

UKRI Strength in Places: Growing Kent & Medway Business Innovation Vouchers- Business Outline

Growing Kent & Medway Business Innovation Vouchers allow businesses to work collaboratively with us on projects to support innovation and growth within your business by taking advantage of 75% funding towards research projects costing up to £20,000.

The Vouchers will give businesses access to the leading experts and research facilities in the Kent and Medway region. They are designed to help overcome the challenges that may be facing a business and realise opportunities through innovation.

The grants are available for horticultural and plant-based food and drink businesses across the supply chain in Kent and Medway.

Projects

The project must be aligned with the scope of the Growing Kent & Medway project focusing on:

- horticultural production including the production of novel, high-value compounds from plants
- fresh produce packaging
- food and drink product and processing
- enabling technologies that underpin the supply chain.

The project must have the potential to deliver a positive economic impact within the Kent and Medway region. Positive societal impacts will also be a condition of receiving funding.

Type of projects we can help with:

- Product validation via prototyping
- Progressing products and services up the technology readiness levels (TRLs) scale
- New product or service development
- Developing a new process, practice or technology
- Produce data which will help support future work
- Technical consultancy from the RO
- Proof of concept or feasibility studies

The list of project above is not exhaustive – if you have a project in mind but it is not listed above [get in touch](#) and we can explore how we may be able to help.

Projects we will not fund:

- Primary production or supply chain concerning animal feed
- Have a focus on fish derived food and drink products
- Market Research
- Do not demonstrate the potential to impact the economy of the Kent and Medway area.

Projects must have a maximum total project cost of £20,000 and can last up to 12 months. Projects start date can be deferred up to 6 months from award notification, all projects must start within 6 months of receiving their Grant Offer Letter.

Beneficiaries of the Growing Kent & Medway grant funding programmes are expected to contribute towards Growing Kent & Medway's social value goals. They will be asked to commit to a certain level of community engagement in the region. Applicants who fail to commit to delivering social value will

be ineligible for funding. In the application we shall ask that the business commit time in kind to delivering social value activity. Our social value guidelines are available [here](#).

Facilities and Areas of research expertise

The research organisations that are part of Growing Kent & Medway are NIAB, University of Kent and University of Greenwich. We have invested in three new state-of-the-art research facilities at each of the organisations to support innovation.

NIAB

GreenTech Hub for Advanced Horticulture:

NIAB are specialists in molecular genetics, genomics, pest and disease biology and management, crop and post-harvest physiology, agronomy and environmental science. The Hub includes specialist glasshouses, growth rooms, modern polytunnels, and cold rooms. The Hub complements existing laboratory and growing facilities available at NIAB.

University of Greenwich Medway Food Innovation Centre:

The team at University of Greenwich are specialists in crop protection, post-harvest storage, new product development, healthy reformulation, sustainable process technologies and alternative protein based food innovation. The new Centre has state-of-the-art capabilities, some of which are unique to the UK.

University of Kent Biotechnology Hub for Sustainable Food and Drink:

The team applies high-tech approaches to production and processing of high-value foods and plant-based compounds from plant material and waste, crop disease and pathogen identification and control, improving biocontrols, analyzing chemical components, and maintenance of healthy soil.

Application Dates

- EOI phase opens summer 2022
- 8th August 2022- Voucher scheme opens for full applications (conditional on EOI)
- 3rd October 2022- Voucher scheme competition closes
- November 2022 Applicants notified

Eligibility

To be eligible for a Voucher the applicant must:

- Be a Kent or Medway based micro, small or medium sized business.
- Applications are also welcome from businesses that are sole traders/ partnerships or charity and social enterprises.
- Large businesses are ineligible for support.
- The grants are available for horticultural and plant-based food and drink businesses across the supply chain.
- Partner with a researcher from one (or more) of the Growing Kent & Medway research organisations to apply.
- Preference will be given to proposals from business who wish to engage with Growing Kent & Medway research organisations for the first time and/ or working with early stage researchers.
- There is a limit of one voucher per business.

Funding Amounts

A Business Innovation Voucher is a grant to the research organisation that can be used by a business to access technical research support.

Grant funding is provided directly to the research organization.

Businesses can take advantage of 75% funding towards research projects worth up to £20,000, so grants of up to £15,000 are available. A 25% co-investment is needed from the business applicant, which can be made up of cash and/or in-kind contributions that will be used in the project.

Businesses can co-invest above the 25% co-investment rate, but the grant awarded will be fixed at £15,000. If the business would like the academic partner to conduct additional work beyond the scope of the project, this will be charged by the research organisation through a separate contract.

What counts as in-kind contribution (not an exhaustive list):

- Labour to assist in the research and attend meetings
- Consumables either provided to the collaborating research facility or used in complementary work outside of the research facility
- Travel and subsistence

How to apply

The Business Innovation Vouchers have a 2 stage application process. You will not be able to proceed to full application stage without first contacting an Innovation Growth Manager or completing the Expression of Interest form:

Stage 1:

Please contact one of our Innovation Growth Managers directly to discuss your business needs and potential areas of collaboration. They will then guide you through the application process.

Alternatively, [please fill in our expression of interest form](#) and one of our team will be in touch

- Robert Saville, NIAB. Particular interest; Crop production systems and agri-tech for horticultural systems.
robert.saville@niab.com
- Sophie Packer, University of Kent. Particular interest; Packaging, disease control and high-value compounds.
s.packer@kent.ac.uk
- Parag Acharya, University of Greenwich. Particular interest: Plant and algae-based alternative proteins, fresh produce storage and food processing.
p.acharya@greenwich.ac.uk

Stage 2:

Once an Innovation Growth Manager has confirmed your project is within scope, they will pair you with a relevant academic to develop your project and send you a link to start the full application. The full application form requires input from both the business and the research partner.

A preview of the application form and full guidance for completing each section can be found [here](#).

The business is responsible for initiating the application form and populating the first sections with company specific details. Once you have submitted your application your partner researcher will be informed. They will be able to complete the application questions assigned to them. Once all the sections are completed the business lead will then be prompted to submit the final application.

The business will be required to make several declarations about their eligibility to receive support and their acceptance of the terms and conditions of the GKM Innovation Voucher Legal Agreement. A draft version of the terms and conditions that you and the researcher will be asked to sign if successful can be found [here](#).

Only applications submitted via the Growing Kent & Medway link to the online application form will be accepted, applications sent by email will not be accepted.

Assessment Process

Once applications have been received, they will be sent on to the assessment panel for review and to decide on whether it should be funded. The assessment panel will make their decision and applicants informed of the outcome within four weeks of the submission deadline. Eligibility checks on the business will be undertaken based on information included in the application form.

At this point applicants may be asked for further information to support the application and may request amendments to the application in order to grant the funding. The decision will be communicated by email to the named business and research partner.

The assessment panel reserves the right to turn down any application that does not meet the required criteria or overall purpose of the scheme.

Award of Grant

Once the application has been approved, the business and the research partner will be invited to complete and sign their GKM Innovation Voucher Legal Agreement.

Please do not start the project until the award has been approved and the Legal Agreement signed.

The total number of GKM innovation vouchers is limited.

Each voucher will cover the costs of the research organisations services provided to the beneficiary business partner. Vouchers cannot be used to fund any expenditure incurred by the company as part of the delivery of the project.

Business Innovation Vouchers are subject to the UK Subsidy Control framework. Companies receiving vouchers must ensure at all times that receipt of their Voucher is compliant with any subsidy control legislation applicable in the United Kingdom at the time. Businesses will be notified of their award and the amount of support being provided.

Contact us

Email: growingkentandmedway@niab.com