

Business Growth Fund

Guidelines for Applicants 2024-25

This grant is part-funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

A) OVERVIEW

The Business Growth Fund (BRGF) is a competitive, discretionary grant fund targeted at new and existing businesses based in North Lanarkshire to support their long term growth and sustainability. BGF grants will provide up to 50% of eligible project costs (excluding VAT), up to a maximum grant award of £50,000 to fund specific activities to help businesses grow and develop their operations.

Grant support is available towards the following project types:

- **Capital Expenditure**
- **Infrastructure Improvement**
- **Consultancy Support**
- **Exhibition Support**
- **Training Support**

B) OBJECTIVES

The key aims of the BGF are closely aligned with the Council's "Plan for North Lanarkshire", and in particular Ambition Statement 5: *Grow and improve the sustainability and diversity of North Lanarkshire's economy*. Specifically, the BGF seeks to:

- i. **Support business growth** – by helping the business implement projects which increase turnover and increase or safeguard employment, through improvements in productivity, competitiveness or innovation. For example, we encourage applications which will :-
 - introduce new and/or improved products, processes or services.
 - assist growth into new domestic and/or international markets.
 - support digital transformation through the adoption and integration of digital technologies and ecommerce.
 - support the implementation of carbon reduction technologies and processes to help businesses achieve their net zero objectives.

The funding should lead to a sustainable improvement in the business and should achieve additionality by way of completion of the project on a larger scale, more quickly or to a higher standard.

- ii. **Support key sectors** – the types of applicant businesses and industry sectors we propose to consider for grant support will be aligned to the Council’s “Plan for North Lanarkshire”

(<https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=26904>) and the Economic Regeneration Delivery Plan. Therefore, priority will be given to businesses operating in the following sectors:

- Manufacturing
- Logistics
- Food & Drink
- Health & Social Care
- Life Sciences
- Creative Industries
- Tourism
- Construction
- Social Enterprise
- Energy

Note that applications from businesses outwith the above industry sectors will be considered if the local economic benefit arising from the project seeking support is forecast to be significant. Applications from business operating in the Gambling and Betting and Drinking Places (Bar/Public houses) sectors and large retail businesses will generally be excluded. Note for the purposes of this application large retail is defined as business in the retail sector operating in premises with a rateable value of £51,001 or over.

C) ELIGIBILITY OF BUSINESS

Applicant businesses must comply with the following eligibility criteria. The Council may carry out further checks on the applicant business by consulting sources of business information such as Companies House, Business Gateway, Scottish Enterprise and similar databases:

- i. **Business stage:** only businesses that have been actively trading for at least 12 months can apply for a Business Growth Fund grant (evidence may be requested to substantiate this).
- ii. **Business type & location:** The applicant business must be small or medium-sized business based in North Lanarkshire and operating within a recognised legal structure (see www.gov.uk/business-legal-structures/overview). Private individuals cannot apply for grant support. Ventures at the pre-start/pre-trading/feasibility stage are ineligible and should instead consider the Business Start-up Grant for support. Businesses that have been actively trading for less than 12 months are also ineligible but can apply for grant support via the Small Business & Self-Employed Support Scheme instead.
- iii. **Place of business:** If the applicant business only has a 'registered office address' or a 'virtual office address' within North Lanarkshire but conducts its actual business or trade from an operational base outwith North Lanarkshire, then typically the business is not eligible to apply for a grant from North Lanarkshire Council. The company's invoicing and business correspondence address must be within North Lanarkshire. The business must also be able to demonstrate that it pays non-domestic rates (if applicable) to NLC.
- iv. **Business size:** The fund is aimed at micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's) defined by the European Commission as enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.
- v. **Sectoral exclusions:** Please refer to the list of eligible sectors provided in Section B ii.
- vi. **Business structure:** If the applicant is part of a larger group of businesses or franchise with a headquarters outwith North Lanarkshire, or has direct/indirect links to other businesses, it can only apply if it is a wholly autonomous cost/profit centre responsible for its own day-to-day management and producing its own management accounts and audited accounts. Applicants may be asked to produce evidence of their autonomy from the parent company/group. If applications are received from multiple businesses/subsidiaries directly owned by the same group/parent company, the maximum (combined) amount of grant that the group as a whole can draw down is capped at £50,000 (within any rolling 2 year period). By exception, the council may be able to consider applications from businesses headquartered outwith North Lanarkshire, which support the

establishment of satellite branches, franchises or subsidiary outlets located within North Lanarkshire which are not autonomous, but only where the anticipated economic benefits are projected to be significant.

