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New Forest Rural England Prosperity Fund

Guidance to Help with Completion of the Application Form for the New Forest Rural Fund for Businesses

This document should be used alongside the Rural Fund Application form. It will provide you with hints and tips as to how best to answer questions and the type of information we are looking for, in order to give your application the best chance of success. The guidance doesn't cover all the questions, but if you have any questions our contact details are at the end of this document.

Eligibility Criteria and How the Rural Fund Works:

You can find the detailed guidance on the New Forest Rural Prosperity Fund Eligibility Criteria and How the Rural Fund Works on our website at www.newforest.gov.uk/RuralFund

It is important you read this guidance before you start to complete the application form.

Guidance on completion of the application form:

Please Note: The guidance in this document is not exhaustive, and the Council reserves the right to amend the guidance at its own discretion and it will be the final arbiter of the definitions contained below.

Before you start to complete the Application form it is important that you have checked that your business is based within the Rural Fund area at [NFDC WebMap \(newforest.gov.uk\)](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/NFDCWebMap)

Due to the volume of enquiries to the Economic Development office during this period; please do not contact us to enquire on the progress of your application. Be assured we will process applications as quickly as possible.

You can find information about the timescales taken to consider your application at www.newforest.gov.uk/RuralFund

Remember:

To be considered for a grant from the New Forest Rural Fund for Businesses, eligible applicants must provide:

- A fully completed, signed and dated application form;
- A fully completed cash flow forecast;
- All the supporting documents listed on the application form.

The application form and cash flow forecast template are available on our website at www.newforest.gov.uk/RuralFund

There is a limited budget for Rural Fund grants and the application process is competitive.

APPLICATION PART 1: ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS AND PROJECT OUTLINE

Section 1: About your business

This part of the form asks for information about your business and how we can contact you.

- **Contact email address:** If we need to contact you about your application, we will use your email address on your application form therefore please ensure the details are correct. *Please monitor this email account for correspondence from us.*
- **Confirmation of the trading status of your business:** You must confirm that the applicant business is not in financial difficulty and is continuing to trade with a view to making a profit or surplus (not a dormant company).

Businesses that are in financial difficulty, have ceased trading or have closed without being required to do so as part of Government and local restrictions; is dissolved or about to be dissolved; is insolvent or if insolvency action had been instigated against it (including any petition or where a striking off notice has been made); is dormant, i.e. not trading but not insolvent, are not able to apply for a Rural Fund grant.

If you are unsure of the trading status of your business, you are advised to contact your accountant or professional advisor. We may ask you to provide evidence of their advice.

- **Confirmation that you have read the Rural Fund scheme guidance,** (available at: www.newforest.gov.uk/RuralFund) and this document, before completing the application form.

If you have read the guidance but remain unsure whether your business or project is eligible for the scheme, please contact the Council's Economic Development team at BusinessSupport@nfdc.gov.uk or call 023 8028 5735

- **Confirmation that you have used the Postcode Checker** at [NFDC WebMap \(newforest.gov.uk\)](http://NFDC WebMap (newforest.gov.uk)) before completing the application form to ensure your business is based within the New Forest Rural Fund area. If you have looked at the map but remain unsure whether your business or project is eligible for the scheme, please contact the Council's Economic Development team using the contact details above.
- **Please summarise what your business does currently:** Assume the person assessing your application knows nothing about you or your business (please limit this to 500 words).
- **Please explain any anomalies in the accounts or self-assessment return** that you will be submitting with your application. This means anything that deviates from what is standard, normal, or expected for your business e.g., weather impacts or supply issues or a period of business investment etc.
- **The UK Government Subsidy Control Act (2022):** Confirmation that receiving the requested Rural England Prosperity Fund grant from New Forest District Council will not exceed the 'Minimum Financial Assistance' (MFA) threshold for your enterprise as specified in section 36(1) of the Subsidy Control Act (2022).
 - This question asks you to confirm that you have not received other grants and subsidies from public sources above the MFA threshold of £315,000 over this financial year and the previous two financial years. The Council cannot provide advice as to whether other grants and subsidies contribute to this threshold, if in doubt include them in your calculation and obtain advice from your accountant or financial advisor. You can find information on MFA thresholds at www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-subsidy-control-7

