

# East Suffolk Rural Prosperity Fund

Grant guidance notes



# About the fund

## Rural England Prosperity Fund:

On 3 September 2022, the Government announced a new, £110m Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), which aims to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.

For a summary of the fund please see: [UK Shared Prosperity Fund » East Suffolk Council](#)

East Suffolk Council are providing **two capital** grant schemes using REPF funding to provide capital grants to small businesses and community infrastructure organisations in the district's rural area:

1. Rural Business Investment Fund
2. Rural Business and Community Hub Fund

Grants are available of between £15,000 - £30,000 per application for both funds.

Both funds are available to micro, small and medium sized businesses / organisations who are located within the geographical area of East Suffolk (***please note that some geographical exclusions apply, please see slide 30 for more details***).

*Please note that this is a capital only fund. Capital means assets that have monetary value, such as equipment, real estate, and inventory. This fund **cannot** be used to purchase a property.*



# Rural Business Investment Fund

Funding scheme overview



# Types of organisations this grant is suitable for

- The Rural Business Investment Fund is suitable for Small to Medium Sized businesses that:
  - Have a physical premises that you operate from and are seeking funding to support premises upgrades. This could include improvements for energy efficiency, general refurbishment of premises, machinery, technology etc.
  - Or are a business within the agriculture and farming sector looking to diversify your business through other offers and supplement your existing income.
  - It is also open to social enterprises, for example, if you are a community business, cooperative, or a research and development site.

# Priorities of the grant scheme

**The main objectives of the Rural Business Investment Fund is to provide:**

1. Funding (capital grants) for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas. Including capital funding for net zero infrastructure for rural businesses, and diversification of farm businesses outside of agriculture to encourage start up, expansion or scale up of these businesses where this involves converting farm buildings into other commercial or business uses.
2. Funding (capital grants) for growing the local social economy and supporting innovation.

**The Rural Business Investment Fund, is 100% capital fund grant that will allow rural businesses to apply for funding across the following three priorities.**

**All applicants must ensure that their application evidences how it meets at least one of the priorities:**

1. *Net zero*
2. *SME investments and diversification*
3. *Agriculture and farm diversification*

***We are particularly keen to receive applications that take a holistic approach and address multiple priorities where possible within their submitted project.***

# Types of projects

## Net zero projects:

- We are specifically seeking projects from businesses that wish to implement innovative approaches to their process development and end products that result in reduced carbon emissions. This could also include innovative approaches to expanding premises through sustainable materials.
- All projects must have a transformational impact on the business. A project is considered transformational if it can achieve either of the following:
  - The creation of new jobs or safeguarding of existing jobs
  - The adoption of new technologies or processes to increase productivity
- Examples of the types projects this could fund includes purchasing new process and packaging machinery that is more energy efficient or the introduction of new packaging processes that is 'greener' for the environment.

## SME investments and diversification:

- Flexibility according to business need is applied under this theme for businesses and local organisations looking to invest in capital assets, such as machinery, equipment, hardware, refurbishment of premises.
- The applicant must demonstrate how the investment will help their business move forward and deliver your business plan and long-term goals.
- We would specifically like to see projects that focus on investments that will support new processes, new to firm technologies, modernisation and improving business efficiency.

# Types of projects continued

## Agriculture and farm diversification:

- Projects that enable farming businesses to diversify into non-farming activities or complimentary to the underlying farming business. With the aim to help farmers support the underlying farm business by bringing in supplementary income in addition to that from traditional farming pursuits.
- This may be by putting under used resources to better use, for example old farm buildings, or it may be by being able to meet a local demand for a product or service that is not currently being met.
- Project examples could include tourism provision development, projects that will increase the ability to sell locally such as equipment, fridge units and vending machines, innovative milking technologies, event venues, food & drink tours and tasting and tourism experiences.
- Please note that for tourism and accommodation related projects, we encourage you to speak to East Suffolk's planning department to consider the impact on the local environment. Please visit: <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/>

*Please note that we are unable to fund activities that support primary agriculture (including processing and marketing of agricultural products). Projects **must** demonstrate diversification into non-farming activities or that are complimentary to the underlying farming business.*

# Who can apply?

The fund is available to micro, small and medium sized businesses who are located within the geographical area of East Suffolk (*please note that some geographical exclusions apply, please see slide 28 for more details*).