Note: if the applicant business (and ultimate controlling party/parent company, if applicable) is connected to a tax haven it will be ineligible to apply for BGF grant.

- vii. **Business turnover:** Applications will only be considered where the business turnover meets or exceeds the current VAT registration threshold of £90,000, or is projected to do so within 12 months of the date of application. Where the current business turnover is below this level, financial projections and evidence of pending orders/contracts/letters of interest from customers will be required to support the anticipated increase in turnover.
- viii. **Need for grant:** Applicants must be able to demonstrate a funding gap that is preventing, delaying or limiting business growth. We would also actively encourage other sources of funding to be explored first - Council funding should be regarded as a 'last resort' once all other funding options have been exhausted. Other funding routes can be investigated at www.mygov.scot/funding-opportunities.
- ix. **Business premises:** Applicant businesses can be home-based or operating from dedicated commercial premises. In the case of rented commercial premises a minimum 12 month lease is preferred, although month to month or rolling leases will be considered by exception based on merit. A copy of the lease agreement will be requested in support of the grant application. Home-based businesses are generally ineligible for Capital Expenditure or Infrastructure Improvement grants except where a dedicated manufacturing unit exists on-site which is separate from the residence.
- x. **Previous grant support:** There is a limit to the number of successful applications that a business may submit to the Business Growth Fund in a rolling 24-month period, as well as the total amount of grant funding that they can apply for within the same period, as follows:

Type of grant	Maximum number of grants in a <u>24-month</u> period	Maximum grant award within a 24-month period – NEW APPLICANTS	Maximum grant award within a 24-month period - PREVIOUS APPLICANTS
Capital Expenditure	2	£50,000	£50,000 <u>minus</u> previous BGF award
Infrastructure Improvement	2	£50,000	£50,000 <u>minus</u> previous BGF award
Combined Capex + Infra	2	£50,000	£50,000 <u>minus</u> previous BGF award
Consultancy Support	1	£5,000	£5,000
Exhibition Support	1	£4,000	£4,000
Training Support	1	£4,000	£4,000

Commencing from the launch of the 2023/2024 BGF grant scheme, the maximum cumulative BGF grant awarded to any business within a 24-month period is limited to **£50,000**. Note that this includes all capital expenditure, infrastructure, consultancy support, exhibition support and training support funding for which the applicant may apply. The total amount of public sector funding support for the project in question must not exceed 50% of total project costs (exclusive of VAT).

Applicants who previously applied for grant support via the Business Recovery & Growth Fund between November 2021 and March 2023 can be considered for additional grant support (for new projects) up to a maximum cumulative grant award of £50,000 within a 24-month period.

D) ELIGIBILITY OF PROJECT

Projects seeking grant support must demonstrate the following:

- **Contribution to business growth** and/or sustainability – the project must clearly demonstrate a significant contribution in relation to business turnover and employment within 12 months of project completion. This should be explained in the application and backed up by supporting financial information where required.
- **Alignment with one or more of the following key themes** –
 - sustain or create employment and/or training opportunities
 - supporting innovation to develop new and/or improved products, processes or services
 - assisting growth into new domestic markets

- assisting export development and internationalisation
 - supporting the adoption of digital technologies and ecommerce in line with the Council’s Digital Economy and Place Ambition
 - encouraging the adoption and integration of green technologies and low carbon products, processes or services
 - supporting the transition to a zero-carbon economic model and facilitate sustainable change and growth
- **Evidence of need** - the applicant must explain why external financial assistance from North Lanarkshire Council is necessary to enable the project to proceed. The Business Growth Fund will only provide the minimum grant necessary to make the project happen, up to a maximum of 50% of eligible project costs (excluding VAT). The majority of the project funding requirement should be met by the applicant business or come from other sources in the private sector, for example bank borrowings, equity or loan finance. Furthermore the maximum total public sector funding support cannot exceed 50% of project costs.
 - **No indication of prior commitment** – in order to be considered for grant support, no work must start on the project(s) seeking grant support, and no supplier invoices must be received or payments made to suppliers, until after the applicant company has received a formal decision from the council regarding their grant application. Projects which commence or which incur costs before a grant decision is made indicate that grant support is not essential to the project proceeding. Such applications may be cancelled and/or grant awards withdrawn.

