

Cherwell Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) FAQs

Q. In the guidance it states that applicants must not have received Farming Investment Fund (FIF) or Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme funding. Please can you qualify this point, does it mean they can't have received FiPL or FIF funding toward the project you are looking to fund?

A. Yes, according to the UK Govt REPF prospectus, 'it cannot support projects that have received funding from other Defra schemes', so it's only an issue if the project has received FiF or FiPL funding.

Q. Is the restriction on FiPL funding within Cherwell area only?

A. As per the previous question, the key is that the project cannot have received FiPL funding. This is a national requirement placed on the funding.

Q. If you have been offered a Farming Equipment and Technology Fund grant but have not claimed or purchased items can you apply?

A. If you have applied and been unsuccessful, so have not been awarded, then you can apply. If you have been awarded it but have not claimed it or spent it then this is a different situation, please contact the team and we can check on an individual basis.

Q. Regarding the priority areas that the business operates in. My business is not directly considered one of these, but it supplies goods or services to all or some of these areas. Would it be eligible?

A. Grant recipients must operate in at least one of the REPF priority sectors to be eligible for the grant. You must be able to honestly and accurately tick at least one of these boxes in your Expression of Interest.

If you can tick the box, then that is fine your business is eligible, if you cannot then your business is out of scope. If you are not sure, please contact the team and we will check on a case-by-case basis.

Q. Does the priority sector "Manufacturing" have any restrictions and if this was a startup project e.g. manufacturing green cleaning products, would this qualify?

A. There are no restrictions on the manufacturing sector, but the business and project would need to meet all other eligibility requirements of the scheme.

Q. Do E-cargo bikes count as EV fleet?

A. Yes, e-cargo bikes count as EV fleet.

Q. How do you define 'no agricultural' does horticulture fit into this?

A. Horticulture does fit into this, it is treated the same as agriculture. If you are diversifying the business and applying for a grant for this project, then this is fine. However, if you are looking for a grant to support the horticulture element this is not eligible. As with agriculture, it is about the focus on diversification away from immediate growing and production. If you are unsure about your project in relation to this, please contact the team to discuss on an individual basis.

Q. If business existed before the dates stated but was purchased afterwards, does this still comply with the rules?

A. Yes, there is a distinction between a business's trading history and its ownership. Providing the business meets the other eligibility requirements and the change in ownership has not changed these then the change in ownership does not impact on eligibility.

Q. Can you enter multiple applications for different diversification projects?

A. You can only enter one application per business. If you have multiple projects, please choose the project which best fits the scheme and that is most important to your business to put forward. If you put multiple expressions of interest in, we would only be able to approve one of them.

Q. What is the first date that capital expenditure can be booked - is this on notification of successful grant application?

A. Yes, that is correct. We aim to notify applicants of grant award decisions by close of play (COP) on the 17 December with Grant Offer Letters to follow by 20 December 2024. Please note that the Grant Offer Letter must be signed and returned in order to accept the grant. This is only valid until 5pm on 2nd January 2025. If the offer is not accepted and returned to OxLEP before that time, it will be revoked and funding re-allocated.

Q. Will the grant offer letter come by actual letter or by email?

A. The grant offer letter will come by email. Please note that they will be sent out in December, it is therefore critical that you provide contact details of an authorised alternative if your main point of contact is likely to be on annual leave when the letters are issued.

Q. Will all claims be settled before 05th April 2025 if submitted in March?

A. Please see page 3 of the Grant Guidance document for the key timings for the scheme. Final claim payments will be made by 30th April 2025. If you need your claim paid by end of the financial year, please speak to the team.

Q. Is this likely to be available annually?

A. We do not know if the grant scheme will be available again. It is funded via the Shared Prosperity Fund, which is reaching the end of its 3-year period of delivery. All Shared Prosperity Funding for the whole of the UK has to be spent by March 2025. We do not as yet know plans for future funding, but please complete the Business Support Tool and give your consent for marketing so you will be kept up to date.

Q. What type of business/organisation is eligible? Can partnerships apply for these grants?

A. Any legal entity with evidence of trading, including sole traders, registered businesses, charities and social enterprises that meets the micro or small business definition. This includes partnerships. Applicants must meet all other eligibility criteria, including that they have been trading within Cherwell for at least one year on submitting their EOI. The grant cannot be used to support a pre-start or a community group that does not have legal status.

Q. My organisation is a not-for-profit organisation, can I apply?

A. This largely depends upon the project applied for. If your organisation meets all other eligibility criteria, it must also be able to demonstrate how the grant would support enterprise locally. For example, if your organisation is a village hall and you wish to invest in space for local business(es) to operate from, that could be appropriate – for example, fit-out of space for an office-based enterprise to occupy/rent, or equipment for a post office/shop to permanently operate from the building. This would both provide an income stream for the 'village hall business' as well as support local enterprises.

Q. What counts as capital?

A. Broadly capital means hard stuff or property. If your investment can be capitalised then you can apply for a REPF grant. We may request written confirmation from your company accountant that your project costs can be capitalised under your accounting model.

Q. Can you purchase demonstration stock?

A. REPF 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.

Q. Does the equipment needed for the project have to be purchased new or can it be bought used? i.e. at an auction, etc?

A. Second hand items can be included in your expenditure, but you will need to consider that the price at the time of your application may change.

Q. What if things change and we don't spend as much, or the price of an item rises and is more than we requested?

A. Should the circumstances on which an application was based changed, you must contact OxLEP to discuss before committing to making any payments. This may include, but is not limited to, a change of expected completion date, change of supplier, change to the project value, expected project outcomes, or cancellation of the project.

Q. Is it essential to have 3 formal quotes for every item when we submit the application?

A. We ideally require three quotes. The minimum we will accept is one quote with an explanation to why obtaining three quotes was not available. Please contact OxLEP to discuss if you are unable to obtain three quotes.

Q. 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?

A. 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. Claims must be submitted by 27th March 2025.

Q. Is it possible to match REPF with other grants?

A. The grant match must be private money, i.e. it cannot come from a public source such as local or national government. Bank loans are also eligible as match. The simplest match is cash in the bank. If you wish to use other grant funds (including other public funds), please let us know and we can confirm if this is eligible match based on the details of the fund.

Q. What if my application forms part of a wider project or plan?

A. Yes, this is fine, if you make clear in your application the beginning, end, and the part of your wider project (including costs) that the REPF grant will support, to put your grant project in context. We would need to understand the concept, timescales and costs which you are asking us to support.