

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.

What is the Business Sustainability Challenge?

Q: What will this business grant support?

A: Growing Kent & Medway have developed a number of competitive grant funding competitions to support sustainable innovation in the horticulture and plant-based food and drink sectors. The Business Sustainability Challenge has been developed to support in house innovation, research and development conducted by the business and help to facilitate collaboration between businesses.

Who can apply?

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 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: 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:

- 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: 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: Do you support charities?

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

Q. Can I partner with a business outside of Kent and Medway?

A. Yes. The lead business needs to be a Kent-based micro, small or medium sized company but the collaborating partner(s) can be from outside Kent (but within the UK) and of any size (see question below ‘Can I partner with a large business?’).

Q. Can I partner with a large business?

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 medium sized company would need to be the lead applicant and would be the only partner able to draw grant funding, Although the costs that the large company contribute could be counted towards the co-investment.

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: My project idea requires the project to run over the summer season, can I defer the project start date to accommodate this?

A: Unfortunately project start dates cannot be deferred beyond the guidelines set out below (‘When will I be able to start my project?’). All projects in this round will need to be completed by June 2024 and so the summer season will not be included. The timing of this round will suit some projects and not others. If the timing of this round does not suit the project you have in mind we hope to run a second round of the Business Sustainability Challenge which will be launched in 2024 which may suit your project phasing better.

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 are available in our ['guidelines for applicants'](#).

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

A: All eligible costs will be counted towards 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). Once the project is completed you will be asked to present evidence of your costs and the grant will be paid accordingly.

Q. Will the grant cover subcontractor costs?

A: The grant can cover subcontractor costs 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 £900,000 available, so this could be anything between 18 and 90 projects.

Q: Will there only be one round of applications for this grant?

A: If the full £900,000 is not allocated during this first round of applications, we anticipate that we will run a second round in 2024.

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

A: This grant cannot 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'](#) document. 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.

The ['Eligible Cost Calculator'](#) will do the capital usage cost calculations for you so you only need to enter the figures in the input cells.

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, however, you must be registered as a Growing Kent & Medway member to access your draft form. It is free to sign-up. Your application form will be found in your membership dashboard.

Further guidance about saving, editing and submitting your application form can be found [here](#) (YouTube video explainer).

Q: How do I sign up to be a Growing Kent & Medway member?

A: You can register for a free membership at:
growingkentandmedway.com/become-a-member.

Q: I have registered to be a member but still can't find my application form

A: Please allow 48 hours for your membership to be processed and your application form to be visible on your dashboard. Send a message to contact@growingkentandmedway.com if you can't find the link after 48 hours.

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 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 and Medway's services are able to apply for funding in this competition.

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.

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

A: Applications close at 23:59 on May 31st 2023. The applications will be assessed through June and July and applicants informed of the outcome of their application by August 2023.

Once Projects are awarded

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

A: Successful applicants will be informed by August at the latest. 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 will have up to two months from the date of the grant offer letter 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 June 2024.

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.