



Nottingham
City Council

Nottingham City Council UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

High Street Small Grants Scheme

Applicant Guidance

1. Introduction

Aim of the grant scheme

The High Street Small Grants Scheme is a grant scheme from Nottingham City Council that offers funding to small businesses in the City of Nottingham as part of our UK Government funded Shared Prosperity Funding.

The grant will provide funding to eligible small businesses to deliver a range of interventions to support High Streets in the city centre and local neighbourhoods. These include marketing and events, equipment purchases, support for shop premises including energy efficiency measures, shop front improvements and greening in line with our City Centre Strategy and Action Plan. It is intended that these grants will help in supporting the development of a vibrant entrepreneurial business sector as well as increase the overall footfall and customer numbers on our High Streets.

The High Street Small Grants Scheme has the following aims:

- Support and sustain existing businesses on the high street
- Improve the appearance of existing premises on the high street
- Bring vacant properties back into use
- Encourage businesses to participate in improving the high street

Focus of the grant scheme

The grant scheme is focussed on assisting High Street businesses currently trading in Nottingham City Centre and local High Streets and neighbourhood shopping districts, particularly retail businesses and those in the hospitality and leisure sectors. For the purpose of this grant a High Street is defined as a cluster of 15 or more businesses within 150 metres. Please refer to the High Street Small Grants Scheme list of eligible areas document for a list of High Streets and local shopping areas where businesses need to be located to be eligible to apply.

Duration of the grant scheme

The High Street Small Grants will be available between November 2022 and March 2023, subject to funding. A further, expanded programme of small grants for businesses will be available from April 2023.

Amount of grant funding that you can apply for

The grant will support projects that fall under one of five themes (see Section 4 for details of the five themes). The maximum grant amount that can be applied for varies between £1,500 and £5,000 dependent on the theme. Eligible businesses can apply for a grant under a single theme or a combination of themes. The maximum combined amount that can be applied for when bidding under a combination of themes is £10,000.

In exceptional circumstances a higher grant amount may be awarded if the applicant can make a business case to justify the request.

2. Grant criteria and eligible expenditure

Eligibility criteria

Grants are open to a business which meets the following criteria:

- Is located in the City of Nottingham

- Has been trading for a minimum of 6 months
- Is an independent business (for the purpose of this scheme an independent business is defined as a single retail outlet, or a chain of two or three stores managed and owned by either a Sole Trader, Partnership or Limited Company)
- Has between 1 and 50 employees
- Has a turnover of less than £10m
- Is registered with Companies House or the Charity Commission OR is a sole trader or partnership with a Unique Tax Reference Number from HMRC.
- Must be able to fund and evidence 100% of the project cost upfront from their own resources
- Holds a business bank account (a 'trading as' account is acceptable). A business bank account is a trading commercial account in the name of the applying business. All purchases must be made via the business account and all claim payments will be made to the same business account. Personal or current accounts are NOT eligible.
- The business must have all the necessary permissions and licenses to operate the business.

Additional eligibility criteria for applications for shop front improvements

- Retail units must have a ground floor and street facing frontage
- You must be the owner or leaseholder of the business and premises
- Applications from long-term leaseholders must include formal approval from the freeholder to carry out any works affecting the structure or the external fabric of the building.

Eligible project activity

The High Street Small Grants Scheme can fund projects under the following themes

1. Energy efficiency measures
2. Marketing and promotion, including events
3. Equipment purchase
4. Digital and ICT equipment purchase
5. Shopfront improvements

For examples of the types of projects that could be funded under these themes see Section 4: High Street Small Business Grant Themes

Ineligible project activity

The following cannot be supported by the grant:

- Works that have already been undertaken
- Works to upper floors or basements (when applying for grants to improve shop fronts)
- Works to residential properties
- Businesses that are trading from a residential property are excluded from the grant scheme
- Purchase of mobile phones and mobile phone contracts
- Repairs and maintenance to existing equipment
- Any second hand item which was previously purchased using grant funding
- VAT (unless the applicant is not able to recover VAT)
- Recurring revenue costs (including: salaries, pensions, stock, rent, utility charges, service charges subscriptions, insurance, tax, recruitment fees, website hosting etc.)
- Repayment of existing loans or debts
- General running costs for the business

The list of ineligible project activities is not definitive and all proposals will be assessed for eligibility by Nottingham City Council

Availability of grant

All grants are made at the discretion of Nottingham City Council and are subject to availability of funding.

