

Visitor Economy Grants – FAQ's

1. What type of businesses are eligible for the Visitor Economy Grant?

Visitor Economy Grants will be available to small and medium sized businesses, including sole traders who can demonstrate that they registered and trading in Oxfordshire or able to demonstrate that it is based in Oxfordshire. The grants are not available to public or private organisations that are predominantly public funded. The businesses will have to demonstrate that they are operating in one of the following sectors: Tourism, Culture, Arts, Leisure, Events, Hospitality and Independent Retail. A full list is included in the guidance.

2. Can it be spent on sustainability service / software/ tech/consultancy?

The grants are for capital and revenue spend, so consultancy will be covered. A full list of eligible spend is available in the full guidance.

3. Can there be joint applications?

Applications may be made by a business / organisation on behalf of a group of businesses / organisations (as a partnership or consortium) who wish to introduce and implement a project that delivers genuinely new provision for visitors to the County. There must be a single applicant who is responsible for receiving and spending the full grant award directly with suppliers. The grant monies cannot be distributed to the other businesses / organisations to spend as part of the project.

4. I understand that the grant can't be used for salary, but can it be used to pay someone's day rate for example. An external contractor, for a few days.

Yes, the grant can be used to pay for contractors and consultants so that they can help to deliver tangible outcomes as described in the guidance.

5. Interested to learn more about how a non-profit can use a grant. OxLEP works with a range of 'not-for-profit' organisations and have supported many of them with grants that need to be spent then claimed back. These organisations have been able to accumulate resources (i.e. cash in the bank) over time which allows them to do this.

6. What if I have multiple outlet locations under one business? Could each location apply for a grant?

The grant is issued to the business not the multiple locations of the business. A business can apply multiple times but there is a limit to one grant award per business. We would recommend that businesses focus on submitting one well prepared application.

7. Can we use the money to purchase a shop, after being online for 5 years?

Funding for capital equipment, renovation or refurbishments that don't require planning permission are eligible. We wouldn't fund the purchase of a shop as the grant funded project cannot have started prior to grant award and the purchase would likely take longer than the grant scheme timescale.

8. Could this fund the hire of a venue on a long term basis? If a lump sum was paid to hire a venue for a year for example?

No, this would be classed as working capital and is not an eligible spend.

9. Are there any minimum / maximum criteria in size e.g. turnover / number of staff?

No, the Visitor Economy Grants will be available to small and medium sized businesses, including sole traders, charities and social enterprises. The grants are not available to public or private organisations that are predominantly public funded.

10. If planning already approved would the project be eligible?

Grants for building extensions will not be considered - delivery timescales do not allow the Visitor Economy Grant to support building extensions (whether requiring planning permission or not). Even where planning is granted many capital projects are delayed due to materials and labour shortages.

11. How many grants are you anticipating to award?

It is anticipated that the fund will support up to 15 -25 eligible Oxfordshire businesses with grants.

12. 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 the payment terms are 90 days you cannot submit a claim until after the supplier has been paid. You may choose to pay your supplier early so that you can then make your claim.

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

No, we can only award a grant to an existing undertaking with evidence of trading (e.g. a limited company, sole trader, etc.).

14. Is match funding required?

Applicants are not expected to contribute any money towards their project.

15. Will I score higher if I contribute some money to the project?

No, match funding is not a requirement of the grant scheme so will not be assessed.

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

The maximum amount of grant that will be allocated is £15,000. Grant applications with a total project cost above £15,000 are acceptable but must be supported by a company contribution. If your project costs more than £15,000 you must provide quotes for ALL expenditure up to the project total. 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.

17. What if things change and we do not spend as much? Do we just claim actual spend, off the bank statement?

Reimbursement is based on actual defrayed expenditure. If your approved expenditure is less than anticipated, your grant will reduce.

18. I have not seen anything relating to how many years a company has to have been in business and how far back OxLEP want copies of accounts.

The grant scheme is open to all trading businesses in Oxfordshire, irrespective of when they started trading. There is no requirement to submit accounts with the application.

19. What is the definition of public funding?

Definition of public funding is anything that can be traced back to government/the state, so Central Government Departments, Local Authorities, OxLEP, Arts Council, etc., are all public funding. However, if less than half of your funding/income derives from public sources then an application to the fund would be accepted.

