

## Growing Kent & Medway Business Innovation Vouchers Frequently Asked Questions

If you have a question that isn't answered below, please contact our team, email [contact@growingkentandmedway.com](mailto:contact@growingkentandmedway.com)

### About business innovation vouchers?

**Q: What are Business Innovation Vouchers?**

A: Business Innovation Vouchers are designed to give you access to research expertise and facilities. They can be used to fund consultations with scientific experts, small trials, or access to cutting-edge equipment. The Voucher is a grant that will be redeemed by the partner research organisation.

**Q: Do I have to partner with a research organisation?**

A: Yes, you have to partner with one of three research organisations in Kent and Medway. The funding value will not go to your business.

**Q: Which organisations can I work with?**

A: You must partner with at least one of the following research organisations;

- University of Kent
- University of Greenwich
- NIAB

We can put you in touch with the organisation and researcher most suited for your project.

### Who can apply?

**Q: Can I apply if my business is not based in Kent or Medway?**

A: Yes. Your business can be registered anywhere in the UK. You will need to partner with a research organisation in the region as stated above.

**Q: I am a large business. Can I still apply?**

No. Unfortunately, this grant is not open to large businesses. For a definition of business size, please see our website.

**Q: Is the grant only open to horticultural businesses?**

A: You will need to provide evidence that you are connected to the horticultural or plant-based food and drink sector or propose a project that has an impact in these sectors.

**Q: Are organisations such as plastic recycling services able to apply?**

A: We support businesses across the whole horticultural and plant-based food and drink supply chain. You can apply if your idea relates to businesses within the sector and your idea can help them to become more sustainable or create circular economies.

**Q: Is this grant open to start-up businesses?**

A: Yes, we are keen to support new entrants to the sector. You will need to demonstrate that you are a genuine business (See 'What do I need to provide to demonstrate I am a genuine business? below'.)

**Q: Can I apply if I am self-employed?**

A: Yes. You will need to provide evidence that you are connected to the horticultural or plant-based food and drink sector or propose a project which has an impact in these sectors and demonstrate that you are a genuine business (See 'What do I need to provide to demonstrate I am a genuine business?'.)

**Q: What do I need to provide to demonstrate I am a genuine business?**

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

- o If you are a limited company – 3 years of company accounts (where available) to be supplied plus 3 months of business bank statements (where available).
- o If you are not registered with Companies House (such as sole traders) we would require two or more of the following documents:

- Three months of business bank statements (where available)
- HMRC Registration Document ▪ Business Utility Bill (addressed to the business)
- Business Insurance Certificate

**Q: Can charities apply?**

A: Yes. We support charities, not-for-profit, and social enterprises.

**Q. Can more than one company work with a researcher on a single project?**

A. Yes, multiple industry partners can apply for a single voucher to support a research project. This has the benefit of enabling the cost of the match funding, be it in cash or in kind, to be spread across multiple businesses. If successful, projects that have multiple industry partners will have to produce a collaboration agreement, between themselves, and submit a signed copy as a condition to receive the funding.

## What types of projects are eligible?

**Q: Does my project need to relate to the fresh produce sector?**

A: If your project helps to improve the sustainability of the horticultural, or plant-based food and drink sectors, then your proposal could be eligible. For example, this could include either taking a waste stream from these sectors and finding a use for it in another sector (valorisation) or utilising a by-product from another sector to replace a less sustainable material, or ingredient used currently in our supported sector for this competition.

**Q: What do you mean by an 'innovative' idea?**

A: We cannot fund 'off the shelf' solutions. We are looking for innovative ideas. For instance, this could be looking at improving the efficiency of an existing process or finding new ways of doing things in your business or the supply chain.

## What funding is available?

**Q: How much are the Vouchers worth?**

A: The value of your voucher can be between £10,000 and £30,000. Businesses can take advantage of 50% funding towards research projects worth up to £60,000, so grants of up to £30,000 are available. A 50% 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. The minimum project size is £20,000 in total project costs.

