

Rutland County Council: Rural England Prosperity Fund

Rutland Rural Enterprise Grant 2024 – 2025 (Capital Projects)

Grant criteria and guidance

1. Introduction

Rutland County Council have been allocated funding from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).

The REPF is an extension of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for eligible local authorities. It aims to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.

Rutland County Council have launched the Rutland Rural Enterprise Grant to support local businesses, under REPF Intervention 1.1: capital grant funding for small scale investment in micro, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in rural areas.

The total grant pot available is £200k.

2. Scheme objectives

The Rural Enterprise Capital Grant Scheme aims to promote economic growth and sustainability in Rutland by providing capital grants to micro, small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The programme focuses on supporting businesses in rural regions to diversify, innovate, and adopt sustainable practices, thereby creating employment opportunities, fostering community cohesion, and encouraging private sector investment in growth-enhancing activities.

Applicants to this scheme must demonstrate how their project will deliver the 'Business Growth' and at least one other scheme objective.

Scheme objectives:

- 2.1. **Business growth:** The scheme will enable business development and growth. This could include supporting businesses to enter new markets, develop new products or services, or improve productivity. The objective is to increase business turnover.
- 2.2. **Job creation:** Projects will aim to achieve sustainable job creation or the safeguarding of existing jobs. The project could also support upskilling and/or promotion of employees, thereby, contributing to economic growth and stability.
- 2.3. **Community Cohesion:** The program seeks to strengthen social bonds and cohesion within rural communities by fostering entrepreneurship and supporting local businesses.
- 2.4. **Green Growth:** Projects that aim to reduce their carbon footprint and achieve green growth through investment in net zero infrastructure and technology. This could also include developing new services and products that will support other organisations to reduce their environmental footprint.
- 2.5. **Wider Economic Impact:** Projects should aim to have an impact on the wider Rutland economy. This could include working in partnership with local businesses, using local suppliers and creating more demand for local businesses (for example, a new accommodation business may have a wider economic impact on other local tourism attractions, because their customers will spend in those businesses).
- 2.6. **Innovation:** Projects that are truly innovative. The project will develop innovative new processes, products or services that will enable the business to do things differently, creating efficiencies and growth opportunities.

3. Eligible projects

For projects to be eligible, they must meet the criteria below:

- 3.1. Clearly demonstrate how the project meets the given scheme objectives (section 2).
- 3.2. The project must be based in a rural area of Rutland – for the purpose of REPF this includes all of Rutland, apart from St. George’s Barracks.
- 3.3. The scheme can only support capital projects. This means the funding must be used for lasting assets such as buildings and equipment.
- 3.4. Where relevant, the project must have any permissions or licences needed before a grant can be approved. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Planning permission.
 - Building regulations approval.
 - Conservation area consent.
 - Listed building consent.
 - Appropriate ecclesiastical permission.
 - Consent of landlord where the applicant is a tenant or leases the building/land.
 - Waste carrier’s license.
 - Relevant health and safety and insurance requirements including risk assessments where relevant.
 - Photo permission forms.
- 3.5. This funding is designated solely for initiating new projects. Projects must not commence until the grant has been officially approved.
- 3.6. Grants are to be utilised strictly for business-related purposes. They are not permissible for domestic property enhancements or personal vehicle expenses.
- 3.7. Every project is required to assess its alignment with the natural environment to fulfil objectives. It is essential to evaluate the project's impact on natural resources and ecosystems at a minimum. Priority will be given to projects that yield optimal economic, environmental, and social advantages.
- 3.8. Applicants must provide robust project plans illustrating the feasibility and potential success of their projects. Businesses are advised to work with the Growth Hub to review and/or develop their project plans.
- 3.9. Businesses must demonstrate they have at least 50% match funding. The grant will provide funding of up to 50% of the total project costs. E.g. If your total project is £30,000, the max grant you can apply for is £15,000.
- 3.10. Min. grant value £5k, max. grant value £20k, therefore ideally seeking projects between £10-£40K.
- 3.11. Projects must be completed by 31 January 2025.