Timescale

You must be able to complete your project, pay for it and claim your grant before 31st March 2023.

Grant amount and match funding:

The High Street Small Grants Scheme will provide 100% of the funding requested to the maximum amount detailed for each of the themes. The maximum amount that you can request varies between the five themes (see Section 4, Grant Themes for the amounts).

Match funding provided by the applicant is not required for this grant scheme. However any match that an applicant can provide (either 'actual' or 'in-kind) should be indicated in the application.

'Actual' match funding' is cash that you will be contributing to the project. For example you might want to buy equipment that costs more than the maximum amount of grant that can be awarded. 'Actual' match will be the money you contribute to the purchase to make up the difference between the cost of the item and the maximum amount of grant that you can apply for.

'In-kind' match' is non-cash funding of free goods or services, such as staff hours, use of premises or research that can be given a value and be included in the project cost. Staff time should be costed at £10.90 per hour.

You must be able to pay upfront for any works or purchases as grant payments are made in arrears, to reimburse/contribute to costs already paid.

As the grants are paid in arrears applicants will initially need to pay for the project.

In all cases applicants need to apply for the grant by submitting a full application form and obtain written approval of the application from Nottingham City Council, before any work is undertaken or items/equipment purchased. The grant will not be paid towards the cost of transactions that have occurred before the date of the approval.

VAT

Applicants who are VAT registered will have their grant assessed on the net cost of eligible projects; non-VAT registered applicants will be assessed on the gross cost. If the applicant does not know whether they are VAT registered or not they must seek advice from HM Revenue & Customs.

3. Applying for the grant

Applicants should submit a completed application form together with any required quotes or budgets

- You must obtain a quote for purchases or works to be undertaken and submit these with your application form. **NOTE buying goods/services from a linked company. i.e., one that has any shared directors with your company or that has directors that**

are close members of your family (husbands /wives / partners / brothers / sisters / children and their husbands /wives /partners / brothers / sisters / children is not permitted.

- If you are requesting a grant to run an event you must provide a budget for the event with your application breaking down the costs
- Project costs that you include in the application should be net, exclusive of VAT
- Nottingham City Council will assess the eligibility of applicants

Each application will be judged on its own merits with regard to how well it meets the scheme's aims and eligibility criteria and its ability to be implemented within the set timescales.

Decision on applications

All applications will be subject to an assessment by Nottingham City Council and the amount offered will be at the discretion of Nottingham City Council and only whilst funds are available. The decision of Nottingham City Council is final. It reserves the right to vary the level of grant or reject an application.

Notification of decision on the application will be made in writing to the applicant. An offer of grant will be made by an offer of grant letter, which will specify:

- The eligible applicant
- The eligible goods/services to be accessed/purchased
- The maximum amount of grant awarded
- The date by which the expenditure should be completed

Payment of grant

- Grants are discretionary and Nottingham City Council reserves the right to withhold payment of the grant in whole or part if any condition of the offer letter has been breached
- No retrospective costs can be paid – do not place an order, pay for or commission any goods and services prior to receiving an offer letter
- The applicant must submit the claim (including receipted invoices) for grant assistance within one month of the completion date as stated in the offer letter. Payment will be subject to the applicant having satisfactorily completed the project and complied with all terms and conditions of the scheme
- Payment of the grant will only be made when Nottingham City Council receives copies of paid invoices for the approved grant from the applicant. Invoices dated before the date of the offer letter will not be eligible for payment
- Increases to the grant payment will only be made in exceptional cases. Any increase in costs or changes to supplier must be agreed with Nottingham City Council
- Payment of the grant will be made into the applicant's business bank account (or 'trading as' account) via BACS
- Grants will be paid against the agreed suppliers and works quoted, as stated in your application form
- You must pay 100% of the costs to the supplier – the grant is a reimbursement, for the value stated in the offer letter
- Only costs paid to legitimate businesses will be reimbursed – we cannot reimburse costs paid directly to individuals

IMPORTANT

No claims will be paid where payments to a supplier were made by cash, by a third party or by cheque. All payments to suppliers must be made from a business bank account.

Payments made to suppliers by credit card will only be eligible for grant if the card is registered to the business and not a private individual.

4. High Street Small Business Grant Themes

Grants are available to support activities under the five themes detailed below.

Applicants can apply for a grant under a single theme, for example a café could submit an application to purchase an epos system (digital/ICT).

Applicants can also submit an application against a number of themes, for example the café might want to purchase an epos system (digital/ICT), organise an event to promote their business (marketing and promotion) and improve the frontage of the premises they occupy (shopfront improvements).

