

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

**Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI)
Programme**

Rural Business Development Grant Pilot Scheme

GUIDANCE NOTES

The Rural Business Development Grant Pilot Scheme is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) as part of the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme.

The Scheme is being administered by local Councils



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Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Background to Grant Programme

The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme's (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grant Pilot Scheme aims to sustain and support the development of micro rural businesses across Northern Ireland by providing a small capital grant for the business. The TRPSI Programme is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, and this grant Programme is administered and managed by local Councils.

1.2 Level of Grant Aid

The Scheme can provide funding of up to 50% of costs for capital items up to a maximum of £4,999. The minimum grant awarded will be £500. The total cost of the capital project must be a minimum of £1,000 and must not exceed £20,000. Applicants must provide the remaining match funding towards the project.

This is a competitive process and all grants awarded will be determined on the base of merit.

1.3 Who Can Apply?

Grants are available to support the sustainability and development of existing micro businesses based in rural areas.

You can apply for a Rural Business Development Grant if:

- The business is based in a participating Council and within a rural area of Northern Ireland. A rural area is defined as an area with a population of less than 5,000 residents, plus the areas of Strathfoyle, Newbuildings and Culmore in Derry/Londonderry Urban Area (OUA) and Helens Bay, Crawfordsburn and Groomsport in the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA). If you are unsure if you are in an eligible rural area, please contact your local Council office before submitting your application.
- You are an established business that is actively trading, evidenced by providing your self-assessment number or Limited Company details, sales turnover details and a copy of a recent bank statement that is used by the business.
- Your business currently employs less than 10 full-time equivalent employees.
- You are appropriately insured or prepared to obtain appropriate insurance if awarded a grant (building or contents insurance as appropriate). No evidence of this is required at application stage, but you will be asked to confirm insurance cover at grant claim stage.
- You can provide two quotations for each item to be purchased which meet the guidance stated in section 1.7.
- You can complete your project within a short timeframe. It is anticipated that grant offers will be made in mid-February 2020, and your project cannot

commence until you receive a formal offer of funding. Projects must be completed by 31st March 2020, with all works completed, onsite, paid and through the bank account by this date.

- You are aged 18 or above at the application deadline. You may be asked to provide evidence of this at the Letter of Offer workshop if you are awarded a Letter of Offer.

Only one application can be accepted per business.

1.4 Who Cannot Apply?

The grant scheme cannot support:

- Businesses based in urban areas.
- New start businesses who have yet to commence trading (all business sectors).
- Mainstream agricultural activity.

All other existing registered businesses based in a rural area of a participating Council are eligible to apply for support.

1.5 What can be funded?

This is a pilot capital grant scheme to support the purchase of new capital items or activities including equipment, machinery and building works, which cost at least £1,000 and no more than £20,000. Examples of eligible expenditure includes computer equipment with associated software, new equipment or machinery, or minor building works to bring an area of a building back into economic use or improve/change the use of the building. For a project involving building works, full planning permission must be in place at the time of application, and the applicant must either own the property, or have a 5 year lease on the property from the date of any Letter of Offer.

1.6 What cannot be funded?

The following items cannot be funded under the Scheme:

- Any resource items, such as marketing materials, websites, training, feasibility studies, software (unless also purchasing associated capital hardware);
- Business running costs, such as staff costs, rent, rates, electric;
- Motorised vehicles, including vans, lorries, cars, boats, bikes;
- Improvements or refurbishments of any residential property (even if used for business purposes), including attics, garages and extensions;
- Improvements or refurbishments of any commercial property that is not owned by the applicant, or has a lease term of less than 5 years;
- General maintenance or refurbishment works;

- Any activity or action that is a statutory requirement of your business (eg for Health and Safety purposes such as Personal Protective Equipment) or the responsibility of another government department;
- Equipment, machinery or building works costing less than £1,000 or more than £20,000;
- Second hand equipment;
- Projects that have already started prior to a Letter of Offer;
- Consumable items used by businesses that are replaced regularly because they wear out or are used up.

Please note this list is not exhaustive, your local Council Officer can speak to you about your individual project.

1.7 What should I submit with my application?

Your application form must be fully completed and submitted to your local Council office as described in Appendix 1 with all required supporting documents.

