**OxLEP Business Investment Fund Grant Q&As**

**Full Application Stage**

1. **If our project - a roof top Solar PV installation - on a building in a conservation area needs local consent, but not planning permission, can we apply?**

*It is unlikely that the panel would approve an application that requires consent due to the possibility of the consent not being granted.*

1. **I sell care software. I would like to expand to US market. Need to upgrade my software and implement US Compliance. Can these be funded? For me it will be capitalised.**

*BIF cannot support projects that are linked to ‘Any statutory or legislative obligations, duties, or requirements’. If you can ensure that your project is not doing that and if the spend can be can be capitalised, then it will be eligible.*

1. **Would bespoke build onto an existing vehicle be eligible? It adds value to an existing chassis.**

*Yes.*

1. **Would an application for creation of Marketing Content be a viable proposition? And, the development of a website to drive sales be viable?**

*If you are paying a supplier to develop the content and website then it is likely to be revenue costs. If you are unsure as to whether your proposed expenditure is eligible for the Business Investment Fund, we recommend you speak to your company accountant in the first instance to ensure the item(s) are able to be capitalised on your balance sheet. We may request written confirmation from your company accountant that your project costs can be capitalised under your accounting model.*

1. **We incorporated our company in August 2020. We have been doing R&D and developed our tech and sold one machine so far. We have £500k of potential sales now in our pipeline and a solution or organic waste ready to demo to new customers. Does this constitute 'trading'?**

*Yes – we define the “trading from date” as the date you registered your company as long as you have actively worked during this period. If you are a sole trader it is the date you started selling your goods / services.*

1. **How do you define trading. I have been registered in Oxfordshire for 4 years and we deliver remote training via Zoom / Teams and the lessons are delivered from our company address in Oxfordshire.**

*If you are delivering your services from Oxfordshire then you are trading in Oxfordshire.*

1. **We are looking to build a small office inside our unit to enhance our customer experience in building off grid campers. This would include purchase of new laptops and software for us to design diagrams, would this be included.**

*Yes.*

1. **If an accountant says its capital to do a web project, would you accept it?**

*Yes – We may request written confirmation from your company accountant that your project costs can be capitalised under your accounting model.*

1. **Do you do EIS investment?**

*EIS and SEIS investments are not incompatible with the Subsidy provided through BIF, however you should check with your Financial Advisor for any implications of receiving a UK Subsidy through the Domestic Subsidy Allowance for COVID-19 business support scheme.*

1. **Our project is to upgrade our 3d print resource and add resilience against frequent power cuts. I assume we would apply with quotes offset by the resale value of the existing equipment.**

*If the total purchase value of the new equipment is below £24,999 then it could be supported. In effect you will be providing match against the grant, we would be fully funding a part of the payment.*

*However, if the total value of the new equipment is above £24,999, this would violate the restriction on the value going to a single supplier and/or the procurement limits.*

1. **If the grant was used for new equipment (3D printer - which could also be included as a co-operative offering for other OxLEP businesses), could additional cost be factored in, to create the necessary marketing material/video for commercialisation post R&D?**

*The additional costs can only be included if they are capital costs.*

1. **We're looking at getting a food truck which we will pay for ourselves, would this grant cover the costs of all the equipment required inside as well wrapping the vehicle?**

*Yes.*

1. **I run my successful business from my home, I need to extend into my garage to further scale my business. Would this cost be accepted?**

*Yes – as long as it does not require planning permission.*

1. **Will development of marketplace (mostly enhancing) will be considered.**

*It depends what you mean by ‘development of marketplace’, we recommend you speak to your company accountant in the first instance to ensure the item(s) are able to be capitalised on your balance sheet.*

1. **I'm looking at developing a recording studio to create online academy. Capital costs include some renovation of a rented space as well as equipment. The rented space currently is on my home property. Can you confirm if this would be eligible?**

*Yes – as long as it does not require planning permission.*

1. **Our business has been registered in Canada since 2019 and our services are virtual. We’ve had customers from Oxfordshire use our services virtually. Does this satisfy the trading eligibility criteria?**

*You must be based in or mainly trading in Oxfordshire to apply for the grant*.

