



GUIDELINES

Dorset Growth Hub – Small Growth Grant

- As part of a Grant Scheme (The Dorset Business Growth Programme) funded by The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and run by The Dorset Growth Hub, funding may be available to assist your business with its plans to implement a step change in their business as part of their growth ambitions.
- Small Growth Grants are match funded by your organisation (3:1) up to a **maximum grant of £5,000 and a minimum grant of £1,000**. E.g.: a minimum contribution of 75% of the total cost of the eligible project costs is required from your business. Hence the **minimum project size is £4,000**, but for example if the total project costs are £20,000 or over then the maximum grant of £5,000 is available. Examples of eligible project costs are provided later in these guidelines. We are happy to consider grants for projects that include ineligible project costs, but the grant match award will be applied to the eligible project costs only.
- The grant application process is competitive and funds are limited. The onus is on the applicant to present as strong a case as possible as with any other application for external finance.
- Only one grant can be applied for and issued per business as part of the Dorset Business Growth Programme. Recipients of our former grant schemes since January 2017 are not eligible for additional grant support.
- In order to be eligible you will need to formally engage with our programme and receive some support or guidance in the form of 1-2-1 diagnostic and information meeting, workshop, and/or seminar. Support and guidance is available for grant applications from our Access to Finance Team.
- You will need to be able to demonstrate that a grant will assist your business to grow in the next 6 months from an existing sustainable position. Hence, businesses that have been trading for less than one year will not be eligible.
- Growth can be demonstrated in a number of ways but we are particularly interested in your planned job creation (direct employment only), introduction of new products or services to market (diversification), or improving business processes/digital capability (productivity). Focus on at least one of these areas in your grant application is essential to get our attention. We will not support planned business activities that do not add to the net growth of the Dorset economy by merely displacing the activity of other local businesses.
- Applicants are encouraged to provide supporting management information (see below) to demonstrate your current business viability and future ambitions. Moreover, clear articulation of what the business plans to do (The Project) and how the project is a step change from existing operations (a point of difference or additionality) are the key to a successful grant application.
- **Application is by Expression of Interest (EOI) and supported by management information.** Management information provision is not essential but will strengthen the application. This could include the provision of historic/forecast financial reporting, a business/marketing plan, and supplier quotes for the planned project.
- **Completed EOI with supporting information should be submitted to grants@dorsetgrowthhub.co.uk** (or via an Access to Finance Advisor) and as part of this process

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the business must sign up as a participant of the Dorset Business Growth Programme.

- If trading as a Sole Trader or Unincorporated Partnership, proof of trading with UTR (Unique Tax Reference) number and start date will be required.
- Upon receipt, applications will be forwarded to the Dorset Growth Hub team for assessment and then reviewed by a panel (usually held fortnightly). Applicants will be notified within 2-3 weeks as to whether or not the application has been successful, and at that point a grant offer letter is issued with a signed agreement date.
- Please note that there are specific procurement policies that must be complied with for grant claiming where individual eligible project costs and/or single supplier combined costs exceed £25,000. For example, evidence will be required for tendering for works or services, and the provision of 3 quotes for purchases of supplies or goods. Full guidance is provided with grant offers.
- Grant monies will be paid following submission of relevant project cost receipts, evidence that these have been settled from a bank account and evidence that procurement policies have been adhered to. Full claim procedures will be provided with the grant offer letter.
- Any claims for **project costs must be in the future** following the contractual signed agreement date. No retrospective claiming will be eligible. **Hence, your grant must be agreed before your project costs are incurred.**
- **Grants must normally be claimed in full within a six month agreement period.** This starts from the date the grant offer is made. Please note that this time limit is subject to variation and the definitive deadline will be in the offer letter.

The Small Growth Grant can be used for eligible project costs, which may typically be:

- Acquisition of plant, machinery, tooling (title must held by the applicant)
- Property improvements- additional space requiring refurb/refit
- Outsourced specialist projects/consultants – procured expertise
- IT or digital infrastructure costs & cloud based technology
- Digital marketing costs eg. consultancy costs / website development/design, App development, online content production)

NOTE- Grants are not suitable for replacement expenditure or what are considered “business as usual” business costs. Equipment can be new or used. The grant is looking to help your additional investment decisions to aid growth.

The Small Growth Grant cannot be used for:

- Repayment of debts
- Land/property purchases, and rental payments/deposits
- Direct Labour- Salaries/wages
- Stock and consumables
- General running costs of the business or working capital, **including the provision of laptops/phones/tablets, software licenses, professional fees**
- Repairs & Renewals **including replacement of plant & equipment**
- Vehicles and highly portable equipment

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- Training
 - Research & Development
 - Previously incurred expenses
 - Projects that have already commenced
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- We have kept this guidance and the application process as simple as possible and have not attempted to answer every question which might arise. Specific questions on what can be funded, the application process or anything else, can be addressed to an Access to Finance Specialist who will help you ensure your application is robust and ready to be submitted.
 - Please also note that some sectors are not eligible for support on this programme due to Central Government Legislation. These sectors include: *Fishery & Aquaculture, *Primary production, processing and marketing of agricultural products, *Coal, Steel and shipbuilding sectors, *Synthetic Fibres, *Generalised School Age Education, *Banking and Insurance Companies, * Nuclear related activity (*please follow the link for full eligibility guidelines)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/760264/ESIF-GN-1-003_ERDF_Eligibility_Guidance_v9.pdf

- Most local retailing and local service activities are also ineligible.
- If you require more information or are unsure if you are eligible for the support we offer, you can call us on 01202 607533 and a member of the Dorset Growth Hub team will be happy to help.
- **To download EOI form please click the link on the Dorset Growth Hub website “Grants Tab” below these grant guidance notes.** <https://www.dorsetgrowthhub.co.uk/grants/>

To provide a strong grant application, please remember to provide supporting information with your Expression of Interest