Be dated within the last six months and still valid,
- Be addressed to the grant applicant business at the address shown on the application form – any online quotes should also quote this address,
- Show the supplier's address, telephone number and contact details,
- Give the VAT number (if the supplier is VAT registered and VAT is charged on the quote); and
- Show the supplier's company registration number (if they are a limited company).

Where catalogue listings are allowed as set out in the guidance, applicants should send references to a catalogue listing as emailed attachments, and they should include:

- the date on which it was saved or copied,
- the item description and the price,
- the name of the company or catalogue, and
- the page number or webpage.

Regrettably, we cannot accept hyperlinks to catalogue information due to the changing nature of supplier's listings.

Value for money

To demonstrate value for money, it is expected that applicants use the cheapest supplier of each item, demonstrating best value on the market for the project item. You need to identify your preferred supplier, if the supplier is not the cheapest, please explain why. We may not be able to accept the cost of your preferred supplier, and this may reduce the grant for the item to the cheapest quote. In this scenario you could still work with the supplier of your choice, by paying the difference yourself between the two quotes.

The following are not acceptable reasons for using a more expensive quote:

- the location of the supplier,
- the fact that the applicant has bought from a supplier before; or
- any offers the supplier makes to the applicant about future service or maintenance of equipment.

If expenditure or items the business is seeking to move forward with is considered excessive, a favourable grant offer remains possible, however the Council may apply a cap to project expenditure to a value it deems to be reasonable. Where a cap is applied, the business will need to demonstrate funding plans for these ineligible project costs. If this cannot be demonstrated, then the Council will not make an offer for grant funding.

If you believe your projects costs may fall into this category you are advised to set out the business case for opting for the more expensive solution and your plans to fund this for the Council's consideration. This could avoid necessary administrative delays to resolve this matter or an unfavourable funding outcome at application.

Independent quotes

The quotes you provide should be from businesses/ individuals who are independent from your business and you. If any of them are not, please provide details and explain how they are connected. If you are proposing to use a supplier that is connected to you or your business in any way and the quote is accepted, the total cost permissible for this item may be reduced when the grant is calculated.

Procurement rules

You are expected to comply with the procurement rules set out in the guidance for applicants. If you decide any of your project items need to be tendered, please explain the process you

have followed to source the chosen tender and how the tenders comply with your process. You are advised to discuss your process with WCC before proceeding. If your business has a Procurement Policy, please provide a copy with your application.

For larger capital schemes a fully detailed estimate compiled by a qualified quantity surveyor may be appropriate. The quantity surveyor must be independent from the applicant business. All larger capital schemes must be discussed with WCC before submitting an application.

Second-hand items

If you propose to purchase any of the project items second-hand, you must explain these in your application form and provide the reasons why. In addition to the quote, you will also have to provide the following written confirmation:

- The seller of the equipment shall provide original proof of purchase and confirm that at no point during the previous seven years has it been purchased with grant funding,
- Evidence the price of the equipment does not exceed the market value cost of similar new equipment (comparable quotes),
- Confirmation of the current condition of the equipment, i.e. that it meets health and safety legislation and its usability for the operation(s) proposed; and it has at least five years' useful life remaining from the date of the final payment.

Conflict of Interest

Businesses who are looking to apply for a REPF Business Grant need to explain, in the application form, if there is any conflict of interest between them and a supplier providing a quote or tender for the project.

Conflict of interest will include being a Director or Shareholder of the Company providing the quote, or if the Supplier is part of the business Group is a sister company or is a family member.

If a business is aware of any other conflict of interest other than outlined above, they must email: business@warwickshire.gov.uk for further guidance.