

# Growing Kent & Medway Business Sustainability Challenge

## 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).

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### What is the Business Sustainability Challenge?

#### Q: What will this business grant support?

A: *The Business Sustainability Challenge has been developed by Growing Kent & Medway to support in-house innovation, research and development.*

### Who can apply?

#### Q: Can I apply if I am a start-up businesses or self-employed?

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: 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:*

- *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).*
- *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*

- *If you are a partnership – you can supply a signed copy of the partnership agreement plus one of the documents highlighted in green 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 green above*

**Q: Is this grant only available to horticultural businesses?**

*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: Do you support charities?**

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

**Q: How do I find out if my business is eligible based on geography?**

*A: As a place based programme we want to support businesses based in the Kent and Medway region to innovate. We have defined the Kent & Medway region with a list of eligible postcodes which is available in our 'guidelines for applicants' on our competition [web page](#). As long as your company has a registered and/or trading address within one of the postcodes listed you are eligible to lead a project in this competition.*

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

*A. The lead business needs to be a Kent-based micro, small or medium sized company but the collaborating partner(s) can be from anywhere in the UK and of any size (Although Large businesses will not be able to claim any grant).*

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

*A. Large businesses can apply for this competition but they are not able to draw a grant or lead the consortium. So, for example if a large company in Norfolk and a small-sized business in Kent had a project idea, the Kent-based small company would need to be the lead applicant and would be the only partner able to draw grant funding. *The costs that the large company contribute could be counted towards the co-investment.**

*For a definition of business size, please see our [website](#).*

## 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 taking a waste stream from these sectors and finding a use for it in another sector, such as beauty or pharmaceuticals (valorisation). Alternatively, your proposal could use a by-product from another sector to replace a less sustainable material or ingredient used currently in the horticultural or plant-based food and drink sectors.

### **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 can I claim?**

A: You can claim a minimum of £10,000 and up to £50,000. 50% of eligible project costs will be reimbursed once the project is completed with the other 50% covered by match funding from company resources. A list of eligible costs is available in our 'guidelines for applicants' on our competition [web page](#).

### **Q: What can I include in my match-funding contribution?**

A: All eligible costs will be counted toward your total project costs. At the application stage, we ask you to list the costs for your proposed project. The grant amount will be calculated from this (i.e. 50% of total project costs). You will be asked to present evidence of your costs once the project is completed. The grant will then be paid accordingly.

### **Q. Does the grant cover subcontractor costs?**

A: The grant can cover subcontractor costs of up to 30% of the total project cost. This subcontractor could be a commercial service, such as analytical laboratory services, consultancy services, or a research organisation. The subcontractor can be from anywhere in the UK, although bear in mind that we do require that at least 75% of project activity takes place in the Kent and Medway region.

**Q: How many projects will be funded?**

*A: This will depend on how many people apply and how much each applicant requests. We have £600,000 available, so this could be anything between 12 and 60 projects. Projects will also need to meet our eligibility criteria and satisfy the scope of the competition. This is a competitive process so not all applications will be funded. Please refer to section 'The Assessment Process' for further information.*

**Q: Can I claim for capital expenditure. e.g purchasing new machinery or equipment?**

*A: This grant scheme is not for capital projects. Grants can be used to contribute towards the cost of using equipment within the project, this is known as 'Capital Usage'. The grant cannot therefore cover the cost of buying equipment. It can however cover the capital usage cost, which is the cost of using the piece of capital equipment (e.g. machinery or kit ) within the project.*

**Q: How do I calculate my capital usage cost?**

*A: An explanation and worked example of calculating capital usage costs can be found in our 'guidelines for applicants' on our competition [web page](#). The calculation considers the total purchase cost of the equipment, its depreciation over time, the length of the project and the proportion of time that it will be used within this project. This will give you a capital usage cost.*

*Our 'Eligible Cost Calculator' that you will be required to submit with your final application form will do the capital usage cost calculations for you so you only need to enter the figures in the input cells. You can download the 'Eligible Cost Calculator' from our [web page](#).*

**Q: Should I include VAT in my costings?**

*A: If you are a VAT registered company, enter the costs as net (excluding VAT). If you are not a VAT registered company, enter the costs as gross (VAT inclusive). As part of the claims process if you are not VAT registered we will ask you to complete a VAT declaration form and check your VAT status.*

## **The application process**

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

*A: Yes, you can.*

*To start your application process, you will need to create an online account. You will then receive a link to your application form. You can then edit your form as many times as you like until the application deadline.*

*You will receive an email each time you save your form, which includes a link to retrieve and edit your latest version of your application.*

*When you are ready to submit your completed application form, please tick the box to confirm it is your final submission. You must do this before the deadline, midnight 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024.*

### **Q: I have created my online account but still haven't received my application form.**

*A: Please allow 48 hours for your account to be processed and your application form to be sent to you. Send a message to [contact@growingkentandmedway.com](mailto:contact@growingkentandmedway.com) if you can't find the link after 48 hours.*

### **Q: Can I use a grant writer to help prepare my application?**

*A: Yes, the services of a grant writer can be used to help prepare your application. We would also recommend using the support available through Innovate UK's Business Growth team (formerly Innovate UK Edge). They have a team of dedicated innovation and growth specialists who can provide guidance and help identify potential collaborators (if appropriate) as you develop your project idea. You can find out more at their website or alternatively contact one of their specialists covering the South East directly at [monika.dunkel@innovateukedge.ukri.org](mailto:monika.dunkel@innovateukedge.ukri.org). Before engaging the services of a grant writer or Innovate UK's Business Growth team we recommend that you contact the Growing Kent and Medway team to discuss your project idea and approach to check it is within scope – contact us to arrange a meeting at [contact@growingkentandmedway.com](mailto:contact@growingkentandmedway.com).*

## **The assessment process**

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

*A: As a lead you can only make one application but you can be a named partner on any number of applications led by another business.*

### **Q: I have been awarded Growing Kent and Medway funding though 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 and Medway's services is able to apply for funding in this competition. Businesses who led projects in our first round of the Business Sustainability Challenge, however, are unable to apply.*

### **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. We will also only fund projects that satisfy the scope of the competition and meet our quality and eligibility criteria.*

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

*A: Applications close at midnight on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024. The applications will be assessed through May and June and applicants informed of the outcome of their application by July 2024.*

## **Once projects are awarded**

### **Q: When will I be able to start my project?**

*A: Successful applicants will be informed by July 2024. Successful applicants will be sent an offer letter and instructions on how to get your project underway. Projects can start and expenditure incurred from the date the grant offer letter is received (on the condition that the legal agreement is signed and returned in a timely manner thereafter). Alternatively, applicants may defer the start date up until the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024 in order to review and return the legal agreement, to arrange any collaborative agreements (if applicable) and to prepare for the start of the project. All projects must finish by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025.*

### **Q: Can I defer the project start date?**

*A: All projects must have started by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024 and be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025.*

**Q: When will the grant money be issued?**

*A: A grant of 50% of the total eligible project costs will be reimbursed at the end of the project. The lead applicant will be asked to submit evidence for the expenditure of the whole project to Kent County Council, our grant giving partner. Kent County Council will reimburse 50% of the total eligible project costs directly to the lead applicant. It is the responsibility of the lead applicant to distribute the grant to the grant drawing partners.*