The maximum amount that a business applying against a single theme can apply for is detailed against each of the themes.

The maximum combined amount that a business can apply for if requesting grants against a number of themes is £10,000. In exceptional circumstances a higher amount of grant may be awarded at the discretion of Nottingham City Council where an applicant makes a compelling business case for a higher amount. Applicants who feel they are able to make a case for a higher amount should discuss this with the grant team before submitting an application.

Theme 1. Energy Efficiency Measures: maximum grant £1,500

Funding is available to support the installation of small-scale measures to reduce energy consumption and costs. Total project costs must not exceed £2,499.

Examples of projects/activities that could be funded under this theme include:

- Installation of LED lighting
- Improved insulation
- Improved heating or cooling systems
- Upgrade to modern electronic thermostats
- Fit additional thermostatic controls
- Fit PVC strip curtains to reduce draughts

Theme 2. Marketing and promotion: maximum grant £2,500 for an individual business. £5,000 for consortium applications

Funding is available to fund small projects to support and promote a business, in terms of on-street or online presence. Grants are available for a single business or a group of businesses on a single high street or location. A consortium application could also come from a group of businesses from the same sector. Where a group of businesses wish to apply as a consortium a single business must apply on behalf of the group.

Examples of projects/activities that could be funded under this theme include:

- Website development including building a new website or the inclusion of e-commerce elements to an existing website
- Improvements to a businesses' online presence, updating websites, social media channels etc
- Promotional events – these can be online, in-store or on street
- A social media campaign to target specific customers
- Brand design including logos and campaign

Theme 3. Equipment purchase: maximum grant £5,000

Funding is available to help purchase non-digital or ICT equipment to support productivity or efficiency improvements in the business.

Examples of equipment that could be funded under this theme include:

- Machinery or equipment that helps your business to increase production, produce a new product or deliver a new service
- Machinery or equipment that will help to improve efficiency within your business

Theme 4. Digital / ICT equipment purchase: maximum grant £2,500

Funding is available to assist the purchase of digital or ICT equipment that will support improved productivity or efficiency in the business.

Examples of digital/ICT equipment that could be funded under this theme could include:

- Purchase of laptops, tablets, printers, point of sale machines, software finance packages
- Purchase of computer peripherals
- Specialist equipment such as audio equipment, cameras, drones, cloud storage

Theme 5. Shopfront Improvements: maximum grant £5,000

Funding is available to support physical improvements to the frontages of businesses. It is hoped that these grants will enhance the visual appearance of the high street, thus making them more attractive to shoppers and visitors and increasing footfall

Examples of projects/activities that could be funded under this theme include:

- Restoration or repair of current shop fronts including painting
- Replacement shop front, windows and doors.
- Removing inappropriate signage
- Installing new fascia signage
- Installing appropriate lighting
- Painting of existing shop fronts and upper floors (including render).
- Replacement gutter and downpipes.

IMPORTANT: Projects under the shopfront improvements theme **MUST NOT** include works that will require planning permission/Listed Building consent. This is due to the timescale for completing projects and claiming the grant from Nottingham City Council.

FAQs

Can a grant be used to purchase stock?

No. The purchase of stock that can then be sold by a business is not eligible for grant support.

Do I need to provide three quotes?

No. Applicants only need to provide a single quote for each item of expenditure

Do I need to include a business plan?

No.

Can I apply to the High Street Small Business Grant Scheme more than once?

No. Eligible business are restricted to one application under the scheme.

Will I need to pay the grant back?

No, the funding provided to a successful applicant is a grant and not a loan.

Where can the Business Rates Account Number be found?

Your Business Rates Account Number can be found at the top of any business rates bill you have been issued. Nottingham City Council are unable to provide your account number to you to avoid cases of fraud.

I don't want to buy the equipment and intend to lease it, can I apply?

No. Leased equipment is not eligible. All equipment must be purchased outright by the applicant

Can I purchase second-hand equipment?

Yes, second-hand equipment can be purchased and, as with the purchase of new items, a quote addressed to the business should be submitted.

What will be accepted as a quote?

A quote should be in written form, addressed to the business, and detail the items to be purchased and clearly show the costs excluding any VAT. The grant will not support the VAT costs and is calculated on the cost excluding VAT.

If the items are being purchased from a retailer who is unable to provide a quote please send a screenshot of the webpage and link to the website for the item you require that clearly shows the price.