E) SUPPORTED PROJECT TYPES

Applicants can apply for grant funding in support of the following project types:

- **Capital Expenditure**
- **Infrastructure Improvement**
- **Consultancy Support**
- **Exhibition Support**
- **Training Support**

Please note that:

- BGF funding cannot be used to provide working capital.
- All projects in receipt of a BGF grant award must be completed, and all suppliers paid in full, and a Claim for Grant Payment received by the council, **no later than 31 January 2025**. Grant awards may be cancelled or withdrawn if supported projects are not completed, and if grant payment is not claimed, before 31 January 2025.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

**Outright purchase of plant, equipment or machinery
as part of a growth project**

Grant rate = **up to 50% of eligible (ex VAT) cap-ex costs.**

Maximum grant **£50,000**, Minimum grant **£1,000**.

Examples of eligible projects include:

- mobile or hand-held equipment which will significantly benefit business growth in terms of increased turnover and job creation, or which will help overcome a technological barrier enabling new or existing markets to be fully exploited. This includes mobile ICT equipment such as tablets where a case can be made which shows the direct benefit to the business.
- investment in servers or cloud-based systems.
- purchase of software, either bespoke or 'off the shelf'.
- the build and development of e-commerce web platforms, and integration of online trading functionality into existing business websites, to help the business sell into wider domestic or international markets.
- purchase of machinery or equipment (new or used*), but only if paid for in full at the point of receipt.
- purchase of ICT equipment (eg. desktop PCs, laptops, monitors, servers, printers, telephony systems, smart devices etc) or office furniture (desks, chairs etc) for new or existing employees. There must be a clear justification as to why the new equipment is required

in order to aid business growth, and the additional benefits it will bring (eg. in terms of productivity and efficiency).

* The purchase costs of second-hand equipment is eligible under the following conditions:

- the price of the equipment should not exceed its market value and is less than the cost of similar new equipment.

Exclusions:

- purchase of vehicles (including vans, pick-ups) unless they have been extensively customised and used specifically for the sole use of the business. Note that the vehicle would need to be kept for at least 3 years and North Lanarkshire Council may require proof of ownership.
- development of information websites/brochure websites which lack a clear focus on e-commerce development.
- grant support cannot be provided towards items purchased via lease, hire purchase or other finance agreement.
- annual software subscriptions or software license renewals
- replacement of equipment/items 'like for like'.
- items replaced due to 'wear and tear' or which are faulty or obsolete.

Equipment purchased with grant support should help introduce new and/or improved products, processes or services into the business and assist growth in new or existing markets.

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT

Expansion, conversion, sub-division or other improvement to the physical infrastructure of business premises as part of a growth project

Grant rate = **up to 50% of eligible (ex VAT) infrastructure costs.**

Maximum grant **£50,000**, Minimum grant **£1,000**.

Examples of eligible projects include:

- construction/installation works associated with expansion or conversion of office/work space

- cabling and ICT infrastructure (eg. network installation, three-phase power supply)
- construction of walls or fences
- cosmetic or non-essential improvements (eg. painting, floor coverings, exterior signage etc) *where the applicant business is re-locating to new premises**
- repairs required to premises to ensure the building is watertight or draught proof/insulated, *where the applicant business is re-locating to new premises*. This includes ‘wear and tear’ repairs, such as leaky roofs, draughty windows, broken roller doors etc.*

*** Note:** such cases will only be considered where there is clear additionality arising from the business re-location (for example, moving to larger premises to accommodate more staff to help grow the business).

Grants will be subject to the necessary granting of statutory consents (including consent of the landlord where the property is not owned by the business). A copy of the premises lease may be requested in support of the grant application.