Applications will be accepted from:

- Sole traders
- Limited companies
- Business partnerships
- Any constituted “not for profit” community, voluntary or business group
- Voluntary organisations or social enterprises

There are no restrictions on the sector that can apply for the funding however you must be an SME (employ less than 250 people and your turnover is less than EUR 50m/~£43m or annual balance sheet less than EUR 43m /~£37m).



# Deadline for applications: Rural Business Investment Fund

Round	Round dates (applications open and close)	Dates of Appraisals	Panel Meeting
Round 1	2 May 2023 – 30 June 2023	3 July 2023 – 21 July 2023	w/c 31 July 2023
Round 2	31 July 2023 – 29 September 2023	2 October 2023 – 27 October 2023	w/c 6 November 2023
Round 3	1 April 2024 – 31 May 2024	3 June 2024 – 28 June 2024	w/c 8 July 2024
Round 4	5 August 2024 – 27 September 2024	30 September 2024 – 25 October 2024	w/c 4 November 2024
Round 5	2 December 2024 – 24 January 2025	27 January 2025 – 21 February 2025	w/c 3 March 2025

*The grant decision will be relayed to you at the earliest opportunity. Please be aware, full compliance with the eligibility criteria does not guarantee that your application will be successful, as grants are discretionary, and there is no right of appeal against the grant decision. If your grant application is declined, an explanation will be provided.*

*Please note that the authority holds the right to change or cancel funding round dates should the funding scheme be oversubscribed, and all funds are allocated.*



# Rural Business and Community Hub Fund

Funding scheme overview



# What is a business & community hub?

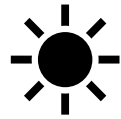
- The Rural Business and Community Hub Fund is a **capital** grant scheme for community facilities that aim to become a **community and/or business hub**.
- Community and business hubs are physical multi-purpose centres that provide a range of high-quality services to meet local community needs, hosting a range of activities and services, and will become sustainable through income streams such as also offering co-working spaces, hired space, clubs etc. Grant applications should clearly demonstrate how capital improvements can help them become a **sustainable** community hub.
- This can include digital upgrades, capital improvements to create suitable space for community and business use and net zero upgrades.



We want applicants to this fund to **think big** and consider a multi-faceted approach to their funding application, rather than focus on one specific improvement, and make a range of improvements to enable new activities/projects to meet those needs in energy-efficient and digitally connected buildings. Improvements, i.e. new windows etc, will **not** be funded in isolation, they **MUST** be linked to **additional or new activity**. Examples are shown below.



Faster Broadband and a set of laptops for digital skills training



Solar Panels on the roof



Better insulation in the roof



A small extension for the community pantry/uniform bank



Replacement doors and windows



Computer desks and chairs - a co-working area for homeworkers



An EV charging point

Room dividing system to enable two activities to be held at once



# Priorities of the grant scheme

The Business and Community Hub Fund, is a 100% capital fund grant that allows rural organisations to apply for funding across three core priorities that support the development of a functional community and business hub.

All applicants must ensure that their application evidences how it meets at least one of the priorities:

1. *Digital upgrades*
2. *Capital improvements to create suitable space for community and business use*
3. *Net zero upgrades*

***Priority grant applications will look to include both business and community use, e.g. a co-working space 1 day a week.***

***We are particularly keen to receive applications that take a holistic approach and cover multiple priorities within their submitted project and results in additional or new activity.***

# Key Questions to consider when developing a community & business hub application

- What unmet needs are there in your community?
- How could your building be adapted to meet those needs?
- Could changes to the building layout and/or access help meet the needs of specific groups within the community, for example young people or residents with disabilities?
- Could your facility offer more in terms of services for residents, for example Citizens Advice or Turning Point outreach opportunities, fitness classes, or condition specific health groups like dementia or carers support?
- What about those who are struggling with the cost of living – could you create space to set up a community pantry or fridge?
- Could you make the building more energy efficient and sustainable (and also make it a warmer and more attractive space to be)
- Could the space be used for skills development, for example cooking classes or digital skills groups?
- Could businesses or home workers use the building as a co-working space?