1. A copy of most recent Bank / Building Society Statement for the account used for the business. Note, this should be the same account that project items are purchased from.
2. A minimum of 2 quotes/price-checks for **each item** you are applying for:

Total Estimated Cost per Item	Action & Minimum Number
Up to £5,000	At least 2 price-checks per item from <u>different</u> suppliers / internet quotations
£5,001 - £20,000	At least 2 Written Quotes per item from <u>different</u> suppliers (internet quotes cannot be used)

Procurement Guidance

- At least 2 quotes from 2 separate suppliers should be sought for each item. You or a business that you are an owner/partner/director of, are excluded from quoting for the supply of goods, services or works to a project that you may be offered funding for.
- If quotations are being sought, or provided from any member of your family or extended family then the relationship must be advised to the Council prior to any procurement activity and declared in writing on the procurement documentation. In these cases you are required to provide 3 quotes i.e. two independent quotes in addition to the family member quote to provide sufficient comparison of costs under the reasonableness of costs rules within the scheme.
- Quotes should be 'like-for-like'; particularly where items are specific e.g. laptop / IT / machinery etc. Quotations for the same make and

- model of products must be provided.
- Ensure that all costs are quoted and accounted for, eg delivery and installation costs should be part of the quote.
 - Email quotes are acceptable and should include any covering email.
 - Quotes must be dated prior to close of call and contain the supplier's name.
 - Internet searches must be printed off and sent with your application. **Do not** simply list website addresses/ provide links to websites as we **will not** check these.
 - The lowest quotation should be selected with corresponding costs detailed on the application form.
 - Details of the quotes received must be listed in Annex A of the application form.

Scanned copies of the quotations can be accepted with your application.

3. If applying for building works - copies of any relevant statutory approvals (e.g. planning permission), and,
4. If applying for building works – evidence of ownership or 5 year lease.

Your application and supporting documents must be submitted by **12noon on Wednesday 18th December 2019** to your local Council via the method listed in Appendix 1. **Late, or incomplete applications will not be accepted.**

Section 2: How to answer the questions

All sections of your application form must be completed as fully and concisely as possible as this information will be used in the assessment of your project proposal. Incomplete applications will be deemed ineligible and will not be assessed for funding. Please note maximum word limits per question.

Q1 Applicant Details

- (a) Please state name of business
- (b) Please state contact name and details
- (c) Please provide the status of your business and confirmation that you are running a registered business by selecting 1 of the options and completing the details in full

Q2 Business Overview

- (a) Please state the date your business commenced trading
- (b) Please state your business address, if different to contact address. Please remember that the project must be in a defined rural area of the Council to be eligible for grant aid.
- (c) Please provide a comprehensive overview of your current business activities.
Maximum 500 words
- (d) Please enter the current number of full-time and part-time employees (including yourself if applicable). Full-time employees must work at least 30hours per week in the business.

Note – in order to be eligible, the business or enterprise must employ less than 10 full-time equivalent employees.

- (e) Please provide your sales turnover for the last complete financial year, or year to date.

Q3 Project Details

- (a) Please enter a short title for your project (eg Business Expansion, Business Sustainability)
- (b) Please enter a description of the project and detail any new business activities, customers or markets as a result of implementing it. **Maximum 500 words.**
- (c) Please explain why you need to carry out your project and what the demand is for your project. You should clearly identify the need for the project, for example, is there deficiencies in your current business, or a market for the proposal? Detail the market research you have undertaken including customer feedback. **Maximum 500 words.**

- (d) Please tick and provide information on each specific impact your project will have on your business over the next 12 months. You should complete all text boxes that apply to your business/project.
- (e) Please provide details of the skills and experience which you or your organisation has that will assist you to carry out the proposed project. In particular, you should comment on general management, marketing and financial experience and any relevant training/mentoring undertaken or qualifications held. You should provide as much information as possible.
Maximum 500 words.

Q4 Project Costs

- (a) Tick as appropriate, enter VAT registration number if required.
- (b) Please provide details of the items/activities you require funding for.

Note – maximum total cost is £20,000 and maximum grant request is £4,999.

If your business or enterprise is not VAT registered, you may apply for 50% of the GROSS cost (i.e. the cost including VAT). If your business or enterprise is VAT registered, you can only apply for 50% of the NET cost (cost excluding VAT).

Note – you will be required to show that procurement of all items has been completed and that this procurement meets the procurement guidance.

- (c) Please detail your match funding for the project.

Q5 Previous Funding

Please provide details of all other grants awarded to you/your business in the last 4 years (so since November 2015). Include details of grant offers made, but that are still to be drawn down (eg if you have a live Letter of Offer).

Q6 Project Timescales

Please confirm if you can complete your project by 31st March 2020, to include project items purchased and onsite, and paid and cleared your bank account by this date.

Note – projects which have already commenced are ineligible for funding. Your project cannot commence until a Letter of Offer is released (anticipated mid-February).