Premises improvements carried out with grant support should help introduce new and/or improved products, processes or services into the business and assist growth in new or existing markets.

Exclusions:

- cosmetic or non-essential improvements (eg. painting and decorating, carpets and floor coverings, landscaping, exterior signage etc) where the applicant business is proposing to carry out the works to its existing premises
- temporary or removable improvements
- repairs required to existing premises to ensure premises are watertight or draught proof/insulated. This includes ‘wear and tear’ repairs, such as leaky roofs, draughty windows, broken roller doors etc
- repairs required to ensure premises are compliant with relevant Health & Safety Regulations, Building Regulations or Disability/Equality legislation
- security systems (eg. CCTV and alarm systems)

CONSULTANCY SUPPORT

Commissioning of external consultancy services to support the development of a growth project

Grant rate = **up to 50% of eligible (ex VAT) consultancy costs.**

Maximum grant **£5,000**, Minimum grant **£490**.

Examples of eligible projects include:

- production of a marketing strategy
- achievement of quality accreditations and technical certifications
- preparation of business plans and financial projections
- development of bespoke business software/IT systems, or the customisation and integration of 'off the shelf' business software and systems

We encourage applications which will introduce new and/or improved products, processes or services into the business and assist growth in new or existing markets. The maximum permissible rate for consultants is £490/day (£70/hour). Projects with a higher rate may not receive the maximum 50% grant.

Exclusions:

- in-house consultancy is ineligible for grant.
- development of information websites/brochure websites.

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

Attendance at an industry exhibition or trade show within the UK or overseas either as an Exhibitor or Visitor

Grant rate = **up to 50% of eligible (ex VAT) exhibition costs.**

Maximum grant **£4,000**, Minimum grant **£245**

i) Attending an industry exhibition or trade event as an EXHIBITOR (UK & Overseas)

Grant support is available to help businesses **exhibit** at domestic or overseas trade shows or industry exhibitions, or to participate in trade missions. The Council will contribute towards the costs incurred in renting, setting up and running an exhibition stand at trade events in the United Kingdom and abroad (including the cost of exhibition

space, stand, electricity, and marketing costs such as production of banners, brochures or other promotional materials).

The grant can also cover accommodation and air/rail travel costs, however certain exclusions apply (see below). Note that in order to qualify for support, this must be the **first time** your organisation has participated at the event in question.

Exclusions:

- trade missions which are already funded via other agencies
- staff costs
- subsistence costs (eg. food & drink, hospitality)
- hire car costs
- taxi fares, transfers and parking charges
- fuel costs
- support is not available if the business has attended the same event previously

We encourage applications which will introduce new and/or improved products, processes or services into the business and assist growth in new or existing markets.

Attending an industry exhibition as a VISITOR (UK only)

Grant support is also available to allow businesses to attend trade shows, exhibitions or other industry events as a **visitor** (within the UK only) for the purpose of developing new business opportunities, to meet potential new customers, or to investigate new markets. The grant can cover accommodation and air/rail travel costs, however certain exclusions apply (see below). The minimum grant award for this activity remains £245, therefore the minimum (eligible) expenditure must be at least £490 (ex VAT).

Exclusions:

- fees associated with attendance as a delegate at conferences, workshops, seminars, and networking meetings
- trade shows, exhibitions, other industry events outwith the UK
- trade missions which are already funded via other agencies
- staff costs
- subsistence costs (e.g. food & drink, hospitality)
- hire car costs
- taxi fares, transfers and parking charges
- fuel costs
- support is not available if the business has attended the same event previously

We encourage applications which will introduce new and/or improved products, processes or services into the business and assist growth in new or existing markets.

Conditions on eligibility of Travel and Accommodation costs

– **Air & rail fares**

Grant support can only be considered as a contribution towards the cost of standard/economy class air or rail travel.

– **Accommodation costs**

Grant support can only be considered for a maximum of 4 days' overnight accommodation costs directly related to the exhibition/trade show in question. The grant will contribute up to 50% towards eligible accommodation costs (ex VAT) up to a maximum grant of £60/day. Note that food and drink costs and other miscellaneous subsistence/hospitality expenses (including corporate entertainment) incurred at the exhibition/show or as a result of your hotel stay are ineligible for grant.