Section 2: Your Project Outline

- **Please describe how you plan to spend the grant:** this is where you describe what it is you want to purchase with the grant with the specifics as to work to be undertaken / items to be purchased. Please provide as much detail as possible so that we can clearly understand your proposed project, and to avoid any unnecessary delay in processing your application as the Rural Fund grant is limited.
- **Please describe the source of your match funding i.e., own cash, bank loan etc.** We need to know how you will match-fund the proposed project costs as the grant will only cover a maximum of 50% of the project costs. You will also need funds to manage your cash flow until the grant is paid. Please be aware that with some sources of finance, the finance company will own the asset until your final payment to them is made. As such, this type of finance cannot be used as match funding because we cannot pay a Rural Fund grant to a recipient who, at the time of the grant claim, doesn't actually own the item(s).
- **Is the applicant or business in receipt of other public funds to support this project?** We ask you to confirm that the applicant or business is not in receipt of other public funds. We need to know this information as the Rural Fund for Business does not allow match funding from certain other Government schemes. There are also schemes that do not allow other public sector funds to be used for the same project. If you have received other public funds for this or an associated project, please contact us using the contact details at the end of this document.
- **Confirmation that your matched funding contribution towards the costs of the project (a minimum of 50% of the costs) is in place:** We ask you to confirm this because the Rural Fund grant allocation is limited, and it is a competitive process. Therefore, we need to know that applicants are committed to the project and, if approved, are able to start the project (i.e., purchase the items/commission works) within 6 weeks of receipt of the Grant Offer Letter.
- **Confirmation that your financial resources are in place** for you to pay the entire project costs upfront and then claim your agreed grant once all of the items are on site/ works completed and are in the ownership of the business. This is because the Rural Fund grant allocation is limited, and it is a competitive process. Therefore, we need to know that applicants have sufficient resources to manage their cash flow until the grant is paid.

APPLICATION PART 2: SPECIFIC DETAILS OF YOUR PROJECT PROPOSAL AND BUSINESS PLAN

Section 3: Project milestones, costs, funding and demonstrating value for money

- **Project Start and Completion Dates:** We ask you to provide your project start and completion dates as we need to know that projects will be completed (i.e., grant funded items purchased, grant funded works completed and grant monies claimed) before 01 December 2024.

Projects that are not completed, and grant claims that have not been submitted by 01 December 2024, risk payment of their grant award as we will not be able to pay grant monies after this date.

As Rural Fund grants are paid once you have all your grant funded items on site/works completed and in the ownership of your business, you will need to factor-in contractor availability and delivery timescales etc for any equipment you are purchasing.

- **Expenditure Information:** This section requires a breakdown of your project costs and quotations. This information will be used to assess whether your proposal offers value for money for the Rural Fund.

When you submit your application, you will need to provide copies of detailed quotations or catalogue listings for the proposed expenditure; we cannot process applications without this information. The number of quotations required will be determined by the value of the quotation (see table below).

All quotations should be current and be no more than two months old at the point of application submission.

We will only accept fewer quotes than recommended in exceptional circumstances – if this applies please discuss this with us before continuing.

You can choose whichever quotation best meets the needs of your business, however if you select a more expensive quotation you will need to justify this in your application.

