



Rural England Prosperity Fund - Online Application Guidance Notes and Processes

Background:

As part of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), Stafford Borough Council has chosen to invest in supporting the growth of businesses based in its rural areas.

This grant is for capital expenditure only (lasting assets such as equipment and buildings).

Note: Applications will close on **30 November 2025** subject to funds still being available

You are strongly advised to read the Stafford Borough Rural England Prosperity Fund Policy before completing your application form.

This grant is open to businesses who can fulfil the criteria below.

Criteria:

Businesses must be independent and trading from commercial premises based in the rural local authority areas of Stafford Borough, as defined below and via magic.defra.gov.uk/

- Towns, villages and hamlets with populations below 10,000 and the wider countryside
- Market or 'hub towns' with populations of up to 30,000 that serve their surrounding rural areas as centres of employment and in providing services

If you have difficulty understanding the information in the above link then please email economy@staffordbc.gov.uk.

Businesses must have been trading for at least 12 months and can provide 12 months' worth of certified or management accounts.

Must be a micro, small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) i.e. employ fewer than 250 full time equivalent people and have an annual turnover of less than or equal to £44m or a balance sheet total of less than or equal to £38m from all sectors.

Excluded activities include businesses of a political or religious persuasion, public houses, bars, clubs, off licence premises, takeaway restaurants, any licensed premises which are betting and gaming establishments as well as activities involving pornography or clairvoyance and any business activity that is illegal or deemed as unsuitable for public support by Stafford Borough Council.

If the business is owned by another company or combination of other companies, please refer to the guidance on the government website:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-act-2023-short-guides/supplementary-information-small-and-medium-sized-enterprises-definition-html

Must not have already purchased the service/product prior to grant application approval and prior to receiving a fully signed funding agreement from the Borough Council.

Projects that have already received funding from other Defra schemes as follows, cannot receive funding through REPF:

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme
- The Farming Investment Fund
- The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund

Must not have received more than £315,000 in public subsidies in the current and previous two financial years (financial year being 1 April to 31 March) including the expected level of grant the applicant is applying for. This grant operates in accordance with Subsidy Control Act 2022 under MFA i.e. Minimal Amounts of Financial Assistance over. Please see the government website for further information
www.gov.uk/government/publications/subsidy-control-a-guide-for-beneficiaries/subsidy-control-a-guide-for-beneficiaries

Please note that where a business is part of a group, the £315,000 limit applies to the group for public sector support within the United Kingdom.

Any subsidy which is awarded to an applicant under the Rural England Prosperity Fund will need to be declared when applying for other public subsidies. Therefore, if successful, the Subsidy Control Declaration Award provided by the Council to successful applicants must be retained and shown to any other public body to which you apply for funding for the three years following the offer. False declarations will lead to the recovery of the value of the assistance provided plus interest.

Stafford Borough Council Privacy Notice - GDPR:

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), we are committed to protecting your personal data and processing it in a transparent and secure manner. When you provide your data as part of a grant application, we ensure that it is used only for the specific purposes outlined in the application, such as evaluating your eligibility and the potential impact of your project. We collect and process data lawfully, ensuring it is accurate, up-to-date, and necessary for the evaluation process. Your data will not be shared with third parties unless required for the fulfilment of the grant or as legally required. For more information please see
www.staffordbc.gov.uk/business-grant-applications-privacy-notice

We will keep you informed by the means of our monthly newsletter of any future upcoming grant or business support schemes, which we believe will be of interest to you.

You have the right to opt out at any time and the right to access, correct, or delete your personal data at any time.

We implement appropriate security measures to protect your data and ensure its confidentiality. If you have any concerns regarding how your data is processed, you can contact us directly for clarification or to exercise your rights under GDPR.

Completing the online application form:

The information you provide through the REPF application form, alongside the associated documents, will be used to appraise your proposal. Information that is missing will delay your application. Approvals are only made where there is budget still available.

Please provide honest and comprehensive information about your organisation, project partners/stakeholders, spend, income, activities to be delivered and outputs/outcomes to be achieved. The information you provide in your application form will form part of the funding agreement if your application is successful. Please be mindful that you must present realistic and achievable information.

Applications will be appraised on the following key criteria:

Deliverability	20%
Value for money	20%
Additionality	20%
Strategic fit	10%
Diversity of the project	10%
Net zero / green agenda	10%
Contribution to the wider local economy	10%

The use of consultants or third parties to complete the application form for you is an ineligible cost. Applicants must have had dialogue with a Business Adviser from the Council's Business Growth Team to support them through the application process.

The application form must be digitally signed by a person legally responsible for the business identified as the 'Applicant' in the application form

All your supporting documentation should be uploaded via the online process. If you are having difficulty with achieving this for any reason, please send the documentation directly to economy@staffordbc.gov.uk stating your business name and REPF in the subject header.