# Examples of projects under each of the three priorities

## Digital upgrades

Digital improvements and upgrades that support modernisation of facilities, equipment upgrades and connectivity improvements. Example projects include:

- Projects that provide access for community members to engage with a range of digital devices (laptops, tablets, iPads, smart-phones, etc.), such as a community loan facility, etc.
- Projects that provide access for community members to enhance connections with others, such as a community-use internet hub, or internet café, etc.
- Provision of internet installation/connection/line upgrades in community facilities for community use.

## Capital improvements to create suitable space for community and business use:

Capital improvements that will support the development of:

- Suitable space for community shops, pantries and / or fridges,
- improvements to premises to enable local voluntary groups such as youth charities, carers groups or refugee support groups,
- setting up or enhancement of rural community-led repair cafes or mend workshops,
- meeting space,
- health or well-being activities,
- educational activities,
- skills and employment training,
- sports and fitness activities,
- other arts or cultural activities,
- community cafés,
- Accessibility improvements,
- and co-working space.

# Types of projects continued

## Net zero upgrades:

This fund can support the following types of projects, ensuring that all either support a move to net zero or energy efficiency to support overall carbon reduction of the organisation and sit alongside the other priorities of this fund:

	Example(s)
Purchase of capital investment to make small adaptations to businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Purchase of equipment to allow new operating processes, such as a move to digital services, optimisation of resources or enhanced waste management</li><li>• E-cargo bikes</li></ul>
Energy efficiency improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Changing to a low carbon heating system</li><li>• Installation of low and zero carbon generating technologies, such as solar PV, biomass or micro-wind</li><li>• Insulation, replacement windows, doors etc. to improve energy efficiency of buildings</li><li>• Heating e.g., Biomass, ASHP/WSHP etc. but not fossil fuel alternatives</li><li>• Solar Panels (building regs and planning permission may apply)</li></ul>
Building fabric upgrades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Insulation</li><li>• Energy efficient lighting</li><li>• Draught-proofing</li></ul>
Machinery upgrades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Energy efficient plant and machinery</li></ul>



# Who can apply?

The fund is available to micro, small and medium sized businesses and organisations who are located within the geographical area of East Suffolk (*please note that some geographical exclusions apply, please see slide 28 for more details*).

## This includes:

- Sole Trader
- CIC / Social Enterprise
- Limited Company
- Business partnership
- Community Interest Organisation (CIO)
- Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee
- Community, voluntary or business group
- CIC / Social Enterprise
- Registered Charity
- Village Hall/Recreation Ground Committee
- Local Branch of a National Organisation
- Town/Parish Council

The fund is also be open to landlords of commercial and voluntary space, mobile community assets, community buildings and commercial space looking to have a new purpose, to diversify their offer and ensure long term survival.

There are no restrictions on the sector that can apply for the funding however you must be an SME (employ less than 250 people and your turnover is less than EUR 50m/~£43m or annual balance sheet less than EUR 43m /~£37m).

# Project enablement support

- In addition to the capital funding, East Suffolk Council has a small revenue grant available to help enable projects, for example revenue funding for projects if they require capacity building or project management support to enable the delivery of the project.
- You will be asked within your application for the fund as to whether your business / organisation requires such revenue funding to support the enablement of your project.
- If you answer 'yes' within your application, you will need to set out within your application:
  - How much revenue funding your project requires
  - Why your business / organisation is not able to meet these costs
  - What the funding will be used for
  - And evidence of need for this element
- **Revenue grant requests are restricted to a maximum of £7,500 per application.**

*Revenue funding is for the purchase of non-lasting assets. For example, this could be digital platforms, consultancy, and project management resource.*

# Support for the application process



- It is a **mandatory requirement** for the Rural Business & Community Hub Fund that you have spoken to Community Action Suffolk (CAS) about your project before applying.