Before applying for Exhibition Support grant funding via the Business Growth Fund, applicants should consult the Scottish Enterprise website for information on other funding which they may be able to access in support of their internationalisation strategy (see www.scottish-enterprise.com/services/do-business-outside-scotland).

TRAINING SUPPORT

**Commissioning of an external training provider to provide training
for business employees as part of a growth project**

Grant rate = **up to 50% of eligible (ex VAT) training costs.**

Maximum grant **£4,000**, Minimum grant **£245**.

The Training Support grant is designed to help small enterprises to grow by raising skill levels and improving competency, thereby increasing productivity and competitiveness. It enables businesses to raise the standard and quality of their products/services, develop their existing customer base or expand into new markets.

The maximum permissible rate for training providers is £490/day (£70/hour). Projects with a higher rate may not receive the maximum 50% grant.

Key requirements:

- individuals participating in training projects must be listed on the company payroll as either full-time or part-time employees
- training must be successfully completed, and the award/qualification received, no later than 31 January 2025.
- grant applications must be submitted, assessed and a decision received by the applicant business before the training commences.

Exclusions:

- training that has already commenced
- training delivered internally by the company's own staff
- training projects which will not be completed, paid for in full, and claim for grant payment submitted by 31 January 2025
- any training which is a legal requirement (including training required in order for businesses/operatives to be compliant with relevant health & safety legislation)
- exam registration/certification fees
- cost of travel to and from the training venue
- accommodation and subsistence costs

F) APPLICATION, ASSESSMENT AND CLAIM PROCEDURE

1) Supporting documentation

Applicants must submit the following documentation in order to apply for a grant:

- **Application form**

Completed Business Growth fund application form (please ensure this is signed where indicated).

- **Evidence of Incorporation**

This may include any one of the following:

- Company (inc. SCIO): Certificate of Incorporation or Companies House registration number.
- Partnership: Partnership agreement or HMRC registration.
- Sole Trader Self Employed and Freelancers: HMRC registration, Self-assessment documents or valid business insurance document.
- Community Interest Company: Certificate of Incorporation

- Trust: Constitution documents, HMRC registration or VAT registration.
- **Evidence of ownership/commercial lease**
This could be a copy of i) premises lease or ii) e-mail from landlord confirming duration of tenancy agreement, or iii) proof of ownership. If the applicant business submits an application prior to moving into commercial premises within North Lanarkshire, any grant award will be conditional on the Council receiving a signed copy of the lease (or proof of ownership) before the business submits its Claim for Grant Payment.
- **Evidence of projected project costs**
This should include **two formal supplier quotes** for all eligible capital expenditure items, infrastructure works, consultancy services, training services, or exhibition costs seeking grant support.
- **Bank Mandate for Payment by BACS** – bank account details for the applicant business will be requested after your application has been assessed (and only for successful applicants).

2) Additional supporting documentation depending on project type

Applicants must submit the following additional supporting evidence depending on the type of project seeking grant support. The Appendix documents referenced below are contained within the Business Growth Fund application form:

Capital expenditure	i. Business Plan*
	ii. Latest Management accounts**
	iii. 12-month Cashflow projection**
Infrastructure Improvement	i. Business Plan*
	ii. Latest Management accounts**
	iii. 12-month Cashflow projection**
Consultancy Support	i. Appendix A Consultant's Declaration (completed by consultant)
Exhibition Support	i. Appendix B Exhibition Support (completed by applicant business)

Training Support	i. Appendix C Trainee Details (completed by each trainee)
	ii. Appendix D Training Provider Declaration (completed by training provider)

***Business plan:**

If a full business plan is not available, a mini-business plan consisting of a one page summary of the company setting out its plans for the future is sufficient.