Value of quote	Supporting evidence that you must provide with your application:
Up to £2,499	1 quote or catalogue listing
£2,500 - £25,000	3 written quotations or evidence of current market price from relevant supplier's goods, works and/or services
Over £25,000	Formal tender process

Remember:

- The Rural Fund will support capital items only. It will not support revenue costs which include salaries, running costs, costs for advertising or stock. Revenue items must not be included in your expenditure information.
- Minimum individual item value is £100, items below this value must not be included in your expenditure information.
- Proposed project expenditure should be shown (£) net of VAT (unless VAT is non recoverable)
- Project expenditure can include second-hand equipment, but it must be sourced from a trusted dealer who will provide a reasonable warranty or guarantee and who can demonstrate proof of ownership (such as their purchase documents, warranty documents, logbook etc.). Furthermore, the second-hand equipment must not cost more than the current market value for the same equipment if bought new.

Section 4: Permissions and licences

IMPORTANT: It is the responsibility of applicants to obtain and maintain any necessary permissions/licences for this project and for the operation of the business.

The Rural Fund administrators cannot advise you on licences and permissions for your project. Instead, you will need to contact the relevant authority.

- **Planning Permission:** you will need to speak with the relevant planning department to find out if this is required for your project or for building works associated with your project. Both of the following links have maps so you can identify which Planning Authority area your business is in
 - If your premises are within the New Forest National Park, they are your planning authority, see: www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/planning/pre-application-advice/
 - If your premises are outside the National Park but within New Forest District you can speak with the Council's Duty Planning Officer at www.newforest.gov.uk/article/2001/Duty-planner-service

- **Other Licences and Permissions:** Your project and business may need a licence and/or permissions to operate. These may be administered locally by New Forest District Council, on a county-wide basis by Hampshire County Council, or nationally by Government agencies.

You can use the GOV.UK Licence Finder to identify the licences you will need to operate your type of business www.gov.uk/licence-finder

- **Landlord Permission:** If the project activity involves investments in immoveable assets and the business is in rented property, you will need to provide us with evidence of the landlord's written permission to the improvements where this is a condition of the tenancy.

Section 5: Your Business Plan

The answers you give in this section will help us to determine whether or not your application is successful.

The guidance isn't exhaustive – it lists the main points you should consider but do include anything else that you feel will help the grant assessor to understand (and have confidence in) your business and proposed investment.

Section 5a. Tell us about your business as it is currently:

- **Describe your business in detail, what it does and how it has developed:** Assume the person assessing your application knows nothing about you or your business. They will want to know:
 - What the business does currently - what does the business do/produce and how much (for example think in terms of occupancy/visitor numbers, production volumes etc.);
 - Where does the business get its raw materials / inputs from (if relevant);
 - The structure of the business and how long it has been trading - has its structure changed (i.e., if you have moved from being a sole trader to a Limited Company),
 - If your business is not yet trading or has been trading for less than 2 years, explain the business structure and describe what stage it is at in terms of establishment and growth.
 - Tell us about you and the others involved in running the business: their background, experience and skills relevant to the business and the proposed project.
- **Please tell us who your current customers are and how you promote your goods or services to them:** we don't need to know the names of individual customers rather tell us about how you ensure you always have customers for your products or services.

Section 5b. Tell us about your proposed project and the difference it will make:

You must now complete the 12-month cash flow forecast spreadsheet and refer to it to complete the rest of the application form. You can find the template for the cash flow forecast where you downloaded this application form at www.newforest.gov.uk/RuralFund

- We need to understand how undertaking the proposed project will impact financially on your existing business and the capacity within your business to manage this.
- We also need to see how you will manage cash flow in the business as the grant will be paid in arrears i.e., between the period you buy the agreed items and before your grant monies are paid.
- The cash flow forecast must show the impact of the grant funded project for 12 months from the date at which the equipment is on site / works completed.
- Remember to include any additional costs you will incur to run the grant funded items e.g., staff costs, fuel, insurance etc and any efficiency savings etc.

- You must ensure the figures used in your cash flow projection correspond with the project expenditure information you have provided above.
- There is guidance on the cash flow forecast template, however, please be aware that the Council is unable to advise applicants on their cash flow forecasts, instead you should seek guidance from your accountant or other professional advisor.