## CAS Specific Support for Applicants

- Basic eligibility checks - including catchment area and fund priorities
- Application development support – evidence of need, timelines, finances, and outputs & outcomes
- Business planning support – vision, organisational priorities, financial forecasting, and long-term impact
- Access to additional CAS support and resources, including Healthcheck, Pro-Help, Financial Sustainability Support, and a range of training.
- **Please contact: [info@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk](mailto:info@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk)**

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Further information on  
**both schemes**

# Grant funding intervention rate

## The following maximum intervention rates apply:

- Rural business investment fund: up to 75%
- Rural Business and community hub fund: up to 80%. *Please note that on this grant scheme we will accept up to 10% of your total 20% match to be in-kind funding such as through staff and volunteering hours.*

The grant intervention rate is the amount of funding a grant will provide. This is calculated as a percentage of the total eligible expenditure of a project.

***You must provide evidence within your application on what other match funding has been secured / you are seeking and how you will fund the remaining costs of the project.***

***You will need to demonstrate in the application form that your business / organisation has explored other business finance options and why this was not feasible.***

# Quotations for works and services

As a condition of the grant, all capital (physical assets) expenditure, and services provided by another organisation on behalf of the applying organisation over the value of £4,999 will require evidence of three quotes obtained to ensure value for money. Expenditure over £75,000 will require a formal tender process. Please provide any quotations that you have obtained for the project along with the completed application form.

This shall include adopting the following minimum procedures:

<b>Value of Purchase</b>	<b>Procedure to be followed</b>
£0 - £4,999	Direct Award (meaning you can choose who is awarded the works without obtaining any quotations)
£5,000 - £74,999	3 written quotes or prices sought from relevant suppliers of goods, works and / or services
£75,000 and over	Formal tender process

*Please note that it is recommended that the business or contractor carrying out the work holds a minimum Public Liability Insurance cover of £5 million.*

# Planning permission and license requirements

- If you are applying for any physical upgrades or improvements that will require planning permission, grants will only be approved if planning permission has already been provided or if there is evidence that planning permission is currently being sought and the grant will be awarded on a conditional basis that planning permission is approved.
- To find out more about how to gain planning permission, please visit: <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/>
- You will also be asked within the application form to declare any other permissions or licences that are required for your project and when they will be obtained.
- If your project is taking place on rented / leased / tenanted land or premises, please ensure you submit a letter of authority from the land or premises owner or that the owner applies for the grant funding direct. We require, as a minimum, a 5-year lease or rental agreement to consider applications on rented / leased / tenanted land or premises.



## Options and market need

- As part of the application process, you will be asked to provide an overview of what other options you have considered and how you have chosen your preferred project.
- You will also be asked to provide evidence of the market need for your project and explain what research has been undertaken to support this.
- When we refer to 'market' this means the area and / or sector (also referred to as 'arena') in which you carry out your commercial dealings or for public benefit service. For example, you may wish to include how the funding will help you compete with your competition, increase your sales through improved services and products, attract additional users to your hub and/or how will it help you meet the needs of your customers or community?

# Environmental impact, equality and diversity

As part of the application process, you will be asked how you have considered:

- Environmental impacts associated with the project
- And to explain how you have considered any equality and diversity impacts associated with the project, including how you have considered the impacts on the following groups: ethnicity, disability, age, gender, religious beliefs, marital status, gender reassignment and sexual orientation (protected characteristics).
- This means outlining how you have or will ensure your project will not negatively impact the local environment and how your project will ensure that no particular group in the community is discriminated against. For example, you may include a wheelchair ramp to a facility / business as part of your project.

# Subsidy control

The REPF grant support will be delivered through Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA).

The maximum support through MFA is £315,000 and this is a cumulative total of all support received over the current, and the last two complete financial years through MFA, EU de minimis and Small Amounts of Financial Assistance Allowance.

