



Funded by
UK Government



Ashfield Accelerator Grant (AAG)

Guidance and information notes

Updated: 14th May 2024



What is this grant?

The Ashfield Accelerator Grant (AAG) is a discretionary grant fund targeted at assisting the growth of established businesses based in the district of Ashfield. It is being offered by Ashfield District Council and is funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

This grant can provide between £8,000 - £30,000 (excluding VAT) to pay towards eligible project costs that support **micro, small and medium sized enterprises** based in the District of Ashfield. Eligible projects must create new jobs and/or help businesses reduce their energy usage and make progress towards achieving net zero carbon emissions in a quantifiable manner and be aligned to the Ashfield Accelerator Project which is being delivered by East Midlands Chamber.

This grant scheme is subject to **Public Subsidy Control Rules** and the appropriate procurement of goods/services. If you wish to apply, then you must have a **minimum project cost of £16,000** which would provide a grant award of £8,000 if successful. This is a match funded grant scheme with an intervention rate of 50% towards any eligible project costs.

Only one application can be made per business over the lifetime of the Ashfield Accelerator programme and the maximum grant that can be applied for is £30,000, depending on the project type see below:

- Capital expenditures. £30,000
- Infrastructure improvements. £30,000
- Consultancy support. £5,000
- Training support. £5,000
- International exhibitions support. £5,000

This grant scheme will close on **31st October 2024** and so any awarded projects must be completed within 3-month or by **31st January 2025** at the latest.

** It is important that applicants are able to provide match funding for the grant which must be in place before the Chamber can issue a Grant Funding Agreement. Match funding can come from private sector sources such as bank loans, asset finance, company funds and director loans.

NB. Subsidy Declarations

- This grant is subject to the Minimal Financial Assistance limits under the Subsidy Control Act. This means no recipient can receive more than **£315,000** over a 3-year period (consisting of the current financial year and the 2 previous financial years). Covid business grants received from local government and any other subsidy claimed under the Minimal Financial Assistance or Small Amounts of Financial Assistance limit over the 3-year period should be counted. [Subsidy Control rules Quick Guide](#)
- Applicants can not apply for mixed UKSPF fundings to address the same business projects. Any awarded grants can be clawed back if this condition is not adhered to.

For what can I use the grant?

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

1. Capital expenditures:

- New machinery to **increase productivity** or bring services in-house to improve productivity, efficiency, and margin.
- New capital equipment to **implement innovative processes**, develop new or improved products, goods, or services.
- Assistance to **implement net zero plans** to reduce carbon emissions. For example, significantly improve the energy efficiency of equipment and should demonstrate a significant reduction in the overall energy usage of the business.
- New digital systems to increase productivity or competitiveness.
- General office IT equipment (monitors, hard drives, printers, scanners, laptops, desktops, telephony systems only) **for new employees created as part of an eligible project.**
- Any non-excluded equipment or machinery (see exclusions below) that will contribute to one of the key objectives of the grant.
- Mobile or hand-held equipment that will benefit business growth in terms of job creation, or which will help overcome a technological barrier enabling new or existing markets to be fully exploited. This includes certain mobile ICT equipment, such as tablets, where a case can be made that shows the direct benefit to the business.
- Investment in servers or cloud-based systems.

Excluded capital expenditure includes:

- Any equipment that is not purchased outright, for example, hire purchase or under a finance agreement.
- Smartphones
- Off-the-shelf software packages such as MS Office, and other office equipment.
- Replacement of equipment/items 'like for like.'
- items replaced due to 'wear and tear,' or which are faulty.
- Purchase of vehicles – vans, pick-ups
- Any equipment related to farming or agribusiness.

2. Infrastructure improvement:

- Construction/installation works associated with expansion or conversion of office or workspace **for new employees created as part of an eligible project.**
- Cabling and ICT infrastructure (such as network installation, three-phase power supply)
- Installation of energy efficient systems, equipment, or building fabric that will demonstrably reduce carbon emissions in the business and/or assist net zero aspirations, including but not limited to:
 - Renewable heat technologies such as installing an air source heat pump or a biofuel generator.
 - Installing LED lighting.
 - Installing solar panels, wind turbines and wood-burning stoves

- Upgrading the energy efficiency heating, ventilation, and air conditioning
- Improving insulation, draught-proofing, double or secondary glazing

Excluded infrastructure projects include:

- Cosmetic or non-essential improvements (such as painting, landscaping, construction of walls or fences and so on)
- Temporary or removable improvements.
- Repairs required to ensure premises are wind or watertight or repairs required to ensure premises are compliant with relevant Health and Safety Regulations or Building Regulations.
- Projects/applications for security systems, CCTV systems or fire alarms

3. Consultancy support:

- New marketing plans/strategies
- E-commerce capacity to enable online trading and help sell into new domestic or international markets.
- International social media marketing incl. search engine optimisation.
- Quality accreditations and technical certifications
- Bespoke business software/IT systems, or the customisation and integration of 'off the shelf' business software and systems
- International Intellectual Property Advice and Translation Services

Excluded consultancy projects include:

- Business plans.
- Feasibility Studies
- Energy audits
- In-house consultancy.
- Purchase and installation of off-the-shelf software packages (for example Microsoft Office software, standard Sage packages and so on)

4. Training support:

- Any external training required to help improve skill levels in business, increasing productivity and efficiency or any external training to allow the business to expand or diversify the products or services they provide, for example training for a new piece of equipment or process that is new to the business.
- Sustainability and Net Zero Training Courses which improve the ability of the business to reduce carbon will also be considered.

Exclusions for training support include:

- Training that has already commenced
- Training delivered internally by the company's own staff.
- Any training which is a legal requirement (including training required for businesses/operatives to be compliant with relevant health and safety legislation)
- Exam registration/certification fees
- Cost of travel to and from the training venue

- Accommodation and subsistence costs

5. Overseas Exhibition support:

- Attendance at International Trade Exhibitions
- Travel to and from the event with accommodation costs.
- Conference fees including cost for exhibition spaces.
- Design, construction and dressing of exhibition stands.
- Costs to prepare conference promotional materials.

Exclusions for exhibition support include:

- Trade missions which are already funded via other agencies, for example Department for Business and Trade.
- Subsistence costs (such as food and drink, hospitality.)
- Support is not available if the business has attended the same event previously.

What are eligible projects?

An eligible project must:

- **Create jobs** or safeguard current employment and / or **assist your business work towards a net zero plan to reduce carbon emissions** within 12 months.
- Lead to the project happening on a larger scale, within a faster period or to a higher standard.
- Introduce new digital technologies or innovations into the business that will improve productivity.
- Open new international markets improving supply chains and/or generating new revenues.
- Not have started or any commitment made regarding the project, for example, order made, or deposit paid. No expenditure or commitment should be made on a project until **after** a formal decision from the Grant Panel.
- Be able to be completed within a **3-month** time limit from application submission date or by latest 31st January 2025.

How much could I receive?

This scheme will provide a grant up to **£30,000** that will contribute towards 50% of the total eligible cost of the project (excluding VAT).

- The minimum grant that we will award is £8,000 requiring applicants to put forward an project costs of £16,000 to be considered for this grant scheme.
- To obtain the maximum grant applicants will need to spend **£60,000**.
- This must be the total project cost excluding any VAT.
- The applicant's contribution is 50% of the total project cost, which for the maximum available grant would be £30,000. (excluding any VAT).

We have maximum grant levels that can be awarded, these depend on the type of project expenditures making up an application - see below:

- Capital expenditures. £30,000
- Infrastructure improvements. £30,000
- Consultancy support. £5,000
- Training support. £5,000
- International Exhibitions support. £5,000

**This is a discretionary fund and requests for any additional funding may be considered in exceptional circumstances, based on the specific merits of the new project, for example where significant growth in turnover or jobs is projected.

How is it paid?

Applicants will need to pay for the total project before receiving the grant and then submit evidence of eligible expenditures to claim back monies from any grant which has been awarded. The amount being claimed will then be paid directly into the applicant's business bank account via BACS.

Grants are not paid retrospectively and so you cannot begin making purchases for any items until you have been sent a letter offering you a grant and only eligible items purchased after the date of this letter will be accepted.

All projects that have been awarded grant support must also be completed and claimed within 3 months of the award date in the grant award letter received by the applicant company. Grant awards may be cancelled or withdrawn, if supported projects are not completed within the permitted timescales, unless a robust explanation for the delay can be provided and approved.

Am I eligible to apply for a grant?

If you can answer yes to **all** the following statements, you are able to consider applying.

