



Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Rural England Prosperity Fund



Rural England Prosperity Fund Scheme Launch 21st October 2024

Agenda

- Local context
- Grant scheme overview
- Eligibility and Compliance
- Application Process
- Grant Offer and Claims
- Worst and Best Practice

Local Context

Steve Newman -
Economic Growth
Service



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Grant Scheme Overview

21st October 2024

Rural England Prosperity Fund Overview

- To improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.
- £330,000 to be spent on capital grant projects
- Minimum grant value: £5,000
- Maximum grant value: £20,000
- Grant rate 75% i.e. 25% match funding required

REPF Priority Sectors

Grant recipients **must** operate in at least one of the REPF priority sectors:

- Retail - serving local community
- Farm diversification (non-agricultural)
- Food and drink production sector
- Hospitality and Leisure
- Manufacturing sector

REPF Themes

Grants **must** deliver against at least one of the REPF delivery themes:

- Business retention and growth
- Green economy
- Investment in rural communities
- Strengthening the rural economy and rural communities

If you do not deliver against at least one of these, your project is ineligible

REPF Priorities

Grants **must** deliver against at least one of the REPF delivery themes:

- Jobs created
- Jobs safeguarded
- Number of diversification projects supported (including farm)
- Increased R&D and product development
- Diversification into new business markets
- Increased exporting capacity (manufacturing, production and services)
- Successful transition of business operations to net zero carbon emissions and lower carbon footprint
- Number of businesses adopting new-to-the-firm technologies

If you do not deliver against at least one of these, your project is ineligible



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Questions

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Eligibility and Compliance

21st October 2024

Eligibility

- REPF is only available to:
 - Micro and Small businesses which are
 - Trading in an eligible Cherwell District Council area for at least 12 months at the point of submitting an Expression of Interest
- All project costs need to be defrayed and claimed by 27th March 2025
 - *You must be able to cashflow your grant*
- Applicants must have attended or watched a recording of the REPF grant webinar

Geographic eligibility

- Rural Cherwell businesses
- Rural areas are:
 - Towns, villages and hamlets with populations below 10,000; and
 - Wider countryside market or 'hub towns' with populations of up to 30,000 that serve their surrounding rural areas as centres of employment and in providing services (this includes Kidlington businesses).
- See DEFRA's Magic Maps for the project for which you are applying
- Cannot have received Farming Investment Fund or Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme funding
- Existing businesses trading in the Cherwell area for at least 12 months prior to Expression of Interest submission

Costs

- Minimum grant value: £5,000
- Maximum grant value: £20,000
- Grants can fund capital costs
- Match is required – 25% of total project costs must be match

Eligible Activities

- Capital equipment
- Renovation or refurbishments (that do not require planning permission or already have planning permission in place)
- Net zero and sustainability infrastructure, including solar panels, EV chargers, air-source heat pumps and more
- Creation and expansion of rural leisure and tourism businesses
- Diversification of farm buildings outside of agriculture
- Purchase of equipment for food processing and promotion
- Diversification

Ineligible Costs

- Working capital
- Wage subsidies
- VAT payments (other than project costs where VAT cannot be recovered from HMRC or for non-VAT registered businesses)
- Paying off debts / refinancing / hire purchases / asset finance arrangements
- Purchase of financial investments
- Statutory or legislative obligations, duties or requirements

Ineligible Activities

- Projects already underway
- Purchase of EV fleet
- Building extensions (whether requiring planning permission or not)
- Activities which would contradict, duplicate or undermine HM Government domestic initiatives
- “Like-for-like” replacement of obsolete equipment with little or no added value

Eligibility Principles

- No agricultural
- No duplication
- No statutory or legal requirements
- No double counting
- Nothing requiring planning permission

UK Subsidy Controls

- Your business must be viable, or have a credible plan to return to viability
- Minimal Financial Assistance – up to £315,000 over any period of 3 years

Procurement

- Businesses may direct award to suppliers for contracts below £100,000
- Supplier selection must be justified, ideally with three written quotes
- If any supplier cost will exceed £100,000, you must contact the OxLEP REPF team to discuss your approach before submitting your application.

Assets

- Asset register for any asset over £5,000, including:
 - Asset name and description
 - Serial or identification number
 - Location of the asset (including post code)
 - Purchase price (£) (net recoverable VAT)
 - Date of acquisition
 - Approved Use of Asset
 - Legal Registered Owner of Asset
 - Method of Depreciation
 - Date of Depreciation