Q7 Building Works

- (a) State if project involves building works.
- (b) Please confirm if planning permission is required for your project. The onus is on the applicant to check if planning permission is required for your project – you can contact your local planning office to discuss this. If required, full planning permission must be in place and submitted with your application.

- (c) Please confirm if you have applied for building control. Your final building control certificate will be required before payment of grant aid.
- (d) Please confirm that you own the land/building or have a minimum 5 year lease in place if you are carrying out building works as part of your project. Evidence of this must be submitted with your application

Q8 Please indicate if you would like to be registered onto your local Councils Economic Development Database

Checklist

Please tick to confirm what you are submitting with your application.

Declarations

- (a) Please read the declaration carefully and complete it in full.
- (b) Please read the De-Minims Aid declaration carefully. Complete details of all de-minims aid received in the last 3 fiscal years. Please note that this may include grant funding (for example through Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme, Intertrade Ireland or Invest NI) and also business support programmes (such as local Council mentoring programmes). Complete the declaration in full.

Annex A – Evidence of Value

Please complete in full for all quotations received and remember to include copies of all documents with your application submission. Scanned copies of quotations will be accepted.

Section 3 - How we assess and score your application

3.0 Overview

Every application received will be assessed to ensure the following:

- To ensure that the business is eligible to apply to this particular Scheme.
- To ensure each applicant's capability to deliver the proposal, and
- To determine how well the proposal meets the business's needs and supports the business sustainability and growth.

An acknowledgement receipt will be issued to you once your submission has been received. The Council will assess your application for eligibility. If your application is eligible to apply for grant aid, it will be forwarded for full assessment and scored against the stated criteria.

3.1 Eligibility Assessment

If the business, based on the information supplied, is able to satisfy the Council of their eligibility, they will progress to the next part of the process.

If the business, based on the information supplied, is not able to satisfy the Council of their eligibility, they will be advised of specific omissions/shortcomings and how these can be addressed for any future funding requests.

3.2 What if an application is not eligible?

If your application is not eligible, you will be notified immediately and the reasons will be outlined to you. Your application will not proceed to assessment and scoring.

If a business is not eligible for funding through the Programme, businesses may wish to contact the Council, who will help signpost to other sources of support.

3.3 Assessment and Scoring

If the business, based on the information supplied, is able to satisfy the eligibility criteria, they will be scored according to established assessment criteria shown in the table below.

AREA	Score
Economic Impact	/25
Need for project	/25
Evidence of potential export out of Northern Ireland	/5
Innovation	/10
Business Efficiency	/10
Previous funding	/10
Management strength	/15
TOTAL	/100

Applications must score at least 65% in order to avail of funding.

Applicants will be ranked according to score obtained and available funding allocated to highest ranking applications. Applicants who fail to achieve a score of at least 65% will be advised that they have been unsuccessful. Applicants who score above 65%, but who do not score high enough to be awarded funding due to lack of available funding will be notified of this.

3.4 How decisions are made

When the scores are finalised, the applications may be presented to your local Council.

Successful/unsuccessful applicants will be notified at this stage.

3.5 What happens if an application is successful?

If an application is successful, Council will issue a Letter of Offer which is a legal agreement with the business to deliver on the proposals outlined in their application form.

Signed Letters of Offer must be returned within **14 days of receipt**.

If successful, businesses **must** attend a Letter of Offer workshop which will explain the processes and procedures that relate to Programme monitoring, submitting a financial claim, requesting changes, promoting DAERA's support for the Programme, monitoring and evaluation requirements and the process of verification.

This grant funding scheme is retrospective and therefore costs will only be reimbursed once items are purchased, paid in full, viewed in place and a grant claim submitted and processed. Applicants will have to provide original invoices and show evidence of payment of invoices through their bank account as part of the claim process. Items should be paid through the bank account for which a statement is provided as part of the application process. **Cash and Credit card payments cannot be accepted.**

Projects must be complete, paid in full and cleared the bank account by 31st March 2020 or the project will be deemed ineligible and no grant payment will be made.

Grant claims, including original invoices and bank statements, must be submitted to your local Council by 28th April 2020.

Businesses are required to provide information on the impact of their project on project completion. Officers from your local Council, DAERA or audit officials may arrange post project visits to verify spend and discuss the monitoring information with the businesses that were funded.

3.6 What happens if an application is unsuccessful?

If an application is not successful, officers from the Council discuss the application and provide practical developmental support to address areas of concern.

