Funded by
UK Government

**Bedford Borough Council Rural England Prosperity Fund Community Grants - Full Application Guidance**

**Contents**

**Applications**

Before you fill in the application form, ensure you read through this guidance,

**Incomplete / Inaccurate Application**

Incomplete or inaccurate applications will be rejected and there may not be an opportunity to reapply. If you are unsure on what information to provide, or how to answer a question please contact **bedfordukspf@bedford.gov.uk**

**When to send your form**

The first tranche of the schemes will close to applications on **Monday 30th June 2025** at midday.

We will aim to acknowledge your application in five working days

We will aim to advise you whether your application is eligible within 10 working days

We will assess applications and let applicants know whether their application has been successful in July 2025

We cannot accept late or incomplete applications.

Priority will be given to any organisation that have not previously been awarded a UKSPF/REPF grant.

We would encourage you to submit your application as early as possible if you have all of the required information for your application.

**How to send your form**

You must email your completed full application form as a Microsoft Word Attachment only, to **bedfordukspf@bedford.gov.uk**.  You should send any supporting information to this email address, either as a PDF or Word document.


**Filling in the Full Application Form.**

**1.     About your organisation**

Please provide us with a clear summary of the aims and objectives of your organisation so that we can understand the ambitions of your organisation.

## 2.      Your project

### 2.1    Which grant scheme are you applying for?

Please tick the box for the grant scheme you are applying for.

### 2.2    Project name

Please give your project a name.

### 2.3.   Project Description

Your answer here will help us understand exactly what your project is.  In this section, please tell us about the following:

- Describe your project to us; for example, what will you buy with the grant, and what will it enable you to do differently?
- Why you have decided to do the project?
- Tell us why you need a grant to complete the project, and why the organisation has not completed the project before now?

Ensure that you fully understand what can and cannot be included in your project for grant funding, by reading the FAQs.

### 2.4    Who will benefit

Please share details about who will benefit from your project

### 2.5    Tell us about the need for REPF for your project?

Please give us an understanding of the need for REPF.  Tell us why you need a grant to complete the project?  Would your project be able to proceed or run at the same scale without the funding?

### 2.6    Meeting the objectives of the grant scheme

You will need to tell us how your proposed project will meet the objectives and **set** outputs and outcomes and tell us about your **own** outputs and outcomes for your project.

Details about the objectives and outputs and outcomes are given in table 1 below:

**Table 1 - Grant schemes - objectives. outputs and outcomes**

**Funding (capital grants) for impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places.**

| Objectives | Indicative outputs | Indicative outcomes |
|---|---|---|
| Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities. This includes:<br><br>• community infrastructure<br><br>• local green space<br><br>• community led project | Number of organisations receiving grants | • Improved engagement numbers |

**Example Projects**

Capital grants to enable people to develop volunteering and social action projects locally, such as:

• purchase of equipment

• improvements to premises to enable local volunteering groups such as youth charities, carers groups or refugee support groups

**Creation of and improvements to local rural green spaces**

| Objectives | Indicative outputs | Indicative outcomes |
|---|---|---|
| Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities. This includes:<br><br>• community infrastructure<br><br>• local green space<br><br>• community led projects | • Amount of green or blue space created or improved | • Increased visitor numbers |

**Example Projects**

Capital grants to establish or enhance rural green and blue infrastructure including:

• community gardens

• green spaces

• watercourses and embankments

• greening of streets and paths

• incorporating natural features into wider public spaces

**Funding (capital grants) for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups**

| Objectives | Indicative outputs | Indicative outcomes |
|---|---|---|
| Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities. This includes:<br><br>• community infrastructure<br><br>• local green space<br><br>• community-led projects | • Number of amenities/facilities created or improved (Number of amenities or facilities) | |

**Example Projects**

Capital grants for provision of net zero infrastructure for rural communities and to support rural tourism activity, for example:

• EV charging points

• community energy schemes such as scaled up biomass, heat pumps or solar

• Capital grants for kitchens in community hubs which are capable of supporting food and drink entrepreneurs to get accreditation for food production.

Funding for resilience infrastructure and nature-based solutions that protect local businesses and community areas from natural hazards including flooding and coastal erosion.

**Funding (capital grants) for active travel enhancements in the local area**

| Objectives | Indicative outputs | Indicative outcomes |
|---|---|---|
| Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities. This includes:<br><br>• community infrastructure<br><br>• local green space<br><br>• community-led projects | • Total length of new or improved cycle ways or foot paths (KM) | • Increased use of cycleways or foot paths (Number of cyclists or pedestrians) |

**Example Projects**

- Creation of new footpaths and cycle paths, particularly in areas of health need.
- Upgrading of existing footpaths and cycle paths, particularly in areas of health need.

