

Business Innovation Vouchers: Round Two Business Outline

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Growing Kent & Medway Business Innovation Vouchers allow you to work collaboratively with us on projects to support innovation and growth within your business. Businesses can take advantage of 50% funding towards research projects costing a maximum of £60,000, with a minimum total project cost of £20,000.

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

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 Vouchers can be applied for by horticultural and plant-based food and drink businesses across the supply chain registered in the UK. The Vouchers will be redeemed by the partner research organisation. In applying for a Business Innovation Voucher, you are entering a competitive process.

Project scope

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

- Horticultural production including the production of novel, high-value compounds from plants, e.g. medicinal or beauty
- Packaging for plant-based food and drink products
- Plant-based food and drink products 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 and/or the United Kingdom. Positive societal impacts will also be a condition of receiving funding.

The project must focus on one or more of the following innovation themes:

- Moving towards net zero carbon emissions targets
- Minimising waste and maximising recycling
- Improving resource use efficiency and sustainability
- Increasing productivity
- Resilient food production, such as supply chain resilience and nutritional security
- Precision technologies, including sensor technologies, AI or robotics
- Solving the challenge of access to labour.

Type of projects we can help with:

- Progressing products and services up the technology readiness levels (TRLs) scale
- New product or service development
- Developing a new process, practice or technology
- Product validation and small-scale prototyping
- Produce scientific or technical data for product or service development
- Technical and Scientific consultancy from the research organisation
- Proof of concept or feasibility studies

The list of themes 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
- Do not involve collaboration with a Growing Kent & Medway research organisation
- General business planning, marketing, web design, advertising, training, business expenses and professional fees
- Do not demonstrate the potential to impact the economy of the Kent and Medway and/or UK area.

Projects must have a maximum total project cost of £60,000, a minimum total project cost of £20,000. Projects can last up to 12 months. The project's start date can be deferred up to six months from award notification. All projects must be completed by 31st July 2025.

Beneficiaries of the Growing Kent & Medway grant funding programmes are expected to contribute towards our social value goals. In the application, we ask that the business commit time in kind to delivering social value activity. Applicants who fail to commit to delivering social value will be ineligible for funding. See our website for our social value guidelines.

Your project idea must be innovative. You may research or develop a new process, product or service, or improve an existing one. You cannot use this funding for 'off-the-shelf' solutions.

Facilities and areas of research expertise

Businesses must partner with one of three Growing Kent & Medway research organisations for this grant; NIAB, University of Greenwich and University of Kent.

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, analysing chemical components, and maintenance of healthy soil.

Application dates

- Expression of Interest (EOI) phase opens 20th November 2023
- **Deadline for Expression of Interest is 24th Jan 2024**
- Participants get a minimum of 4 weeks for full application submission
- Full applications by invitation only after submission of EOI form
- Voucher scheme competition closes on 21st Feb 2024
- Applicants will be notified by April 2024

Eligibility

To be eligible for a Voucher the applicant must:

- Be a business based in the United Kingdom
- Be a micro, small, or medium-sized business
- Applications are also welcome from businesses that are sole traders/ partnerships or charity and social enterprises.
- Be a horticultural or plant-based food and drink business from across the supply chain
- Partner with a researcher from one (or more) of the Growing Kent & Medway research organisations listed above

Please note:

- There is a limit of one voucher per business
- Businesses who have previously successfully received a Business Innovation Voucher from Growing Kent & Medway are unable to apply
- Large businesses are ineligible for support
- Businesses can only lead one application, but can partner on up to two.

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 organisation.

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.

Businesses can co-invest above the 50% co-investment rate, but the grant awarded will be fixed at £30,000. 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 two-stage application process. You will not be able to proceed to full application stage without first completing the Expression of Interest form:

Please fill in our expression of interest form.

An Innovation Growth Manager will be in touch to discuss the project and consider whether it is within scope.

If the business doesn't already have a research partner in mind, they will pair the business with a relevant academic to develop the project further.

If the project is considered within scope, a full application form will be sent to the business to complete.

Full guidance for the application form is available [on our website](#).

The business is responsible for filling and submitting the application form in consultation with their partner researcher.

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 Growing Kent & Medway Business 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 [on our website](#).

Only applications submitted via the Growing Kent & Medway 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 by the end of April 2024. 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 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.

This is a competitive application process. Funding will be awarded to the highest-scoring applications. Projects will be scored on their fit within the aims and scope of the Growing Kent & Medway Project. This includes the potential to deliver a positive economic impact within the Kent and Medway region and/or the United Kingdom, positive societal impacts, and innovation.

Award of Grant

Once the application has been approved, the business and the research partner will be invited to complete and sign their Growing Kent & Medway Business 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 Growing Kent & Medway Business Innovation Vouchers is limited.

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.

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: contact@growingkentandmedway.com