An Appeals Process/Review Procedure is also available if an application is unsuccessful. The purpose of this is to ensure that the decisions taken and procedures followed for individual applications are applied fairly and consistently.

The Review will provide an independent process through which an applicant will have the opportunity to submit information to the Review Panel indicating that either:

- the outcome was unreasonable or;
- the proper procedures were not followed.

Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered.

3.7 Grant Application Assessment Schedule

The Programme will be open for applications as follows:

Opening date: Monday 18th November 2019

Closing date: Wednesday 18th December 2019 at 12 noon

Late applications will not be accepted under any circumstances. The application form must be fully completed and all required supporting documentation must be supplied at time of submission or the application will not be considered.

Applications and supporting documentation should be submitted to your local Council following the method stated in Appendix 1.

The Programme will follow this eight step administrative process:

Step 1	Open call for applications is made
Step 2	Applications are submitted to your local Council
Step 3	Applications are assessed
Step 4	Letters of Offer are issued and applicant attends Letter of Offer workshop
Step 5	Letters of Offer are returned within 14 days
Step 6	Projects are completed and paid in full by applicant
Step 7	Grant claim is submitted to local Council for processing
Step 8	Grant payment is made directly to applicant

3.8 Application Process

All applications for financial assistance should be submitted to your local Council as outlined in Appendix 1.

It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that their application is submitted prior to the advertised time and date of closing, being **12noon on Wednesday 18th December**. Applications received after the closing time/date will not be considered for funding. No exceptions will be made and there is no recourse to appeal.

The application will be assessed against Programme objectives and the project selection criteria set out by the Councils.

Projects that meet the criteria will be considered for financial assistance on a competitive basis, and if approved, a Letter of Offer setting out the terms and conditions of the assistance will be issued.

Appendix 1 - Council Contact Details		
Council Area	Contact Details	Method of Submitting Application
Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council	Tel: 028 9448 1311 Email: grow@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk Website: https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/ruralbusinessgrants/	By email to: grow@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk or by post/hand delivery to: TRPSI Programme, Economic Development Section, Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey, BT36 5QA
Ards & North Down Borough Council	Tel: 028 91473788 Ext. 40919 Email: rdp@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk Website: www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/rural-development	By email to: rdp@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or by post/hand delivery to: TRPSI Programme, Rural Development Team, Signal Centre, Bangor, BT19 7PD
Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council	Tel: 028 4066 0609 Email: economicdevelopment@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk Web: https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/business/	By email to economicdevelopment@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk or by post/hand delivery to: TRPSI Programme, Economic Development, Old Technical Building, 3 Downshire Road, Banbridge, Co.Down, BT32 3JY
Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council	Tel 028 777 60311 Email: bridget.mccaughan@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk Website: www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/grantsandfunding	Via Council's online funding hub - visit www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/grantsandfunding

Derry City & Strabane District Council	Tel : 028 71253 253 ext. 4265 Email: catherine.collins@derrystrabane.com Website: https://www.derrystrabane.com/businesssupport	Via Councils online funding portal – visit https://www.dcsdcgrantaid.com/applications/ or by Email to: catherine.collins@derrystrabane.com or by Post/Hand Delivery to: TRPSI Programme, Business Support, 47 Derry Road, Strabane, Co Tyrone, BT82 8DY
Fermanagh & Omagh District Council	Tel: 0300 303 1777 Email: businesssupport@fermanaghomagh.com Website: http://www.fermanaghomagh.com	By email to: businesssupport@fermanaghomagh.com or by post/hand delivery to: TRPSI Programme, Economic Development Team The Grange, Mountjoy Road, Omagh, Co Tyrone, BT79 7BL; or Townhall, 2 Townhall Street, Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh, BT74 7BA
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	Tel: 028 92447489 Email: dawn.hynes@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk Website: https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/business/rural-development-and-regeneration/rural-development	By email to: dawn.hynes@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk or by post/hand delivery to: TRPSI Programme, Economic Development Section, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn, BT27 4RL
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council	Tel: 028 2563 3266 Email: rdp@midandeastantrim.gov.uk Website: www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk	By email to: rdp@midandeastantrim.gov.uk or by post/hand delivered to: TRPSI Programme, Investment & Funding Unit, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council, Silverwood Business Park, Michelin, 190 Raceview Road, Ballymena, BT42 4HZ
Mid Ulster District Council	Contact: Eamon Gallogly Tel: 03000 132 132 – Ext 24320 Email: rdp@midulstercouncil.org Website: www.midulstercouncil.org/businessgrowth	By email to: rdp@midulstercouncil.org or by post/hand delivery to: Mid Ulster District Council, Gortalowry House, 94 Church Street, Cookstown, Co Tyrone, BT80 8HX