****Financial information:**

Where required, management accounts should ideally be less than 3 months old. We may request copies of letters of intent, expressions of interest, customer enquiries, or evidence of potential orders or contracts in order to substantiate turnover and cashflow projections. *Note that only applications for Capital Expenditure grants and Infrastructure Improvement grants require management accounts, 12 month cash-flow projection, and business plan.*

3) Additional offering (grant applications > £10,000)

Businesses applying for a total grant in excess of £10,000 are required to provide details of additional activities or offerings that they propose to undertake for the benefit of businesses or communities in North Lanarkshire. Such activities must contribute towards social or economic impacts locally. Examples include :-

Work with us to fill job vacancies
Support the creation, delivery and development of Apprenticeships – Foundation Apprenticeships/Modern Apprenticeships/Graduate Apprenticeships
Participate in careers events in local schools
Donate equipment or material to a local school
Offer supported training/work experience for people who are classed as furthest from the labour market
Offer career talks and Q&A sessions, focussing on opportunities and skills within your business and sector, with students, school children and their families and community groups
Support local schools to participate in enterprise/STEM programmes
Work with local training providers to identify skills gaps and identify opportunities for training
Support skills development in supply chain opportunities to local SME's, social enterprises and the voluntary sector

Job shadowing opportunities offered
Offer mock interviews
Become a mentor for a young person
Offer work experience opportunities, placements or formal apprenticeships to school children and leavers
Participate in/facilitate Industry Awareness Days/Workshops to enable young people to gain a meaningful insight into your sector and the career progression pathways available
Support the design of career and education pathways
Provide mentoring support to other SMEs and microbusinesses, for example around supply chain opportunities
Participate in focus groups/surveys
Deliver industry challenges
Support Education-Business Partnerships

4) Disposal of assets purchased with BGF support

The Council is required to maintain an Asset Register of all assets with a value of at least £5,000 that are to be purchased or developed using funding support from the NLC Business Growth Fund (BGF). This requirement only applies to BGF grants awarded for Capital Expenditure or Infrastructure Improvement.

The Council requires recipients of funding support from the BGF to provide the following information:

- a) Owner of the asset purchased/developed
- b) Date acquired
- c) Description of the asset purchased/developed
- d) Net cost
- e) Location
- f) Depreciation/amortisation policy applied to asset purchased/developed

Items a) – f) must be provided by the recipient of funding support from the NLC Business Growth Fund once the project is completed as part of the Claim for Grant Payment paperwork.

Subject to the paragraph below, the recipient of the funding support from the NLC Business Growth Fund must:

- (i) retain ownership of assets purchased with said funding support for a minimum of five years from the date that BGF grant was paid to the business
- (ii) retain the asset developed with the said funding support for a minimum of ten years from the date that BGF grant was paid to the business.

In the event that the recipient of funding support from the NLC Business Growth Fund proposes to sell on or dispose of an asset purchased/developed with funding support from the NLC Business Growth Fund, prior written consent from the Council is required. If the Council grants consent to the sale or disposal, such consent may be subject to the satisfaction of certain conditions to be determined by the Council, including repayment of all or part of the funding support from NLC Business Growth Fund.

If the Council grants consent to the sale or disposal of the asset purchased/developed by the said funding support, the recipient of the funding support from the NLC Business Growth Fund shall provide the following details to the Council:

- (i) The proceeds of disposal (net £)
- (ii) Who the item was sold/transferred to

Council officers shall be entitled to conduct annual inspections at the premises of the recipient of funding support from the NLC Business Growth Fund to ensure that the ownership requirements set out above are being complied with. In the event that the asset purchased/developed with the said funding support has been sold or ownership transferred, the Council shall be entitled to require repayment of all or a proportion of the said funding support. In making this decision the Council shall take into consideration the following :-

- (i) If the date of sale or disposal of the asset purchased/developed with the said funding support took place after the minimum ownership periods detailed above.
- (ii) If the proceeds of the sale or disposal will be/were applied directly to the purchase of assets similar to those sold or disposed of.
- (iii) If the proceeds of the sale or disposal will be/are being used solely for purposes related to the project.
- (iv) Any other factors relevant to the sale or disposal that the grant recipient brings to the attention of the council.

5) Grant application process

Preparing and submitting your application

Grant application forms are available from the Council on request, in electronic format (MS Word document). However, we recommend that before you complete an application you should discuss your project proposal in more detail with a North Lanarkshire Council officer (via BusinessFund@northlan.gov.uk) or a Business

Gateway Lanarkshire adviser (via lanarkshire@bgateway.com) This will help ensure that your business, and the project seeking support, are eligible to apply in principle. Guidance and advice to help you complete your application can also be provided.