The questions in this form have been thoughtfully designed to help the council gain a clearer understanding of how your business is operating, ensuring that public funds are used effectively and in a way that best supports local businesses.

We do not require huge quantities of information in the free flow boxes, just an overview of what the question requires. The maximum word count is 500 words per detailed question.

Please note the following guidance notes have been written to support you whilst completing your online application.

Questions and guidance:

Applicant Details:

Organisation Name:

Enter the full registered name of your business.

Organisation Type:

Select the type of registered business from the drop-down menu.

Sector:

Choose your sector from resources.companieshouse.gov.uk/sic

What is your main business?

State the main activity of our business

Business trading address including post code:

Please state your business trading address including the post code.

Companies House Registration Number:

Provide company name if a limited company. If not a limited company put N/A.

Company Website:

Please state your website address, if you do not have one please also state this.

VAT Registration Number:

Enter VAT number or mark N/A if not registered for VAT.

Unique Taxpayer Reference Number (UTR):

If you are a sole trader, you can find your individual UTR number in your personal tax account in the HMRC app or on previous tax returns and other documents from HMRC or your accountant.

If you cannot find your UTR on any documents or online, contact HMRC.

Primary Contact

Contact Name:

This will be the applicant who has the authority to digitally sign the application form at the end of the process.

Contact Position:

Please state the position of the applicant, for example, Managing Director, Director, CEO, CFO.

Contact Email:

The best direct email address for further correspondence. This will be the default email we will use throughout the grant process.

Telephone:

Please tell us your telephone number.

Mobile Telephone:

Mobile number for further correspondence. This will be the default contact number we will use throughout the grant process

Last Year Turnover (latest published accounts):

Last year's turnover taken from your latest published accounts to be provided.

How many FTE staff do you employ?

Only include direct employees, excluding any self-employed, sub- contracted, agency staff, casual staff, apprentices, graduate placements, or any zero hour contracted staff.

If you do not employ any people, please put in the box '1' as you need to count yourself as an employee of your own business

Project Summary

Provide a summary of your proposal as if describing it to someone who is unaware of your plans. Include a precise description of what your project will do, what it will achieve/deliver, who will benefit and why it is a good investment for REPF.

Maximum 500 words.

Please list the capital items you wish to purchase with the support of the grant and give a reason why next to each one, for example, reputable supplier, value for money, used them before.

Expenditure Items	Cost of Item (Net VAT)	Cost of Item (Gross including VAT)	Supplier Name	Reason for Selection
	£0	£0		
	£0	£0		
	£0	£0		

Please Note:

- If your business is VAT registered, please provide your quotes as NET VAT.
- If your business is not VAT registered, please provide your quotes including the VAT if its applicable.

By receiving the funds what percentage of growth do you anticipate this will achieve in the next 12 months?

Insert a percentage as appropriate and provide any explanation if appropriate

Project Need

Provide details on need and demand for the project. Provide detail of any research carried out to demonstrate the evidence of need for the project. The response should refer to evidence that there is a need for the project and explain why REPF funding is appropriate and will help.

Project Stakeholders

List any organisations/partners who will be involved in the delivery of the project, for example, key stakeholders, contractors or delivery partners in the project.

Public Sector Funds

Answer 'yes' or 'no' as appropriate around whether your business has received any public sector funding before over the last rolling 3 years, whether EU funding, or from a local authority or Government Department.

At the end of the application form you will need to download from the REPF web page, a declaration form where you must list all public sector subsidies received for the last rolling 3 years. This form should then be signed and returned as an attachment with your application.

Financial Information

List any outstanding debts, such as bank loans or overdrafts. Advise us of what these are, how much is outstanding and the date they need to be paid by.

Project Funding

What would happen to the project without REPF investment?

Would you be able to cashflow the project without the support of the grant?

Or would your project still go ahead anyway?

Or would the project not go ahead?

Please explain how and why this would happen to your project:

Explain how and why this would happen to your project.

Please confirm whether you have applied for funding from other sources for the same, or similar project and the timescales for decision:

Answer 'yes' or 'no', clearly separating information regarding the current project to that of other similar projects.

If you answer 'yes' we will require further details, such as from whom, how much and whether this has been confirmed or awarded yet.

What would happen if the grant was reduced?

For example, if it was reduced, this would have a financial impact on cashflow and leave the company at risk.

Funding Summary

Total Project Cost:

Note REPF can only support capital costs. Please include the total project costs which will include the expected REPF contribution, applicants match funding and any other match funding.

Note: If you are VAT registered, please provide the net value only. If you are not VAT registered provide the gross value i.e. including the VAT.

Total capital:

Note: If you are VAT registered, please provide the net value only. If you are not VAT registered provide the gross value i.e. including the VAT.