4. Eligible businesses

- 4.1. A micro, small or medium business (SMEs).
- 4.2. Businesses must be located in a rural area of Rutland - for the purpose of the REPF this includes all of Rutland, apart from St. George's Barracks.
- 4.3. Any business type can apply, including sole traders, partnerships, limited companies, Community Interest Companies, and social enterprises etc. Charities are not eligible.
- 4.4. Must have been trading for at least 12 months at the time of applying (new ventures will be considered if the business aligns with the grants objectives and falls within one of Rutland's priority sectors i.e. tourism, hospitality, farm diversification).
- 4.5. Businesses can only apply once for this grant scheme.
- 4.6. Businesses that are in administration, insolvent or where a striking-off notice has been made, are not eligible for funding under this scheme.
- 4.7. The Local Authority must confirm with the business that in accepting the grant, the business confirms that it is eligible and where they no longer meet the eligibility criteria, they will be required to contact the Council.

5. Example Projects

- 5.1. Creation and expansion of rural leisure and tourism businesses. For example:
 - 5.1.1.1. creating event venues or tourism facilities such as accommodation, wedding venues and leisure facilities
 - 5.1.1.2. provision of facilities for pet and equines such as kennels, livery and pet health venues
- 5.2. Investment in new technology that will increase efficiency and productivity or enable businesses to provide a new product or service.
- 5.3. Diversification of farm businesses into sectors outside of agriculture.

6. Exclusions to grant funding

- 6.1. The fund cannot support projects that are eligible for funding from other Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) schemes. This includes:
 - The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme
 - The Farming Investment Fund
 - The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund

Please note, where a farm business is looking to diversify within agriculture i.e. adding value to a primary agricultural product (for example, making ice cream or cheese from milk they produce) or introducing vending machines for agriculture products, these are eligible under The Farming Investment Fund. Please find information on the Farming Investment Fund here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/farming-investment-fund>

The Farm Investment Fund operates in rounds, potential applicants that have missed a funding window should apply at the next round. Potential applicants can sign up to the Defra farming blog for more details on the fund and when the next application window opens. <https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/>

- 6.2. The fund cannot provide assistance for projects or expenses mandated by law.
- 6.3. Businesses that have already received grant payments equivalent to the maximum allowable government or public subsidy levels will not qualify for additional funding. Hence, businesses will need to disclose any grants they have previously received in their application (Minimal Financial Declaration).
- 6.4. This grant funding cannot fund revenue projects or operational expenses.

7. Disclaimers

- 7.1. Rutland County Council reserves the right to modify the terms of the REPF Rural Grant Scheme. We will make every effort to inform organisations that have registered their interest with the Council of any such changes.
- 7.2. The Council also reserves the right to pause applications to the REPF Rural Grant Scheme to evaluate the programme and implement any necessary changes. We will make every effort to inform organisations that have registered their interest with the Council of any such changes.
- 7.3. Finances: Any grant awarded will be paid in arrears. If the outcomes are not achieved to the satisfaction of the grants team, the Council reserves the right to reconsider the final amount of funding based on the project's outcomes.
- 7.4. Tax: Any grant received may be subject to tax, and organisations may wish to consult HM Revenue and Customs or a qualified independent financial advisor.
- 7.5. Publicity: Any organisation receiving a grant must agree to publicly acknowledge receipt of the grant and participate in any publicity or promotional activities associated with the funding. Additionally, they must agree to participate in any monitoring and reporting required by the Council, whether specified in the grant approval notification or not.
- 7.6. Information: Personal data supplied on the application form and any supporting documentation will be held on our systems and used in accordance with the

Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The information provided will be used for statistical analysis, management planning, and service provision by the Council.

- 7.7. Fraud: The application administrator will perform anti-fraud assessments, including comprehensive reviews of each application and grant issued. If any applicant is found to have falsified records to secure grant money, they will be subject to prosecution. Additionally, any funds granted under false pretences or by mistake will be reclaimed.