Applicants may also benefit from the comprehensive range of business support available from the local Business Gateway service, which is managed by North Lanarkshire Council. Business Gateway Lanarkshire advisers offer a range of advice and expertise on a wide range of topics including business growth and development. Advisers can also help you prepare and submit your BGF grant application. If you wish to discuss your growth plans with Business Gateway Lanarkshire contact them directly on **01698 520775** or via lanarkshire@bgateway.com to arrange a one-to-one meeting.

How much grant can I apply for?

The maximum grant award under each grant category during 2023/24 is as follows. Note in each case that grants can only contribute **up to 50%** towards eligible project costs:

Type of grant	Maximum no. of grants in a 24-month period	Maximum grant award within a 24-month period – NEW APPLICANTS	Maximum grant award within a 24-month period - PREVIOUS APPLICANTS
Capital Expenditure	2	£50,000	£50,000 <u>minus</u> previous BGF award
Infrastructure Improvement	2	£50,000	£50,000 <u>minus</u> previous BGF award
Combined Capex + Infra	2	£50,000	£50,000 <u>minus</u> previous BGF award
Consultancy Support	1	£5,000	£5,000
Exhibition Support	1	£4,000	£4,000
Training Support	1	£4,000	£4,000

Note that the maximum cumulative BGF grant that any individual business can receive within a rolling 24-month period is capped at £50,000.

6) Assessment and appraisal

Completed grant applications must be received by the BusinessFund@northlan.gov.uk mailbox, and a decision received by the applicant business from the Council, before any purchases are made, project works begin, or any other activity or expenditure relating to the project commences.

Any goods or services purchased, or activity undertaken before a grant decision is made will subsequently be ineligible for grant payment and may result in the entire grant award being cancelled.

7) Decision

The applicant will be notified of the decision on their grant application once the application has been processed. The assessment process typically takes up to 4 weeks, but this can vary dependent on how promptly the required supporting information is submitted by the applicant, and the complexity of the project.

All applicants (successful and unsuccessful) will be notified of the Council's decision by e-mail in the first instance. Successful applicants will subsequently receive an award letter (sent to the business address specified in their grant application), including a Grant Acceptance Form which must be signed, dated and returned to the Council within 21 days of the award date specified on the grant award letter.

8) Claim for Grant Payment

Applicants can submit a Claim for Grant Payment after:

- the project has been successfully completed as per the original application and
- all suppliers have been paid in full and
- the necessary evidence of payment is available (including formal bank statements)

A **Claim for Grant Payment Form** must then be completed and accompanied by:

- completed **Customer Satisfaction Survey**
- **evidence of spend** including:
 - copy invoices from all suppliers
 - copy of the company's bank statement, showing payments in respect of these supplier invoices leaving the company's bank account

Grant will not be paid out in relation to goods/services purchased which cannot be evidenced by supplier invoices matched to the business bank statement.

Key points when claiming your grant payment:

- **Deadline for grant claims:** all projects must be completed, and the Claim for Grant Payment submitted, no later than 31 January 2025.
- **VAT:** note that VAT is ineligible for grant and must be excluded from claims.
- **Paying suppliers by cheque:** where payment for goods or services has been made by cheque, you must enclose either i) a copy of the cheque or ii) a receipt, e-mail or letter on headed paper from the supplier (stating the invoice number) confirming that they have received payment in full. In the case of e-mail confirmation it must be clear from the e-mail address that the confirmation has originated from the supplier.
- **Paying suppliers by cash:** note that items or services paid for by cash unfortunately do not meet our audit trail requirements. As such they are not eligible for grant and must be excluded from the Claim for Grant Payment.
- **Paying suppliers by credit card:** Payments made to suppliers by a business credit card are eligible if the credit card has been repaid using the business bank current account. Therefore, the credit card statements and the business bank statement showing this transaction will be required as evidence of project spend. Any item paid for using a personal credit is not eligible and will be excluded from your Claim for Grant Payment.
- **Business bank accounts:** applicants must have a business bank account (personal bank accounts are not acceptable).
- **Multiple payments made to suppliers in a single transaction:** where a number of supplier invoices have been paid in a single transaction, a BACS list, copies of invoices or a similar breakdown of payments must be provided to confirm that the invoice(s) included in the Claim for Grant Payment have been paid. Note that hand-written invoices or receipts suggesting payment has been received are not sufficient proof of payment and must be accompanied by bank statement evidence.
- **Bank statement requirements:** a complete bank statement must be provided which shows:
 - the business name