Total revenue:

The REPF grant will not be able to support any revenue costs, only capital.

Note: If you are VAT registered, please provide the net value only. If you are not VAT registered provide the gross value i.e. including the VAT.

REPF Requested:

REPF can only support capital costs.

Note: If you are VAT registered, please provide the net value only. If you are not VAT registered provide the gross value i.e. including the VAT.

Applicant contribution (match fund):

What will be your financial contribution to the project cost?

Note: If you are VAT registered, please provide the net value only. If you are not VAT registered provide the gross value i.e. including the VAT.

Other match:

Please state the amount of other matches not including your own.

Note: If you are VAT registered, please provide the net value only. If you are not VAT registered provide the gross value i.e. including the VAT.

REPF Policy Alignment:

All projects funded by UKSPF/REPF should address local business challenges and work towards achieving the objectives of the REPF criteria and SBC REPF policy.

What challenges will your project address in your local area?

All projects funded by REPF should address local business challenges and work towards achieving the objective of the REPF criteria.

Describe any environmental impact that the project will create. For example, waste and resource management, energy efficiency, pollution:

Describe how your organisation considers its impact on climate change and ways in which you can support a reduction in CO2 emissions through this project to address Stafford Borough Councils Climate Change and Green Recovery Strategy:

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/Climate-Change-and-Green-Recovery

You could consider:

- Energy demand reduction, energy efficiency and low carbon energy sources (especially opportunities for onsite renewable generation, for example, solar and wind), renewable fuel types, lighting options (LED / movement sensitive), build specifications that go beyond the standard levels, for example, insulation.
- Provision of infrastructure, for example, EV charging points or building performance monitoring equipment.
- Travel planning to reduce the number of vehicle movements.
- Training / raising awareness amongst staff, participants or beneficiaries about how they can reduce their carbon footprint.
- Consider opportunities for mitigation of negative practices where possible to work towards delivering net zero. We encourage all applicants to develop capital build projects in line with our vision. All organisations proposing capital builds should consider their construction methods and materials, heat and power generation and storage options, transport connections and contribution to biodiversity net gain.

Describe the economic growth impact of your project on your business and the wider local economy:

What will be the impact of the project on your business and the wider local economy? For example, reduce costs, attract more visitors enabling an increase in profits and visitors to other local commercial premises.

Deliverability

Provide a summary of how your project will be delivered, who will be involved and the systems and processes that will be used to ensure effective delivery:

We need to know that the project as described is deliverable and has a good chance of success. Provide a summary of how the project will be delivered and confirm and provide details of your capacity and capability. It is important that you have robust processes, especially around project finance, that allow you to submit claims that only include eligible project costs. Please describe how you will approach this, and the systems you will implement. We also need to know what your governance structure is and how you manage the project. Please detail how you will measure progress, manage risk and deal with issues arising. Don't forget to outline your management and governance structure in terms of who is involved and frequency.

Is the project in ownership of the delivery organisations or are the relevant approval in place for the project to commence? Are there any other consents or permissions required to deliver the project, for example, event license or environment agency.

Project Governance

Describe how your project will be governed. Who will make the decisions and have oversight? How will stakeholders be engaged?

Track Record

What experience does the organisation have of delivering this type of activity and managing?

If you have previously delivered similar activity, especially any activity that was publicly funded, please describe what went well and what you have learnt. For capital projects, information is required with regard to consents and permissions (for example planning approval or building regulations)

Consents

Planning, building regs, listed building, advertisement and other statutory permissions. Please provide the status of each where applicable:

Information is required regarding consents and permissions such as those listed on the application.

You will need to tick all the boxes to confirm that consideration has been given to these. Also you will need to provide the status for each on these permissions, for example, listed building consent - if this is appropriate to your project, please say so; or if you have applied for planning but it has not yet been approved, please provide us with information on when you applied your application number or if you haven't yet applied but need to, you will need to inform us of this too.

Applications are unlikely to be approved without the correct permissions / consents / licenses.

Provide further details or list any other permissions or consent required and their status:

For those permissions/consents not listed but are required, please list and provide further information.

Defra schemes:

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme
- The Farming Investment Fund
- The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Fund

REPF funding is provided to local authorities by Defra. Defra stipulate that should a project be able to be funded via the three funds listed in the question, then they cannot also be supported by REPF.

You will need to confirm that you have checked with Defra that this project does not qualify for any of the other grant schemes listed, nor that you have received or will receive funding from those schemes for this project.

Confirm that you have not and will not purchase the project goods until after the funding agreement has been signed, subject to a successful grant application assessment:

Please state 'yes' or 'no'.

If no is provided, then these capital expenses cannot be considered under the application.

Subject to grant approval, are you able to pay for 100% of the project costs before drawing down the actual grant monies awarded?