1. **Can you purchase demonstration stock?**

*BIF grants cannot support working capital requirements for a business. If your demonstration stock forms part of your working capital, then it is not eligible. If it is not a working capital cost, then it would be eligible. We recommend that you check with your accountant.*

1. **In the Go-create grant it seems any expense above £5k is considered capital. Just to clarify, could we include in the proposal a capital component less than £5k but we need more than 1 and thus the total grant will be within the £5-24,999 grant criteria?**

*The minimum BIF grant request is £5,000 and maximum is £24,999. Your expenditure can include items that cost less than £5,000 as long as the total grant request is within this range.*

1. **We have applied for the VEG grant also. As we won’t be eligible to receive both grants, will you be able to give a response on the VEG application before we apply to this? Or alternatively, can we specify which is more urgent to receive the funds applied for?**

*We will not be able to tell you the outcome before you apply as the VEG panel doesn’t meet until the 6th December. You are welcome to notify the team which your preferred grant application is, but there is no guarantee that either application will be successful.*

1. **If we are a business that went remote during COVID and switched our registered address to a location outside of Oxfordshire (accountants) but continued trading in Oxfordshire are we still eligible?**

*Yes, you are still eligible. We will ask you to demonstrate that you are trading in Oxfordshire.*

1. **Can applicants in receipt of Cherwell Business Adaptation Fund apply?**

*Yes.*

1. **Could we apply with multiple projects (I have both AI and supply chain software in mind).**

*No, businesses can only submit one application.*

1. **Are e-cargo bikes considered as vehicles?**

*Yes – they are not eligible.*

1. **Can funds be spent on freelance costs? (e.g. project management if project involves managing refurbishment etc)**

*No, that is a revenue cost.*

1. **Is promotion and marketing for a new product eligible?**

*No that is a revenue cost.*

1. **What about developing a software (AI/analytical capability) not licence purchase?**

*If you are unsure as to whether your proposed expenditure is eligible for the Business Investment Fund, we recommend you speak to your company accountant in the first instance to ensure the item(s) are able to be capitalised on your balance sheet. We may request written confirmation from your company accountant that your project costs can be capitalised under your accounting model.*

1. **Can we apply jointly with other businesses/organisations? For example, a joint project with a local hospital?**

*Yes, but there must be a lead organisation who puts their details on the application form. The grant must be spent and defrayed from the lead organisation.*

1. **Do we have to tender each item we put through from three suppliers for the application?**

*We ideally require three quotes. The minimum we will accept is one quote with an explanation as to why obtaining three quotes was not available*

1. **My company has been trading since 2019 and we have acquired a Kentish business which has now relocated to Oxon. Can the Parent Co apply on behalf of relocated Co?**

*Yes – you must be able to demonstrate you are trading in Oxfordshire.*

1. **We incorporated early 2020 but didn't move into the pub to trade until Nov 16 2020 - are we out? I suspect the answer is yes, but please confirm.**

*You are eligible to apply. You will have been trading for 2 years when the application closes.*

1. **We manufacture seating for non-domestic purposes. We would massively benefit from software that will improve the design and manufacturing process and reduce waste. The cost is about £8k. Would this be eligible?**

*Software and/or licence costs relating (where these can be capitalised) are eligible.*

1. **If we ask for R&D equipment for a project, we would start using the equipment right away but the project won't finish by March deadline. Are we still eligible?**

*Yes, as the purchase will be complete.*

1. **When you get to the bit on number of quotes needed... we know exactly what we would use the grant for and have done research to find the best solution. The grant would catalyse sales as this would provide evidence that our solution is suitable for them. Will we need 3 quotes?**

*We ideally require three quotes. The minimum we will accept is one quote with an explanation to why obtaining three quotes was not available.*

1. **Can we use the funding to refresh our company website using a marketing agency to hire in a designer and to ramp up our SEO. Day Five is training business supporting Tech software B2B businesses serving global clients.**

*If you are unsure as to whether your proposed expenditure is eligible for the Business Investment Fund, we recommend you speak to your company accountant in the first instance to ensure the item(s) are able to be capitalised on your balance sheet. We may request written confirmation from your company accountant that your project costs can be capitalised under your accounting model.*

1. **As part of the justifications do we need multiple quotes?**

*We ideally require three quotes. The minimum we will accept is one quote with an explanation to why obtaining three quotes was not available.*

1. **We have been trading longer than 2 years but changed legal status less than 2 years ago.**

*You can apply if you have been trading for more than 2 years. We will ask for relevant evidence to prove this.*

1. **Can we have 2 suppliers under 1 project?**

*Yes – you can use as many suppliers as you want.*

1. **We need machinery that is unavailable in UK. it will come from Poland. it will come to £24k for the machinery. Can we include delivery costs from Poland in the grant?**