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Application Process

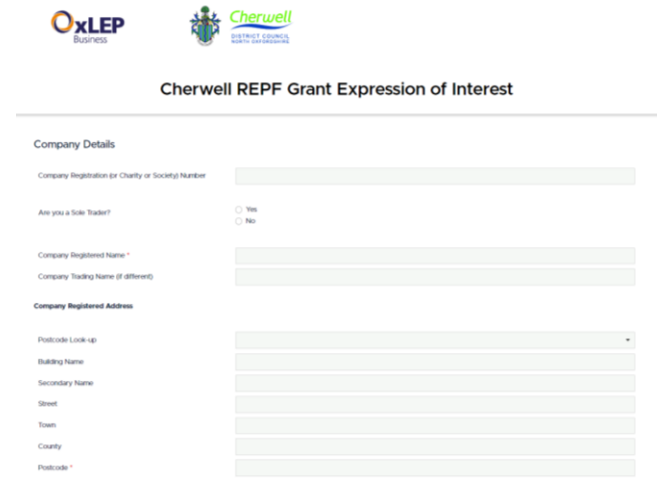
21st October 2024

Process overview

Activity	Date
Soft launch with guidance	Week commencing 23 September 2024
Launch including grant application workshop/Expression of Interest (EOI) and full application	21 October 2024
EOI questions need to be submitted to cherwellrepf@oxfordshirelep.com	By 5pm on 28 October 2024
Expression of Interest (EOI) closes	5pm, 4 November 2024
Full application window opens	14 November 2024
Full application questions need to be submitted to cherwellrepf@oxfordshirelep.com	By 5pm on 18 November 2024
Submission deadline for full Applications	12pm, 25 November 2024
Assessment Period for Applications including due diligence, panel assessment and panel	25 November to 16 December 2024
Applicants informed of final decision	17 December 2024
Grant Funding Agreements issued for review and signature	By 20 December 2024 (via email).
Deadline for receipt of fully signed Grant Funding Agreements by OxLEP	By 5pm on 2 January – offer will be revoked and funding reallocated if Agreement is not received by OxLEP by the deadline
Final claim deadline for submission of all approved project expenses and evidence of spend and defrayal	12pm, 27 March 2025
Final claim payments issued by OxLEP	30 April 2025

Expression of Interest

- On-line portal
- Confirm eligibility to receive the grant:
 - Location
 - Time trading in Cherwell
 - Ability to receive grant
 - Value of grant applied for
 - Start and end dates
 - Brief description of project
 - Relevant REPF priorities
- Contact details
- Eoi closing date 5pm on 4th November 2024



The screenshot shows the online form for the Cherwell REPF Grant Expression of Interest. It includes the OxLEP Business and Cherwell District Council logos at the top. The form title is "Cherwell REPF Grant Expression of Interest". The form is divided into two main sections: "Company Details" and "Company Registered Address".

Company Details

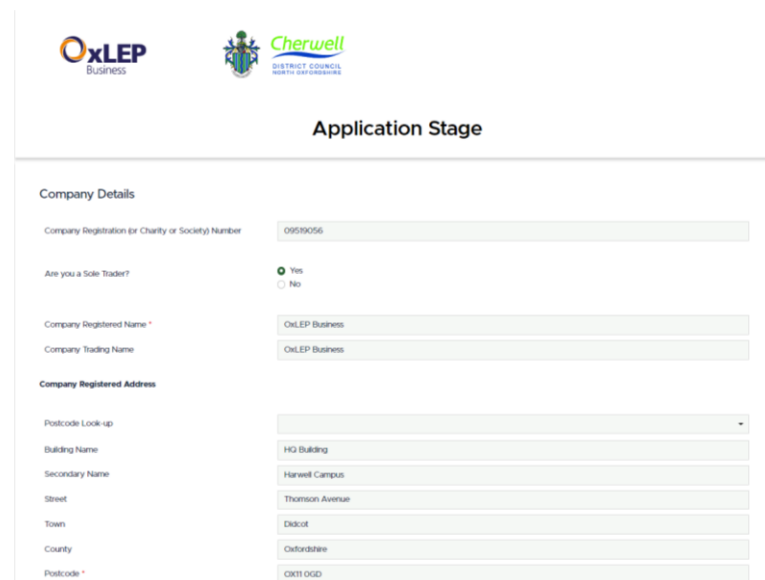
- Company Registration (or Charity or Society) Number: [Text input field]
- Are you a Sole Trader? Yes No
- Company Registered Name: [Text input field]
- Company Trading Name (if different): [Text input field]

Company Registered Address

- Postcode Look-up: [Dropdown menu]
- Building Name: [Text input field]
- Secondary Name: [Text input field]
- Street: [Text input field]
- Town: [Text input field]
- County: [Text input field]
- Postcode: [Text input field]

Application

- Personalised link
 - Full project details
 - Assessment questions
 - Quotes
 - Equalities monitoring



The screenshot shows a web form titled "Application Stage" with the following fields:

Company Details	
Company Registration (or Charity or Society) Number	0959056
Are you a Sole Trader?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Company Registered Name *	OxLEP Business
Company Trading Name	OxLEP Business
Company Registered Address	
Postcode Look-up	
Building Name	HG Building
Secondary Name	Harwell Campus
Street	Thomson Avenue
Town	Didcot
County	Oxfordshire
Postcode *	OX11 0GD

- Template in Word for use preparing your answers to the narrative questions
- Deadline for questions – 5pm 18th November 2024
- Deadline - 12pm (midday) 25th November 2024

Question 1

Grant Project and Delivery
(1,000 words maximum)

Describe the objectives of the proposed grant project
Describe your proposed grant project
Describe how the project will be implemented and managed

Is the project in scope? Are the project aims and objectives clear and well-structured?
Have they explained how they want to spend the funds?
Have they provided a plan of work or explained their approach to delivery? Does the application give enough detail to understand the proposed grant project?