If you are offered support through MFA, you will need to make a declaration that:

- 1) you have not already exceeded the £315,000, and
- 2) with award of the requested support, you will not exceed the £315,000 threshold.

You will be required to make a declaration of the subsidies that your business or organisation has been awarded on the application form.

For more information on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund subsidy control please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-subsidy-control-7>

# What we cannot fund

## We cannot fund:

- Applications from individuals – we cannot make grant payments to individuals
- VAT: If you are able to claim back VAT then VAT is not eligible as part of the costs of your project and should not be included.
- Annual/usual organisation running costs and core staffing costs
- Projects unable to start within 6 months of the grant award date
- Activities promoting political or religious beliefs
- Payments towards endowment funds, deficit funding or loans
- Overseas travel for individuals/groups
- Sponsored or fundraising events
- Funding for trips abroad or hospitality to other organisations
- Repeat funding – i.e. if East Suffolk Council has previously provided a grant for the same activity
- Items or projects which only benefit an individual
- Retrospective costs
- Projects that will displace existing provision
- Activities that are statutory obligations
- Activities that support primary agriculture (including processing and marketing of agricultural products). Projects must demonstrate diversification into non-farming activities or that are complimentary to the underlying farming business.

Before applying, please note that this funding cannot be used to replace lost income / profits / hardship experienced as a result of the pandemic, although it can be used help you to resume activities suspended due to Covid-19. We cannot provide retrospective funding for projects i.e. for costs already incurred.

**Please ensure that your application includes information about how your project adds value to the work of existing organisations, projects and activities in your target area.**

# What we cannot fund continued.

## We cannot support projects that have received funding from other Defra schemes. This includes:

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme - funding for farmers and land managers to work in partnership with National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty bodies to deliver projects on climate, nature, people and place
- The Farming Investment Fund - grants to improve productivity and bring environmental benefits, covering 2 funds - the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund and the Farming Transformation Fund
- The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund - grant funding over 3 years (to 2025) to support capital improvement projects for village halls, covering extending buildings and modernising facilities.

# Excluded areas

Due to Government guidelines for the Rural England Prosperity Fund, we are not able to fund projects within the following locations. If you have any questions or would like to check your eligibility, please email: [economicdevelopment@eastssuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:economicdevelopment@eastssuffolk.gov.uk)

- Lowestoft – including Carlton Colville and Pakefield
- Corton
- The area of Scalesbrook Lane Halesworth and the former RAF site Halesworth – please email us for specific location details or see the map to the top right-hand side
- Sizewell B
- Woodbridge
- Martlesham Heath (including Brightwell Heath and Adastral Park) - please see the map to the bottom right-hand side
- Kesgrave

**If you are a business / organisation that falls within the boundary lines, please do ensure that you email us to check your eligibility.**