<p>Newry, Mourne & Down District Council</p>	<p>Contact: Business Development Unit Tel: 0300 013 2233 Email: business@nmandd.org Website: https://www.newrymournedown.org/business-support</p>	<p>By email to: business@nmandd.org</p> <p>or by post/hand delivery to: Newry, Mourne and Down District Council FAO Business Development Unit</p> <p><u>Newry Office</u> Unit 19 Rampart Road, Greenbank Industrial Estate Newry, Co. Down BT34 2QU</p> <p><u>Downpatrick Office</u> Downshire Civic Centre, Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road, Downpatrick, BT30 6GQ</p>
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Appendix 2 - Additional Information for Applicants

1. Publication of Data

If your application is successful and your project is awarded funding, please note that DAERA may publicise details of all financial support awarded/paid out to beneficiaries. This will include the name of the beneficiary, their postal town, their post code and the total amount of financial support received by the beneficiary from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Details of all applications (successful and unsuccessful) will be submitted to your local Council and applicant details will be published as part of the Council report, which are accessible to the public.

2. Data Protection Act

- We will use the information you give us on the application form during assessment and for the life of any grant we award you to administer and analyse grants and for our own research.
- All information submitted in your application form, supporting documentation and any future claim will be made available to the funding organisation, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, and the administrative organisation – your local Council.
- We may give copies of this information to individuals and organisations we consult when assessing applications, when monitoring grants and evaluating the way our funding programmes work and the effect they have. These organisations may include accountants, external evaluators, external auditors and other organisations or groups involved in delivering the project.
- We may also share information with other government departments, including Invest Northern Ireland, organisations providing match funding and other organisations and individuals with a legitimate interest in applications and grants, or for the prevention or detection of fraud.
- We might use the data you provide for our own research. We recognise the need to maintain the confidentiality of vulnerable groups and their details will not be made public in any way, except as required by law.

3. Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives members of the public the right to request any information that we hold, subject to certain exemption that may apply. This includes information received from third parties, such as, although not limited to, grant applicants, grant holders and contractors. If information is requested under the Freedom of Information Act we will release it, subject to exemptions; although we may consult with you first. If you think that information you are providing may be exempt from release if requested, you should let us know when you apply. For further information please visit the Information Commissioner's Office at www.ico.gov.uk

4 Equality Considerations

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) and Equality Monitoring

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) DAERA has a statutory obligation to promote equality of opportunity between: persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without.

The Act also requires DAERA to take into account the promotion of good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

To meet its statutory obligations, DAERA has to continuously monitor and assess the equality uptake and outcomes of its policies and programmes, to determine if there are any adverse effects or consequences. And if there are, to look at ways to lessen these.

This equality monitoring is done through the completion of an equality monitoring form (questionnaire) by project beneficiaries once the funding has been awarded. DAERA is legally required to conduct this monitoring, but it is voluntary for beneficiaries to complete the form, which will be anonymous and confidential. The completed forms are returned directly to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in a freepost envelope which will be provided. This information will be stored confidentially by NISRA. These completed forms are not seen by DAERA.

The information collected will only be used for Equality Monitoring purposes and in compliance with The Data Protection Act. The details on this form will not be used in the decision to award funding to any person/group who applies to the Scheme, nor will this form be linked in any way to details of individual participants.

All beneficiaries are encouraged to complete the form as it will greatly help DAERA comply with its statutory duty and in its assessment of the equality uptake and outcomes of the Scheme across different groups of people.

- 5 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)** - When you apply for Rural Business Development Capital Grant Pilot Scheme we will ask for some personal information because, for example, your personal email address or telephone number is used on the applicant organisation's behalf. When you provide this information it is processed in adherence with the GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 as well as the scheme's Terms and Conditions to enable us to communicate with you about the application.

DAERA and our delivery agents take data protection and freedom of information issues seriously. We take care to ensure that any personal information supplied is dealt with in a way which complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation. This means that any personal information you supply will be processed principally for the purpose for

which it has been provided. However, DAERA may also use it for other legitimate purposes in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information legislation. These include:

- Occupational health and welfare;
- Compilation of statistics;
- Disclosure to other organisations when required by law to do so;
- Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 where such disclosure is in the public interest;
- The prevention and detection of fraud or maladministration (e.g. The Comptroller & Auditor General and HM Revenue & Customs).

For further details on your privacy see the DAERA Privacy Statement www.daera-ni.gov.uk/daera-privacy-statement