- My business is based in the district of Ashfield.
- My business is enrolled on the Ashfield Accelerator Project
- My business is a micro, small, or medium sized enterprise (up to 250 employees)
- My business does **not** operate in the following sectors: gambling/betting establishments, drinking place that does **not** serve food, credit union, pawn brokers, adult/private shops, national and international chain stores.
- My business turnover is over the VAT threshold or expected to reach a **minimum level of £90,000 within 12 months** of the date of the application.
- My business has not incurred any project-related expenditures or made any confirmed commitments relating to this project/application.
- I am not in arrears for either of the following (whatever one is relevant):
 - Non-Domestic Rates for business premises
 - Council Tax for businesses operating from home.
- The project detailed in the application will directly contribute to one, or both, of the following outcomes:
 - The creation of new jobs to the business or safeguard employees who are at risk if this project does not happen. (Jobs that are paid for through other employment schemes such as: graduates or trainees are not allowed).
 - Assist your business work towards net zero in a quantifiable manner.

Unfortunately, businesses at the pre-trading or feasibility stage are ineligible to apply. Also, the following project types will not be supported:

- Any project leading to a reduction in jobs.
- Projects funded by Hire Purchase or equivalent finance agreements with repayments over a period and no outright ownership until the end of the agreement.
- Projects paid for in cash.
- Projects required by law to meet legislative requirements.
- Projects/applications for security systems, CCTV systems or fire alarms

Additional Information:

Applicant businesses can be home-based or operate from dedicated commercial premises. If the application is from a **home-based business the applicant must contact [Ashfield District Council](#)** to ascertain whether they require planning consent. Some form of written confirmation must accompany this type of application.

Home-based businesses can not apply for support with infrastructure improvements such as energy improvement / decarbonisation and building conversion projects.

There must be no indication of prior commitments – to be considered for grant support, no work must start on the project in question and no expenditures should be incurred until after the applicant company has received a formal decision from the council regarding their grant application. No other form of prior commitment, financial or otherwise (for example, order placed, or deposit paid) can be made as any such application will not be supported.

How do I apply?

We would encourage you to start the process by [registering](#) with the East Midlands Chamber and speaking to a business adviser about your business and the eligibility of your project. This will make sure you maximise the wider support available for your business and explore all the available funding sources.

Whatever stage your business is at, the East Midlands Chamber can offer practical help, advice, and support to help you grow your business, including free workshops and events.

Please read this guidance document carefully before you proceed to ensure you meet any eligibility criteria and conditions of the grant and that you understand what information and evidence you will need to provide should you wish to apply.

If you have any questions, please email business.support@ashfield.gov.uk

If you decide that you would like to apply, please request a meeting with one of the following East Midlands Chamber business advisers. Their contact details are as follows:

- david.smith@emc-dnl.co.uk
- richard.crowden@emc-dnl.co.uk

What happens after I apply?

All applications will be subject to an assessment by a Panel and the amount offered will be at the discretion of the Panel and only whilst funds are available. Ashfield District Council will be represented on that panel with East Midlands Chamber.

The Panel's decision is final and there is no right to appeal.

All decisions will be notified in writing by the East Midlands Chamber within **14 days** of applying. We aim to turn around applications as quickly as possible, it is therefore important that any supporting documents are correct as may invalidate your application and you will not be able to re-apply.

Required documentation.

Applicants must submit the following documentation to apply for this grant:

- Completed East Midlands Chamber Ashfield Accelerator Grant application form.
- **For any expenditures up to £10,000 from a single supplier we require one formal quote per item.**
- **For any expenditures over £10,000 from a single supplier we require three formal quotes per item.**
- Quotes should clearly show the cost of each item excluding VAT and must include contact details for the supplier and cannot be a handwritten note or headed invoice. Please note that applicants will be required to confirm they have no relationship with any of the intended suppliers.
- Most recent bank statement clearly showing your last full month of trading, the account name, business address and account details of the business.
- Latest statutory accounts showing previous 1-years financial position.
- Latest managements accounts within 3 months of date of application showing current business performance.
- Planning confirmation will be required for applications **from home-based business to establish whether they require planning consent** or not for the project. Written confirmation or email from Ashfield District Councils Planning team confirming the position must accompany this type of application.
- Applications must also include a 12-month Cashflow projection. Template available on request.

Ashfield District Council encourage businesses to consider using local suppliers at every opportunity. The Council is unable to recommend suppliers but can provide a list of available local suppliers and traders by contacting business.support@ashfield.gov.uk

Additional Support Available

Did you now that Ashfield District Council provides local businesses with a **FREE** business support service? Please take a look at our [business support webpages](#) to learn more about this free service and if you would like to talk to a member of our team, please email us at: business.support@ashfield.gov.uk.