- sort code
- account number
- invoice being debited from the bank account (supplier name must be visible and amount must match)
- the statement balance the day before and after the payment is made, as this provides confirmation of defrayal

Note that *bank statement extracts or transaction slips* are not acceptable – a formal bank statement must be provided which not only shows the relevant payment(s) but also meets all of the above requirements. If the amounts on the invoice and bank statement do not match (for example due to inclusion of other (ineligible) invoices as part of the single payment), then we will also require a copy of the ineligible invoices that contribute towards the total amount paid.

- **Supplier invoices:** hand-written invoices or receipts suggesting payment has been received are not sufficient proof of payment. Formal invoices on the supplier's headed paper must be provided accompanied by bank statement evidence.
- **Changes to project specification and/or costs:** if your project costs end up being lower than anticipated in your grant application, the grant payment you receive will be reduced pro-rata. However the grant payment cannot be increased beyond your original grant award in the event that your project costs end up being higher than you originally expected. Note also that grant is awarded only for the specific project and associated expenditure detailed in your grant application. If you wish to make changes to any of the goods or services you propose to purchase with the assistance of grant, you must first seek approval from North Lanarkshire Council in advance of any change by contacting BusinessFund@northlan.gov.uk.

Once a grant claim is approved, payment is usually made by BACS transfer direct to the applicant's bank account within 15 working days of claim approval.

G) OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- **UK government funding** – grants provided to applicants as a contribution towards the cost of Capital Expenditure, Infrastructure Improvement, Consultancy Support and Exhibition Support are supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

- **Subsidy Control**

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund Business Growth Fund award being applied for by your enterprise is classified as a Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act (2022).

To be eligible for the support, you must not have already exceeded receipt of £315,000 in MFA subsidies over this and the previous two financial years.

Note: Subsidy Control replaces the former European Commission State Aid Rules. Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) is a relatively new term which is similar to the former “De Minimis Aid” rules which were in place under European Commission State Aid Rules and “Special Drawing Rights” (SDR).

A Business Growth Fund grant award is a Minimum Financial Assistance (MFA) subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act (2022). The maximum amount of MFA offered in completing this application will be £50,000. Before making any payment, written confirmation that receipt of the payment will not exceed your company’s MFA threshold of £315,000 cumulated over this and the previous two financial years, as specified in section 36(1) of the Subsidy Control Act (2022), is required. This means you must confirm you have not received more than £315,000 minus the value of this grant in MFA subsidies or comparable types of subsidy (see section 42(8) of the Subsidy Control Act (2022)) in the current or previous 2 financial years. (Please note that comparable types of subsidy include De Minimis Aid.)

We take this opportunity to remind you that you are required to keep a written record of the amount of MFA you have received and the date/s when it was received. The written record must be kept for at least three years beginning with the date on which the MFA was given. If your application is successful at the point of claiming the grant, we will issue you with an email which you can use as your written confirmation. This will enable you to respond to future requests from public authorities on how much MFA you have received and whether you have reached the cumulative threshold.

- **Monitoring** – we are required to report on key outputs and benefits arising from grants awarded under the Business Growth Fund. Successful applicants will be monitored both during the project and 12 months after completion to verify the impact of Council grant funding on business growth via a number of

indicators, with a particular focus on turnover growth and the number of new jobs created and/or existing jobs safeguarded.

H) FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on the funding and other support available to North Lanarkshire businesses please contact either North Lanarkshire Council Enterprise Development Team on BusinessFund@northlan.gov.uk or Business Gateway Lanarkshire on 01698 520775 / lanarkshire@bgateway.com Please also visit the North Lanarkshire Council website: www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/business.