Weighting 30%

Question 2

Impact of the grant on your business

(500 words maximum)

Select from the dropdown list which REPF priority / priorities your project will address.

To what extent will the grant help enable sustainable growth?

To what extent will the project support the creation of new jobs and/or the safeguarding of existing jobs.

How significant will the impact be on the applicant (based on current situation)? To what extent are they addressing the REPF priorities?

Weighting 25%

Question 3

Impact of the grant on the wider economy
(500 words maximum)

How will the project impact Cherwell and Oxfordshire? What benefits are there to the local and wider economy?

How significant are the potential impacts on Cherwell? How significant are the impacts on Oxfordshire and the wider economy? To what extent do these seem realistic and achievable?

Weighting 25%

Question 4

Value for money / added value
(250 words maximum)

Demonstrate how your project offers value for money for the public investment.

What is the added value of the investment? What would happen without the grant?

includes quotes and company contribution (match)

Are all costs supported by a copy of at least one valid quote? If quotes are missing, is there an explanation as to why? Is it clear whether VAT costs are included or not applicable? To what extent does the project offer good value for money? Has match funding been secured and evidenced? Are the financial forecasts reasonable? How significant and realistic is the impact of not receiving the grant?

Weighting 20%

Additional uploads

- Copies of any quotes
- They must:
 - Be clearly identifiable to the supplier, e.g. supplier letterhead
 - Include the supplier name, a date, price per item, VAT

Can things change?

Can things change
between EoI and
Application?

Yes, but please make
the EoI as accurate
as possible to help
us manage the call

Points to note

- We cannot guarantee the online application process will be compatible with mobile technology
- We suggest updating your web browser
- EoI and application form do not have a save function
- Uploads have a maximum 50 character filename limit

Next steps

- Only one submission is allowed
- Assessment, scoring and due diligence
- Shortlisting for Grant Panel, either:
 - Top 1/3; or
 - All scoring 60%+; or
 - Top scoring covering 125% of the grant pot
- Notification and Grant Offer Letter



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Grant Offer and Claims
21st October 2024

Grant Offer Letter

- Key T&Cs:
 - Eligible spend details
 - Key dates
 - Requirements
 - Claim form
- Must be signed and returned by 2nd January 2025
 - Remember Christmas holidays!

Grant claims

- Grants are paid in arrears
- Consider your cashflow in the project
- Expenditure must have been defrayed
 - Left your bank account
 - Credit cards must have been paid
 - No cash payments or contra arrangements

Submitting a grant claim

- Single claim only
- Latest date for a claim 27th March 2025
 - Claims submitted after that date will *not* be paid
- Payment can take up to 30 days of receipt of a correct claim – we aim to pay claims quicker
- Email claims and evidence to the team on or before your claim deadline
- Contact the team in advance with any issues

What to submit

- Grant claim form – completed
- Copies of invoice evidence
- Copies of defrayal evidence (bank statements)
- Copies of credit card statement (if relevant)

- These can be redacted where appropriate

What happens next

- Claim checking
- Claim approval
- Claim reviews and sample checking
- Claim authorisation
- Claim payment

Key points to note

- Only complete claims can be approved
- Remember to submit your grant claim
- Grant claims can only be made against the approved project
- Grant awards are not allocations to the business
- Under or over-spends should be flagged early



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Worst and Best Practice
21st October 2024

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Preparation

- Why applications are unsuccessful:
 - Square peg round hole...
 - Follow the money...
 - I know about grants...
 - I have plenty of time...
- Best practice hints:
 - Added value
 - Realistic
 - Plan



Process

- Why applications are unsuccessful:
 - I'll do it tomorrow...
 - I'm sure it's fine...
 - They won't notice if I don't...
 - That's silly, I'm not going to...
- Best practice hints:
 - Check
 - Re-check
 - Plan



Content

- Why applications are unsuccessful:
 - As you know...
 - I never use Spellchecker...
 - I'm not going to answer that...
 - They should have asked...
- Best practice hints:
 - Review
 - Consider
 - Plan



Assessment

- Why applications are unsuccessful:
 - I can't give the points...
 - I don't understand the project...
 - I don't understand the business...
 - I don't see any added value...

- Best practice hints:
 - Scoring is given
 - Make their life easy





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