**Q: What is the maximum project cost I can apply for?**

A: 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.

Businesses can co-invest above the 50% co-investment rate, but the grant awarded will be fixed at £30,000.

**Q: Can I claim for capital expenditure. e.g. purchasing kit?**

A: This grant cannot cover the cost of buying equipment. Each voucher will cover the costs of the research organisation's 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.

**Q: Does the business have to pay cash for the match funding?**

A. Match funding may be cash payment to the research organization, or may be "in-kind" contributions required for the success of the research project. In-kind contributions may include company employee time, resources, travel, subcontracting costs etc. spent on project-related activities. It is expected that the costs are reasonable and justifiable. The company is expected to keep records of its own expenditure on activities within the project for auditing purposes.

## The Application Process

**Q: Do I need to submit an expression of interest form?**

A: Yes, you will need to submit an expression of interest form to proceed to our full application process. The expression of interest form should only take a few minutes to complete. It will help us to ensure that your project is within scope, and you are eligible to apply. We are also able to match you with a relevant research organisation partner so that you can proceed with your application, if you don't already have a partner in mind.

**Q: Can I save and re-edit my application form?**

A: Yes. You can press submit at any point during your application. You will then receive an email with a link to retrieve and edit your latest application form. When you are ready to submit your application to our assessment panel, please ensure you tick the box at the very end of the form to confirm it is your final submission. You will need to do this before the closing date, midnight 21st February 2024.

**Q. I am having technical problems with accessing, completing or submitting my application. What can I do?**

A: Contact our team at [contact@growingkentandmedway.com](mailto:contact@growingkentandmedway.com) for any technical support with your application. Our emails are monitored during office hours, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

**Q As a lead business how do I record additional industry partner(s) during the application process?**

A. The application process has been designed for a lead applicant to complete with the assistance of their research partner. If your project has one or more additional industry partners then you should include the breakdown of your match funding contributions by company in the 'Brief justification of cost and how it is related to the project' column in the 'Eligible cost calculator' which you will complete as part of the full application. If you have any questions contact your allocated Innovation Growth Manager to discuss.

## The Assessment Process

**Q. Can I apply if I have previously applied for a Growing Kent & Medway Business Innovation Voucher?**

If you have successfully been awarded a Business Innovation Voucher by Growing Kent & Medway previously, then you are not eligible to apply for another Voucher. If your application in our first round of funding was unsuccessful you can reapply. However, you must demonstrate that your project has taken on board the feedback received in the first round.

**Q: How does this round of Business Innovation Voucher funding differ from your first round?**

A: In our first round, applicants were able to apply for 75% funding of projects worth up to £20,000, so grants were limited to £15,000. The winning projects were announced in February 2023. Businesses can now be registered anywhere in the UK to apply.

**Q: I have been awarded Growing Kent and Medway funding through another of your grant competitions, can I apply for this funding opportunity?**

A: Yes, a business that has previously received financial or non-financial support from Growing Kent & Medway's services is able to apply for funding in this competition. The exception is if you have previously been awarded a Business Innovation Voucher, then you cannot reapply.

**Q: Will all projects that meet the assessment criteria be funded?**

A: Unfortunately, not. This is a competitive grant application process. If we receive more eligible proposals than we can fund, only the highest-scoring projects will be funded. We will also take a 'portfolio' approach to ensure we have a good mix of projects across the three research organisations.

**Q: Can I apply more than once?**

A: Only one Voucher can be awarded per business. However, you can lead one application, but you can partner on up to two.

## Once Projects are awarded

**Q: What is the timeline from application to submission and assessment?**

A: Applications close at 23:59 on 21st February 2024. The applications will be assessed throughout March and applicants informed of the outcome of their application by the end of April 2024.

**Q: When does my project need to start?**

A: Please do not start the project until the award has been approved and the Legal Agreement signed. Projects can last up to 12 months. Your project start date can be deferred up to six months from award notification. All projects must be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025.