20. If we need to borrow money to spend money in the first place, can we include interest / loan fees in the grant application?

No, interest and fees can't be included. Please refer to the guidance documentation.

21. Are we able to apply the grant (if successful) to a retrospective project? i.e. where we start work on delivering a project in September before the October notification?

No, the project cannot already have started.

22. Is a project that already has planning permission eligible?

No – even if planning permission has been granted, there is a risk that the work would not be completed to time and therefore the Guidance is clear that projects involving planning permission are not eligible.

23. Do you need to have your supplier quotes in place or can they be indicative?

Quotes need to be included with your application so that it can be assessed accordingly.

24. Are new sports venues eligible?

Yes, as long as the project costs are eligible.

25. Can you spend money on a number of things that together constitute a project?

You can include as many items as you want in your project expenditure. All must be supported by quotes.

26. Can you get a grant partially approved or is it all or nothing?

All grant awards will be funded based on the requested grant.

27. Will it be essential to have multiple supplier quotes for a project?

Ideally we require 3 quotes. A minimum of 1 quote will be accepted, however you are likely to score lower on value for money

28. Could the grant be used to organise and put on a one-day event in an Oxfordshire town?

Yes.

29. If a company has a number of sites across the country and only has one in Oxfordshire, can they apply? For clarity the company does not operate in majority in Oxfordshire but has one strong site there.

The business should be registered and trading in Oxfordshire or able to demonstrate that it is based in Oxfordshire. If only a small part of the business is based within Oxfordshire, you must be able to demonstrate the impact of the project on the Oxfordshire economy in your application.

30. Can you make two separate applications for two different businesses. Different industries and different shareholders?

Yes. Each business can submit applications.

31. If it is a relatively new company, e.g. formed within the last year, will that be eligible? They can demonstrate that they trade within Oxfordshire and have been since last year but have not got end of year accounts.

If you are unable to provide evidence of end of year accounts, you will be asked to provide evidence of income and expenditure to date.

32. What happens if the prices change between the time of the application and the time the equipment is purchased?

As all of the funds will be allocated at the grant panel, we are unable to increase the total amount of grant awarded. The business would need to cover any price increase.

33. Can you apply if your goal is to attract mostly local customers rather than visitors into Oxfordshire?

Yes, as long as your business is part of the Visitor Economy sector, the aim of the fund is to support local, national and international visitors.

34. If the project has started and unforeseen delivery problems defer completion beyond 14th June, what happens?

All expenditure must be spent and defrayed by 14th June 2024. If your project is delayed beyond this and you have not defrayed the money, the grant will not be paid. Applicants should consider realistic projects that can be delivered within the timeframe.

35. If businesses have had one of the relevant OxLEP grants before, how will their application be considered?

Funding will be allocated to businesses that have not received an OxLEP grant (listed in the guidance) first. If there are funds remaining, we will then consider the remaining applications.

36. Are you at a disadvantage if you applied last year and were unsuccessful BUT your grant this year doesn't really differ?

You will not be at a disadvantage, but you should consider if there are any ways in which you can strengthen your project and the impact it will have, to increase your chances of success.

37. I applied for a grant last year and was awarded it, but due to circumstances beyond my control I was unable to proceed, am I eligible to apply in this round please?

Yes.

38. Can the grant go towards two separate projects that together hit £15k, or does it need to be one single project

The activities or purchases you make should come together as a single project which together deliver the outputs or outcomes you are aiming at. It is for you to describe how this works in your application.

39. Can a registered charity apply?

Yes.

40. Can a business apply if they have only recently started?

Yes, as long as they have started trading.

41. Could we apply for a project which would require alcohol premises licencing applications as part of the project?

No. We will not be able to support any project that will need official authorisation outside of your control.

42. Can the grant be used for kitting out a vehicle that's already been purchased?

Yes.

43. Do I need to have a rough ball park cost figure for the pre-application stage?

Yes, you will need to estimate the cost, but we accept that this may change at the full application stage.

44. Can you apply for a grant for a new business if you have already had a grant in another business?

Yes, the grant is given to the business not the Directors. So, as long as it is a new sole trader or limited company that hasn't had a grant before then it will be eligible.