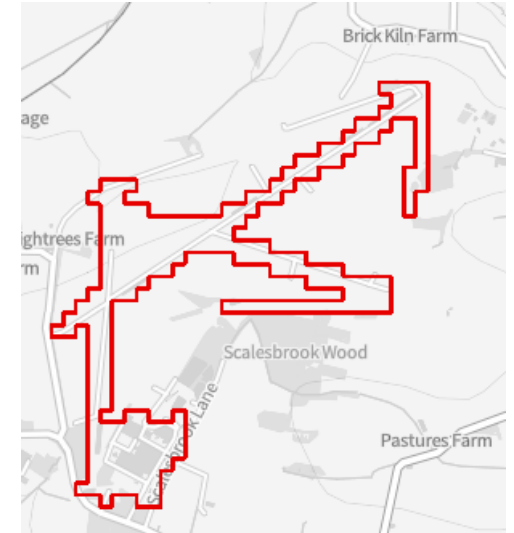


Fig. 1: Halesworth, Scalesbrook Lane area

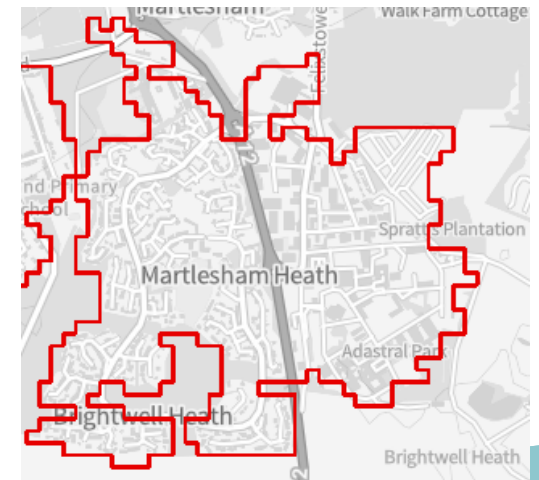


Fig.2: Martlesham Heath boundary lines

# How to apply

If you would like to access funding through either the Rural Business Investment Fund or Rural Business and Community Hub Fund, please complete an application form via the following weblinks:

- Rural Business Investment Fund:  
[https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/Rural\\_business\\_investment\\_fund](https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/Rural_business_investment_fund)
- Rural Business and Community Hub Fund (*please ensure you have spoken to Community Action Suffolk before applying*):  
[https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/Rural\\_business\\_and\\_community\\_hub\\_fund](https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/Rural_business_and_community_hub_fund)

# Hints and tips

**If you are unsure of what to put in a grant application, here are some suggestions that you may wish to consider:**

- What are you going to do? Provide a statement about the activity you want to fund using this grant money.
- Why do you want to do it? Describe how this will add value to your business / organisation / community and what difference it will make, for example, would it enable you to;
  - Diversify your product range ; Improve your productivity ; Increase your useable customer space
  - Access new customers/users ; Create or safeguard jobs ; Increase your export capability
  - Allow for new to the firm technologies or processes ; Provide services for specific groups e.g. young people or people with disabilities
- *Please remember when you add your expected outputs and outcomes to your application that they should be realistic and achievable. These will be monitored as part of the grant process.*

## **How much will it cost?**

- We need to see a breakdown of how you have reached the total fund you are asking for. This doesn't need to be to the penny but should evidence your main costs, confirmation of match funding, and estimates or quotes which could include detail of equipment costs, suppliers etc.

## **How does it match our priorities?**

- Our priorities for the schemes are outlined in the guidance. We do not expect that your project will meet all of our priorities, however your application needs to describe where it does support those it can.



## Hints and tips continued

### **What will the outcomes for your business / organisation be:**

Provide figures to illustrate the anticipated improved outcomes for your business / organisation / community for example:

- Increased sales
- Increased customers / users
- Greater business efficiency
- Job creation or jobs safeguarded
- Improved productivity
- Increased business growth
- Increased export capability
- Improved community engagement

### **When will the project start and finish?**

Provide expected dates including any milestone dates that will occur during the project, for example if new equipment is arriving when will it start to be used.

Our expectation is that projects will start in the near future and will be completed within 12 months.

# Monitoring

- You will need to complete a mandatory Monitoring return 12 months after funding is awarded.
- This is a key part of the process and needs to be completed as accurate as possible, with evidence of how the money was spent, and what outputs and outcomes have been achieved.
- Incomplete returns or a failure to return are likely to impact negatively on future funding applications, so please bear this in mind when completing your application.

# Support

For business support and advice relating to areas such as training, grants and funding, land and premises, business associations and more, please visit our dedicated business support website, East Suffolk Means Business:

<https://eastsuffolkmeansbusiness.co.uk/>

Or email:

[economicdevelopment@eastsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:economicdevelopment@eastsuffolk.gov.uk)



If you are a community-based organisation and seeking support for project development and / or enablement, please contact our Communities Team by emailing:

[Communities@eastsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Communities@eastsuffolk.gov.uk)



# The process

## Received applications

All received applications are appraised by the East Suffolk Funding Team after the deadline of each funding round.

Potential queries are raised with applicants following appraisals.

## Panel meeting

The appraised applications are taken to a panel of officers to discuss the outcome of the applications.

## Outcome

Applicants will be informed of the decision by email, and for those that are approved, the applicant will receive a grant acceptance / offer letter.