Please state 'yes' or 'no'.

The expected answer to this question is 'yes', to show that you are in a position (subject to grant approval and receiving a fully signed funding document) to then pay for the goods 'upfront' before then drawing down the 80% grant awarded. You will of course have to fund the remaining 20% yourself or via other means.

Subject to grant approval, please specify when you plan to spend the grant monies and draw down the grant funding by?

Note your project must be completed within 13 weeks of receiving a fully signed funding agreement, subject to approval.

Allow approximately 4 weeks to go through the appraisal process in addition to the above.

Are you related to, or do you have a relationship with, any officers working for Stafford Borough Council or the programme's delivery partners?

Please state 'yes' or 'no'.

If you answer 'yes' you will be asked to provide further details.

Have you ever had any County Court Judgements served against you?

Please state 'yes' or 'no'.

If you answer 'yes' you will be asked to provide further details.

Have any other Partners or Directors of your business ever had any County Court Judgements served against them?

Please state 'yes' or 'no'.

If you answer 'yes' you will be asked to provide further details.

Have you or any other Partners or Directors of your business ever been adjudged bankrupt or been a Partner, Proprietor or Director of a company which has gone into liquidation or receivership?

Please state 'yes' or 'no'.

If you answer 'yes' you will be asked to provide further details.

Is the project in ownership of the delivery organisation?

Please state 'yes' or 'no'.

Are the relevant approvals in place for the project to commence?

Please state 'yes' or 'no'.

Do you, the applicant own the freehold?

Please state 'yes' or 'no'.

This tells us if you own the freehold, then we do not need evidence of landlords' / owners' permission for the project to take place.

If not, do you have freeholder / landlord permission?

Please state 'yes' or 'no'.

If you do not have freeholder / landlords' permission, then this may delay your grant application.

Milestones

Please list key milestones in your project and target dates:

Start and end dates are as you provided in the Project Description section earlier on in the form. We are looking for your key dates here. For example:

- Project build starts
- Project build complete
- Site opens
- 4 new staff members recruited

Mandatory milestones have been included in the application form and must be completed.

Targets

List your projects expected outputs and outcomes:

A typical output could be ROP6 - number of enterprises receiving a grant.

A typical outcome might be ROC3 - increased visitor numbers

The full list of REPF Outputs and Outcomes can be found at

They largely indicate whether the project is delivering good value for money. Please include only those that you are confident of achieving and measuring. You also need to provide us with a methodology to show how you will monitor performance and measure achievement of each indicator.

For some of these targets you will be required to have baseline data. All targets should be realistic and measurable, and details on what evidence you will provide when these targets will be achieved should be included

All outputs and outcomes are expected to be achieved before 31 March 2026.

Project Risk

Please describe what you perceive to be the main risks to your project and what mitigation plans you have in place.

Try and consider as many areas as possible to show your consideration to risk, for example risks could be:

- Staff leaving
 - Cashflow issues
 - Change in legislation - supply chain
 - A future viral pandemic
 - Machinery not delivered on time.
-

Documents and Statement

These are to be uploaded within your online application form if applicable.

Latest management or certified accounts:

This document is mandatory.

Bank statement:

A recent bank statement clearly showing name of bank, account name, account number and sort code for grant payment purposes. This document is mandatory.

12 months cash flow forecast:

This document is mandatory.

This needs to be realistic and is used to evidence growth as part of the application process.

Copy of up-to-date business insurance document:

Requested as part of due diligence. This document is mandatory.

Evidence of project funding balance. for example, part of a grant or loan from a bank or friend

An example of this could be clear approval on an email or headed letter.

This is mandatory if this forms part of your funding package.

A company letterhead is required which includes your business name, trading address, bank sort code and bank account number:

This is mandatory as required to set your business up on our payments system should the grant be awarded.

Signed Subsidy Control grant declaration form:

This is mandatory under the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

You can download the Subsidy Control Declaration Form online.

Forecasted trading, profit and loss for the next 12 months:

This document is mandatory.

This needs to be realistic and is used to evidence growth as part of the application process.

Quotes:

Quotes should be like for like for the goods to be purchased using the grant.

This value could be for one item or the sum of many items from one supplier, quotes required as follows:

- £1,000 to £10,000 - 2 written quotes
- £10,000 to £30,000 - 3 written quotes
- £30,000 to £60,000 - 3 quotes obtained through a formal tendering process.
Please see additional procurement guidance notes.

Please state your preferred quote

Please Note:

- If your business is VAT registered, please provide your quotes as NET VAT.

- If your business is not VAT registered, please provide your quotes including the VAT, if its applicable.

Additional quotes should be emailed to economy@staffordbc.gov.uk providing your business name and Rural England Prosperity Grant in the subject heading.