Yes – but the grant cost cannot exceed £24,999

1. **Do we need formal quote(s) at the point of applying?**

*Yes.*

1. **Can the grant be used as a deposit for a larger machinery purchase?**

*No.*

1. **Is it one off payment we receive once all the allocated money for the project has been spent? Or can we claim in stages as we spend?**

*There is only one claim payment which is made once all the receipts / invoices and redacted bank statements have been provided and reviewed by the team.*

1. **My business sells know how IP via training courses and I would like to invest in enhancing this training product and our website so we can continue to export our expertise. Can we apply for support?**

BIF is a capital funding scheme, if your investment can be capitalised then you can apply for a BIF grant. We recommend that you speak to your accountant.

1. **The write up for the event says "Eligible businesses must have been trading in Oxfordshire for at least one full financial year"**

*This was a mistake on our website. You must have been trading for 2 years.*

1. **Can applicants in receipt of Cherwell Business Adaptation Fund apply?**

*Yes*

1. **Does an application to ‘Go Create’ preclude an application to this opportunity?**

*These grants are open to all eligible organisations, whether or not you have previously received a different grant from OxLEP, subject to the exception below. However, you will be asked to declare any previous funding from OxLEP, and any recent funding from other sources.*

*Applicants who received a BIF grant in the first BIF grant programme (in FY 2021-2) are not eligible to receive another BIF grant in this programme. Applicants who have submitted a Visitor Economy Grant (VEG) application through the scheme currently being assessed may still be eligible to apply for a BIF Grant. However, applicants will not be able to receive both a VEG grant and a new BIF grant.*

1. **Would pilot product runs be eligible?**

*It depends on what you are doing. We can fund the set up to produce pilot runs. We cannot fund the pilot lines if the product is then sold for profit. Please contact the team if you are not sure as we will need to discuss this on a case by case basis.*

1. **Is there a way to speak to someone to get specific advice / feedback about an application?**

*Due to the number of applications we receive, we are unable to review draft applications or provide feedback on previous applications.*

1. **Can you clarify that the purchase may be enough to demonstrate completion, as I'm not sure we can definitely receive our product in the time (though we are hopeful) It may still be in delivery, so if it is bought and paid in full.**

*You must have spent and defrayed the money by 17 March 2023. Your project delivery can extend beyond this.*

1. **Do suppliers have to be paid before the grant can be paid? What if supplier payment terms are 90 days?**

Yes. We can only pay the grant based on defrayed expenditure; i.e. costs you have paid out of your bank account. Until this happens the costs cannot be claimed. This means that if your payment terms are 90 days you cannot submit a claim until after the 90 days have elapsed, i.e. once the supplier has been paid. In any case, you must have defrayed your expenditure and submitted your grant claim to OxLEP by 17th March 2023.

1. **Do we need to get written quotes for the project like we need for other OxLEP grants?**

You are required to submit at least one formal quote per proposed expenditure item on the Full Application Form. For items exceeding £5,000 you will be asked to justify why you have selected a specific supplier and how they contribute value for money. We require a formal quote for each item being included in your project requirements. No item purchased can cost in excess of £24,999.

1. **Can we apply for more than one grant?**

An individual enterprise can only apply for a single grant from the Business Investment Fund scheme.

Multiple applications from the same organisation are not permitted, even if they are for different projects. Equally, any ‘like for like’, similar or identical project submissions from different companies which appear to have ownership links will be subject to further review and scrutiny.

We will not fund the same project activity more than once.

1. **We have previously received a Business resilience, eScalate, Kickstart and/or an ISfB Go-Create grant, can we also receive a BIF grant?**

Yes, these grants are open to all eligible organisations, whether or not you have previously received a **different** grant from OxLEP. However, you will be asked to declare any previous funding from OxLEP, and any recent funding from other sources.

Applicants who received a BIF grant in the first BIF grant programme (in FY 2021-2) are not eligible to receive another BIF grant in this programme. Applicants who have submitted a Visitor Economy Grant (VEG) application through the scheme currently being assessed may still be eligible to apply for a BIF Grant. However, applicants will not be able to receive both a VEG grant and a new BIF grant.

1. **Can we start working on the project before we are notified, providing we do not pay any subcontractors or third parties?**

If you are willing to start working without the grant, it is debatable whether the grant is needed for the activity and the added value of public funding is not clear. You should not start work on your project before you have been notified that your application has been approved.

