

Business Sustainability Challenge: Round Two Competition Overview

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The Challenge

Innovative ideas, processes or technologies to support sustainable production, products and packaging in the horticultural, and plant-based food and drink supply chain.

Growing Kent & Medway’s Business Sustainability Challenge will support businesses to work individually or in collaboration on short-term, high-impact innovation projects focused on sustainability and creating viable circular economies in the Kent and Medway region.

Scope

This competition aims to support innovation in sustainability and circularity in the horticultural and plant-based food and drink sectors in the Kent and Medway region. To help guide you we have defined seven core areas. During the application stage, we will ask you to describe how your project fits under one or more of these areas.



Projects can focus on the following:

- Moving towards net zero carbon emissions targets

For example, testing and implementing innovative solutions to reducing emissions from your business

- Improving resource sustainability

For example, selecting more sustainable resources for your operation or finding ways to 'close the loop' on otherwise wasted resources

- Minimising waste and maximising recycling

For example, find alternative uses for waste/by-products within the business or between businesses to replace non-circular practices such as landfill and incineration

- Procure food ingredients from sustainable sources

For example, a food producer looking to replace their animal-based protein with an alternative protein source. Or 'upcycling' ingredients from raw materials which would otherwise be wasted

- Use natural resources efficiently

For example, testing and implementing innovative solutions to reduce fossil fuels, optimise water use, reduce pollution of waterways, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, maintain healthier soils and increase biodiversity

- Use environmentally efficient food packaging

For example, optimise packaging use and switch to using recycled or 'upcycled' materials with a lower environmental impact

- Reduce food waste

For example, use technical strategies to extend shelf life and reduce waste sent to landfill or find circularity opportunities within your business or between businesses.

Whilst your project should fit into one or more of the seven core areas, the list of examples is not exhaustive.

Your project idea must be innovative, we will not fund 'off-the-shelf' solutions.

If you are unsure, please contact us to discuss project ideas and how they fit within our core areas: contact@growingkentandmedway.com.

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The Project

This grant scheme is not for capital projects. Grants can be used to contribute towards the cost of capital items based on their usage within the project.

- Projects must be innovative and can last for up to 8 months
- Projects should focus on sustainability and/or creating viable circular economies in the horticultural and plant-based food and drink sectors.
- We encourage collaborative applications with multiple business partners. Individual businesses can also apply.
- Multi-partner projects will need to identify a lead partner who will sign a funding agreement on behalf of the collaborating businesses through a hub and spoke funding model. This means grant claims and payments to all partners are made by the lead partner after claims are authorised by Kent County Council.

The Funding

This funding call will offer grants of up to 50% of eligible project costs (see 'Guidelines for Applicants' on the [competition web page](#)), with a maximum grant value of £50,000 and a minimum grant value of £10,000.

The business(es) should co-invest a minimum of 50% of total eligible project cost through match funding.

This means total project costs of between £20,000 - £100,000+.

Grant will be paid in arrears upon project completion. You will need to provide proof of payment to be reimbursed.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible to lead a project you need to be a Kent or Medway-based micro, small or medium sized business (see list of eligible postcodes and guidance on company size definitions in our 'Guidelines for Applicants' on the [competition web page](#)).

Collaborating businesses can be any sized UK-registered business from any region in the UK. However, 75% of project activity needs to take place in the Kent

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and Medway region and large businesses cannot draw from the grant, although their match funding does count towards the total project cost.

Subcontractor costs are allowed up to 30% of total project costs and the subcontractor(s) can be from anywhere in the UK. You must select them through your usual procurement processes.

Applications are also welcome from businesses that are sole traders/ partnerships or charities and social enterprises.

To demonstrate that you are a genuine company we will require you to provide supporting evidence on request as follows:

- If you are a limited company – three years of company accounts (where available) to be supplied plus three months of business bank statements (where available).
- If you are not registered with Companies House (such as sole traders) we would require two or more of the following documents:
 - o [Three months of business bank statements \(where available\)](#)
 - o [HMRC Registration Document](#)
 - o [Business Utility Bill \(addressed to the business\)](#)
 - o [Business Insurance Certificate](#)
- If you are a partnership, you can supply a signed copy of the partnership agreement plus one of the documents highlighted in purple above
- If you are a not-for-profit entity, you can supply a Memorandum and Articles of Association plus one of the documents highlighted in purple above.

The competition is focused on the horticultural and plant-based food and drink sectors. Businesses operating in these sectors and/or projects which have a positive impact on the sustainability of these target sectors are eligible for funding. If you are unsure if your business/project idea will be eligible contact us. contact@growingkentandmedway.com.

Your project must demonstrate a positive impact on the Kent and Medway economy.

Subsidy

This competition provides funding in line with the UK's obligations and commitments to Subsidy Control. You will be asked during the application stage to declare amounts of subsidy and financial support previously received (find out why and how we do this in our 'Subsidy Control Guidelines' which are available on the [competition web page](#)).

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Key dates

Online Briefing	1 st March 2024 @ 11:00
Applications open	1 st March 2024
Deadline for applications	30 th April 2024
Successful applicants notified	July 2024
Project start	July 2024 onwards*

* For successful applicants, projects can start and expenditure incurred from the date the grant offer letter is received (July 2024), on the condition that the legal agreement is signed and returned in a timely manner thereafter.

Alternatively, applicants will be able to defer the start date of the project to any date up until 1st October 2024 to allow time to review and return the legal agreement, to arrange any collaborative agreements (if applicable) and to prepare for the start of the project.

How to apply

The Business Sustainability Challenge is a competitive funding call. You will need to create an online account, and you will then be sent a full online application form. Please allow up to 48 hours to receive your application form.

If you would like to discuss your idea before applying to check if it is suitable, please get in touch with one of our innovation growth managers: Contact contact@growingkentandmedway.com.

You can create your account on our [competition web page](#).

You will need to provide applicant details, information to assess your eligibility, details about your project and project costs. See our 'Guidelines for Applicants' on our [competition webpage](#) to guide you through the application form.

NOTE: You are only allowed to submit one application as a lead applicant per business in this funding round. If you have led a project funded through round one of the business sustainability challenge you cannot lead a project in this round.

Assessment of the proposals

This is a competitive grant fund. Only the best applications will be funded. We will assess your eligibility to receive funding and the quality of the project proposed. A portfolio approach will be taken in awarding funding. The assessment criteria is summarised below:

- Collaborative projects will be favoured
- Your proposed project needs to be innovative and in scope
- Your proposed project needs to demonstrate that the resources and team are appropriate and have the potential to lead to a successful outcome
- Your proposed project costs need to be appropriate
- Your eligibility will be assessed based on where the lead applicant is based, their size and subsidy allowance
- Your commitment to Growing Kent & Medway's conditions of grant funding. The grant will use public funding, and as such we ask applicants to commit to a number of conditions at the application stage, which are:
 - an agreement to publicise the funded projects (you have an opportunity to outline a public statement should the project be commercially sensitive)
 - social value commitment
 - monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements.

Award of grant

- Following the subsidy and eligibility checks and assessment panel decision, applicants will be informed of the outcome.
- Successful applicants will be invited to complete and sign the Legal Agreement (see our [competition web page](#) for the agreement we expect you to sign).
- You must not start or incur costs on the project until the award has been approved (i.e. you have received a grant offer letter).

Post-award requirements

- Projects to start by October 1st 2024.
- Social value delivery (plan to be included in the application).
- Support with publicity, including a press release and case study.
- Grant payment in arrears - provide claim evidence.
- Completion of a reporting template upon completion.