- **Describe the need for your project and explain the improvement this will make to your business in terms of improved efficiency and productivity etc.** Assume the person assessing your application knows nothing about you or your business. They will want to know:

- how and why the proposed project has come about and the main reasons why the business wants to undertake the proposed project.
- how you have identified the need and demand for the project for example: through research and innovation, identification of a gap in the market or through forward orders etc.
- Please also refer to any reports you have commissioned or research you have undertaken that helps to support your proposed investment.

- **Explain how the proposed project will impact financially (both positively and negatively) on your existing business operations.**

- Please put £ values on this impact in terms of increased turnover, net profit etc and show how you arrived at these figures, referring to your cash flow forecast where relevant.

- **Explain how your business has the capacity to deliver the proposed increase in products, services or efficiencies.**

Applicants must demonstrate that they have the capacity and resources to make best use of the Rural Fund grant investment. Therefore, please consider and describe factors such as to whether you have enough staff to utilise the new equipment, if not how will they be recruited?

Similarly, if you are proposing the purchase of new production equipment: is there enough space to house it, if not how will this be addressed? Also do you have access to sufficient raw materials to fully utilise the new equipment etc.

- **Number of current Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees** (*include owner/directors but exclude self-employed contractors*) – we need to know this to help measure the difference the proposed project will make to the business and to the local economy. Please report this figure as an FTE (Full Time Equivalent), this is explained on the application form.

- **How many jobs will you create as a direct result of this project both at completion of the project and after 12 months?** Please report this figure as an FTE (Full Time Equivalent), this is explained on the application form.

- Please be realistic in your forecasts as, if your application is approved, they will be included in your funding contract with us.

- Projects that create jobs will be prioritised, although we appreciate that projects that make efficiency savings may have the opposite effect.

Section 5c. Tell us why grant funding is required:

- **Please explain why grant funding is required to enable your project to proceed:**

Applicants must justify why the business needs public funding to improve its productivity and growth. You should explain how the project will deliver additional activity over and above what would otherwise be undertaken by the business.

You should also explain why commercial funding (e.g., via banks) wasn't a viable alternative for the whole project.

We can't support projects that we consider will take place anyway without grant funding and you must demonstrate that the grant contribution to a project will enable it to proceed.

Section 5d. For projects creating goods or services: Tell us how you will find new markets for the new product or service or increased production:

The primary purpose of the Rural Fund is to help qualifying businesses to grow and improve productivity. However, creating a new product or service or producing more of something (even if done more efficiently) is only worthwhile if there are customers who will purchase it.

In this section, please explain how you will find new customers and what promotional methods you will use to reach them. Please provide as much detail as possible and assume the assessor of your application knows nothing about your business or the sector in which it operates.

Section 5e. For projects investing in net zero infrastructure:

This section asks you to demonstrate how the proposed investment will cut CO² emissions and make savings to the energy use of the business. It also asks how much of this production is surplus to your requirements and will be sold back to the grid (if applicable).

Please remember to retain the reports and calculations that support these figures as we may ask you to provide them.

Section 5f. For all projects: How will your project contribute to Net Zero

The Together for our Planet campaign encourages small businesses to pledge to cut their emissions to net zero by 2050 or sooner, while helping them grow, adapt and seize new opportunities. You can find more information on the Government supported climate hub at www.smeclimatehub.org/uk/

No matter how small your business or what industry you are in, your commitment could make a real difference – to the planet, to your customers and to your running costs. Even the smallest businesses produce carbon emissions – it could be through your building, your vehicles or your suppliers.

In this section, please explain how your project will help the business to cut emissions and/or contribute to nature recovery objectives.

Please also let us know if you have declared a net zero target for your business and if so what in what year? You can find guidance at <https://businessclimatehub.uk/?s=net+zero>

Section 6: Supporting Documents Checklist

You must submit the documents listed below with your full application and cash flow forecast.