1. **We are not based in Oxfordshire, is there any funding we can access?**

Funding for the Business Investment Fund was secured via the Government’s Getting Building Fund, which aims to accelerate economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. If your business is located outside of the Oxfordshire LEP area, we recommend checking the government website for alternative funding opportunities - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/getting-building-fund>

1. **What are my chances of being successful?**

The funding we have available in Oxfordshire means that we expect to be able to fund between –8 -15 applications depending on the grant values requested. Please note that we will be unable to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants due the high volume of submissions this grant scheme will generate.

Please ensure you read the Full Application Stage Guidance Notes carefully and complete the application form as fully as possible. Incomplete forms will not be considered.

We cannot guarantee the compatibility of the online application platform with mobile technology (e.g. tablets and phones) so we suggest that you arrange to have access to a laptop or computer to complete the Full Application Form if required.

1. **Do my suppliers need to be registered and/or trading in the UK?**

No, suppliers can be based overseas. You will need to demonstrate that they have been selected on merit in the same way as any other supplier. Please ensure that your submitted quotes include any freight costs you need to claim and take account of any additional charges, including import taxes and bank fees.

1. **Can you clarify what the grants can be used for?**

Business Investment Fund grants will typically fund capital equipment, renovation or refurbishments that don’t require planning permission, for example:

* Investment in and refurbishment of buildings, plant, machinery and equipment
* New capital items such as 3-D printers, immersive technology and AI
* Digital design and data analytical capability for inventory and supply chain management
* Software and/or licence costs relating to the above (where these can be capitalised)
* Laboratory space renovation, refurbishment or equipment
* Actions to accelerate the adoption of cleantech and to build back greener, e.g. development energy systems renewal/replacement (where these cannot be funded elsewhere)
* Retail structural enhancements
* EPOS systems - Electronic Point of Sale digital system - computerised system used in shops, restaurants and other retail outlets.

If you are unsure as to whether your proposed expenditure is eligible for the Business Investment Fund, we recommend you speak to your company accountant in the first instance to ensure the item(s) are able to be capitalised on your balance sheet. We may request written confirmation from your company accountant that your project costs can be capitalised under your accounting model.

1. **If my total project cost exceeds the grant approved will that be acceptable?**

We will only reimburse the amount approved in your Grant Funding Agreement, or less. Should your project costs exceed your original estimate then you will need to be able to cover those additional costs directly. Payment is in arrears and dependant on satisfactory proof of defrayal.

1. **Is the Business Investment Fund grant in any way regarded as State Aid?**

All BIF grants will be awarded on the basis of the Special Drawing Rights (SDR) element of the UK’s Subsidy Control Commitments and are subject to your SDR limit not being exceeded. If a company has already received €325,000 of SDR or De Minimis State Aid within a three-year fiscal period, it is ineligible to receive further financial support within that three-year period.

1. **Can the grants be used to support a pre-start?**

No, we can only award a grant to an existing undertaking (e.g. a limited company, sole trader, etc.). Eligible companies must have been trading since at least October 2020.

1. **What reporting do you require on this funding?**

We require a grant claim supported by evidence of defrayal, e.g. invoices and bank statements, and reporting on the output and impact deliverables achieved, e.g. employment increase, new products to firm and to market, etc. There are templates for the reporting and the BIF team will be able to guide you through the process if your grant application should be successful.

We will pay grants out in one instalment on evidence of defrayal. All final costs must be defrayed, and full accurate claim evidence submitted to the BIF team by 17th March 2023 at the very latest. However, we would strongly encourage the earlier submission of claims to ensure a prompt payment.

1. **What if my project costs are estimated at this stage?**

Any Business Investment Fund grant awarded will not be increased beyond the maximum grant amount detailed in the Grant Funding Agreement between the Applicant and OxLEP. The Applicant would need to manage any overspend.

Should the actual total project costs be less than expected, then the grant would decrease accordingly.

1. **Should I include VAT in my project costs?**

VAT can only be claimed if you cannot recover it from HMRC. You may be asked to provide evidence from HMRC to clarify your VAT status. OxLEP Business cannot give VAT advice so please check your VAT status with your Accountant if you are unsure.

**If you have read both the Business Investment Fund Guidance Notes and the FAQs above, and watched the accompanying webinar, and still have a clarification question, please submit your query via email by midday on Friday 18th November 2022 to** **businessinvestmentfund@oxfordshirelep.com**