



Start Up in Sandwell Grants Programme Policy 2023/25

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Start Up in Sandwell is one of the council's seven economic priorities within the Sandwell Business Growth Plan aiming to "*Make Sandwell the Home of the Successful Start Up*". To support this, the Sandwell Business Growth Team are delivering the **Start Up in Sandwell** programme, to stimulate business and enterprise activity, improve business confidence, and encourage people to help make some of their business ideas into a reality. Support is available to Sandwell based entrepreneurs establishing a new business for the first time; or for young businesses based in Sandwell in developing their aspirations to grow their business or develop new opportunities to trade.
- 1.2 The Grant programme is available for financial year 23/24 with a maximum grant award of £3,000. The programme is funded through a combination of UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) and Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. The Start Up in Sandwell Grant programme is subject to availability and once funds are fully committed the programme will close.

2. GRANT APPLICANT CRITERIA

- 2.1 To be eligible to apply for a Grant, applicants must:
- Be registered on the Sandwell Start Up programme delivered by our partners.
 - Be a profit seeking enterprise.
 - Identify a Sandwell domestic postcode or commercial postcode which you will operate your enterprise from.
 - Have a business bank account in the name of the business
 - Not be a charity or an organisation of a political or religious persuasion; activities involving pornography or clairvoyance; or

any business activity that is illegal or deemed unsuitable for public support by Sandwell Council are not eligible for Start Up in Sandwell Grant support.

3. GRANT ELIGIBLE COSTS

3.1 Eligible costs include:

- Business Setup Costs e.g. office equipment
- Developing new market opportunities including IT and Website development
- Promotional activities e.g. signage, leaflets.
- Innovation – Including the development of new products including prototyping, testing and commercialisation (excluding research and development activities) (capital)
- New or improving systems and processes (revenue)
- Capital investment, e.g. new plant, machinery, and equipment (capital)
- Increase in productive capacity of new and existing premises through new property builds/refurbishment/extensions on a commercial property (capital)

4. GRANT INELIGIBLE COSTS

4.1 Ineligible costs include:

- Charities; organisations of a political or religious persuasion; activities involving pornography or clairvoyance; or any business activity that is illegal or deemed unsuitable for public support by Sandwell Council are not eligible for Start Up in Sandwell Grant support.
- Retrospective expenditure (preceding the date of the grant funding agreement).

This list of ineligible costs is not exhaustive and may be subject to change. Sandwell Council has the final decision on the eligibility of project costs. Please contact the Sandwell Business Growth Team for more information.

5. PROCUREMENT GUIDELINES & TIMESCALES

- 5.1 Eligible applicants (new businesses) must register their business within six months of receipt of a Start Up Grant. If you do not register your business within six months of receiving a grant this may put your grant funding at risk of claw-back.
- 5.2 Eligible applicants must be able to financially complete their project by the 1st March 2024 including spend, defrayal and claiming the grant payment.
- 5.3 Eligible applicants must submit a written quotation with their application for all proposed expenditure along with justification on the preferred quote/supplier.
- 5.4 For all expenditure, the suppliers must not be persons or businesses connected to your business, directors, or shareholders unless a conflict of interest form is completed and declared. Use of local suppliers is encouraged to support Social Value in Sandwell priority.

6. AMOUNTS PAYABLE

- 6.1 A single grant of up to £3,000 is available per grant applicant and applicants can choose either a revenue or capital grant.
- 6.2 The grant funding is for eligible costs outlined within the successful application only and where those eligible costs defrayed after the approval of the funding agreement.
- 6.3 The funding is subject to availability, on a first come, first served basis to eligible applicants where all documentation and criteria of submission having been met. All decisions are subject to a business & financial appraisal, assessed on a case by case basis.

- 6.4 Grant Payment/s will be made directly to the business bank account as provided on the grant application, via BACS transfer.

7. SUBSIDY CONTROL

- 7.1 The grant programme operates in accordance with subsidy allowance under the Small Amounts of Financial Assistance Allowance – you're allowed up to £335,000 (subject to exchange rates) in Small Amounts of Financial Assistance over any rolling period of 3 financial years.

More information:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/complying-with-the-uks-international-obligations-on-subsidy-control-guidance-for-public-authorities

- 7.2 False declarations will lead to the recovery of the value of the assistance provided plus interest.

8. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

- 8.1 An online application must be submitted via:
www.grantapproval.co.uk/.
A passcode will be provided to enable the applicant to access to the grant funding.
- 8.2 Applicants will be asked to provide evidence to support their application and the online facility will enable them to upload documents. The following information must be uploaded onto the system as part of the grant application process:
- A business plan/template approved through the Start Up in Sandwell Programme
 - A quotation is required
 - Business Bank statements or a Business Bank Account opening letter
 - Proof of Identify

To receive grant payment:

- Proof of purchase
- Bank/Credit card statement showing defrayed expenditure (payment made)

- 8.3 As this is a financial and time limited grant scheme, the application process will close once the funding within the grant programme has been fully committed.
- 8.4 Grant recipients should note that their data may be shared with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the UKSPF team at central government for research and evaluation purposes and for the prevention and detection of error and fraud.
- 8.5 Information collected will be stored securely and retained in compliance with GDPR and the data protection act. This information will be used to evaluate the grant scheme and will be reported to the lead authority WMCA funding UKSPF.

9. GRANT PAYMENTS

- 9.1 All expenditure undertaken as part of the Start Up in Sandwell Grant programme must be paid for by cheque, card payment or bank transfer (BACS) so that a clear evidence trail can be demonstrated. Any payments made in cash will not be reimbursed. Grant payments will be made directly to the business's bank account stated on the grant application and will not be paid to third parties.
- 9.2 Sandwell Council will only reimburse invoices for eligible expenditure dated after the date when the funding agreement was approved. Grant Payments can be claimed at the completion of the project and claims must not include recoverable VAT.
- 9.3 Grant payments are issued as a reimbursement of eligible expenditure (i.e. paid in arrears) incurred by the business and will be paid upon receipt and validation of the required supporting evidence (invoices and bank statements). All supporting evidence documentation is to be submitted to the Sandwell Business Growth Team.

10. MONITORING & OUTPUTS

- 10.1 Upon the grant recipient submitting the final grant claim for payment, the Sandwell Business Growth Team may arrange a verification meeting to verify expenditure and collate supporting evidence as appropriate.
- 10.2 For outcome monitoring purposes and payment purposes, the grant recipient must provide the Sandwell Business Growth Team with the necessary evidential information within the timescales set for reporting. Failure to provide this information or failure to comply with the reporting process may result in the delay of grant payment, grant payments ceasing, or grant monies being reclaimed by Sandwell Council.

11. GRANT PUBLICITY

- 11.1 A condition of receiving Start Up grant support is that grant recipients co-operate with the council to publicise the grant. This may be through delivering certain social media or website posts, or by promoting the grant logo and the government funders logo in certain instances. Sandwell Council will provide grant recipients with the relevant logos and branding for publicity purposes.
- 11.2 If the purpose of the grant includes funding to produce marketing materials (brochures, websites, advertisements, newsletters etc.) then they must acknowledge the source of the grant funding within any items they produce and follow the UK Government Branding Manual Guidance:
<https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/guidance/marketing/branding-guidelines/>
- 11.3 If it is found that a grant recipient has not adhered to the branding requirements the grant funding will be withdrawn, or where grant funding has already been paid it may then be reclaimed.
- 11.4 Sandwell Council would expect to approve the media content prior to publication or posting any media regarding the funded project.

12. DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- 12.1 Grant applications will be appraised by Sandwell Council.
- 12.2 Given this is an online application, all applicants will be notified of the decision via the online portal.
- 12.3 Grant Payment/s will be made direct to the business bank account stated on the submitted application, and upon receipt of the required supporting evidence to substantiate the financial claim.
- 12.4 Grant recipients will be contacted in due course regarding providing evidence under the contracted outputs.
- 12.5 The Start Up in Sandwell grant programme does not allow for any formal right of appeal and all decisions are final.

13. OVERPAYMENT & FRAUD

- 13.1 Sandwell Council will seek to recover all grants found to be erroneously claimed.
- 13.2 Sandwell Council is committed to identifying and subsequently investigating suspected fraudulent claims made under this programme and grant recipients who falsely declare their circumstances will face prosecution.