The Council will only accept **fully completed applications with the required supporting documents.**

Incomplete applications, or where supporting documents are not provided, will not be processed.

Document	Supporting Notes
<p>i. A copy of the most recent statement from the bank account you use for your business. The statement must be dated within 2 months of the application date, or your application may be rejected.</p>	<p>This must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Show your business name and address to confirm the name and address details you have added at Section 1 of the application form (<i>Statements from online accounts may not automatically show this information. Please ensure that the statement you send us does include this information; you may need to contact your bank for help with this.</i>) b. be the same bank account that you will use the pay for the grant funded items from AND: c. be the account to which you will receive your grant payment into
<p>ii. A copy of the most recent full statutory audited / unaudited accounts for the business OR: If self-employed: a copy of your most recent HMRC self-assessment return.</p>	<p>Please ensure these documents are full sets and all pages are included.</p>
<p>iii. Evidence of trading address: the evidence document supplied must support the applicant business trading address as reported in Section 1.19 of the application form</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A NFDC Business Rates bill OR • A Government or NFDC licence which shows the premises address OR • A formal commercial property rental invoice OR • A current lease agreement for the premises OR • A current insurance document showing the premises address OR • Other (please describe):
<p>iv. 12 Month cash flow forecast</p>	<p>You must complete the 12-month cash flow forecast spreadsheet and attach it when you send us your application and supporting information.</p> <p>You can find the template for the cash flow forecast where you downloaded this application form at www.newforest.gov.uk/RuralFund</p>
<p>v. Written confirmation from your landlord of permission to undertake the project (if relevant)</p>	<p>If the activity involves investments in immovable assets and the applicant is a tenant, the landlord's written permission to the improvements must be obtained where this is a condition of the tenancy.</p>
<p>vi. Detailed quotations or catalogue listings for the proposed</p>	<p>The quotations must be dated within 8 weeks prior to submission of the application and be on the suppliers</p>

Document	Supporting Notes
expenditure (refer to Section 3 above for the number of quotations required)	headed paper or from the suppliers' email. This can include second-hand equipment, but it must be sourced from a trusted dealer who will provide a reasonable warranty or guarantee and who can demonstrate proof of ownership (such as sale documents, warranty documents, logbook etc.). In addition, the second-hand equipment must not cost more than the current market value for the same equipment if bought new.

To submit your application:

Please email your fully completed application form and remember to attach all supporting information listed in the checklist above, quoting REPF and your business name in the subject line to: BusinessSupport@NFDC.GOV.UK

You will receive an automatic response from us to confirm your email has been received.

Please note we cannot accept scanned copies or PDF versions of this form

If you wish to send your documents via a secure file-sharing site, we can only accept documents via Dropbox, iCloud, WeTransfer and G-Drive.

Section 7: What happens after I have submitted my application?

Once you have emailed us your application form you will receive an automated Business Support email to acknowledge that your application has been received.

When we receive your **fully completed Full Application form along with all the required supporting information, and any queries have been resolved**, we aim to process your application within 30 working days. However, this will depend on the volume of applications received.

Please do not contact us to enquire about the progress of your application, you will be notified of the outcome once all the checks and assessments have been undertaken.

The Council will prioritise consideration of grant applications when received and will not respond to canvassing.

You can find more information about the process to assess your application on our website at www.newforest.gov.uk/RuralFund

If you have a question about the New Forest Rural Fund for Businesses:

The New Forest Rural Fund for Businesses is administered by New Forest District Council's Economic Development team.

If you cannot find the answer to your question in this document or on our webpage at www.newforest.gov.uk/RuralFund please email BusinessSupport@nfdc.gov.uk or call 023 8028 5735

Section 8: Declarations and signatures

Please remember to check that all attachments are included, the form is completed in full and that the form is signed and dated by the applicant in their personal capacity or a partner or director with the necessary authority where the declaration is being signed on behalf of an incorporated body such as a limited company.

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