**How does your project demonstrate value for money?**

Please refer to 3.3 below.

**How does your project demonstrate additionality?**

This is the extent to which something happens as a result of the intervention that would not have occurred in the absence of the intervention.

**What are your project's impacts on natural assets and nature?**

You should consider how your project contributes to net zero and nature recovery objectives. These include:

- the UK's commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050
- wider environmental considerations, such as resilience to natural hazards
- the 25 Year Environment Plan commitments

At a minimum, you need to consider your project's impact on our natural assets and nature.

**Meeting the expected outputs and outcomes**

What are the expected outputs and outcomes of the project and how will they both be measured?  Please include details of your **baseline assessment.**

What are the expected outputs and outcomes of the project and how will they both be measured?  Please include details of your **baseline assessment** and how you will measure these**.**

Use these sections to explain to us what impact the project may have on your organisation.  Refer to the indicative outputs and outcomes above but please also tell us about the other outputs and outcomes that your project could include.  You should think of your own answer, however some examples include:

- An increase in income
- Increasing the number of customers or visitors
- Improving accessibility
- Increasing communities resilience to natural hazards, such as flooding

We report to government on UKSPF spend and outcomes and outputs and we will need you will need to produce a Monitoring and Evaluation report at the end of your project to provide information for this.

More information on UKSPF outputs and outcomes can be found at UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025-26: additional information - GOV.UK

**2.7    Delivery**

Project timescale:  How long do you expect your project to take from implementation to completion?  Include any key milestones or deadlines to meet if they are known.

Planned start date: You should tell us when you plan to start your project. This will usually mean when you plan to purchase the items with the grant funding. Remember that we are unable to fund anything that has been purchased prior to a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) being signed, and you will need to provide evidence that the items you use the grant for have not been purchased prior to this at the claim stage.

Estimated completion date: You should tell us here when you expect that your project will be complete.  **All projects must be completed by 31st January 2026.** Your project will be classed as 'complete' when you have paid for the items which have been approved for grant and the payment can be seen as being paid on a bank statement.  The items must have been received, installed and in working order prior to the claim form being submitted to Beford Borough Council.

**3.      How much will your project cost and how will it be funded?**

**3.1.    Total project costs and REPF funding request**

Complete the total project costs and the amount of REPF funding requested.  You must ensure that the total grant amount requested is applicable.

**3.2    Co-funding**

All applications will be considered however, the Council would like to support as many projects as possible with the funding available and it would, therefore, be favourable if co-funding has been obtained.  We would recommend that the UKSPF Grant provide up to 80% of the costs towards each item of expenditure in your application, with the remaining 20% of costs provided by 'co funding'.

This co-funding must be secured rather than awaiting confirmation, to be considered eligible.  Co-funding can be from a variety of difference sources; your organisation's current or savings account, other grant providers.  Acceptable evidence of co-funding includes; a copy of a bank statement or a grant agreement. The evidence you provide should include:

-   Where the funding is coming from (e.g. the bank)
-   How much is available (this must be a minimum amount required to complete your project)
-   Include the date it is available
-   Be clear that this funding is available for your organisation, (e.g. a letter of authorisation)

This co-funding must be secured rather than awaiting confirmation, to be considered eligible.  It cannot come from future sales turnover that you haven't yet generated or from the proceeds of a future transaction e.g. selling some equipment or land.

Complete the table in the application to tell us where your co-funding will be coming from, and how much is available.

### 3.3    Quotations

To complete this section, you will need to obtain the necessary quotes for each item that you wish to apply for grant funding towards.  All projects must comply with UKSPF procurement procedures. This includes three quotes for the purchase of any goods or services between the value of £2,500 and £25,000. We will request quotes prior to issuing a funding agreement and a minimum of one quote should be submitted with your application. For more information, please visit **UK Shared Prosperity Fund: procurement (8) (GOV.UK)**

The amount of funding you can apply for is capped for each scheme**.**

Remember these key points:

- We cannot provide a grant towards items that you have purchased before the date of the Agreement.
- You should provide quotes from different suppliers, independent to your organisation.
- Quotes must have details of the supplier, a full description of the items, VAT breakdown, and be dated within the past 3 months.
- Quotes should be 'like for like'.  If delivery charges are included in one quote, they should also be specified on the other(s).
- The grant can only fund items that have been purchased in full by the applicant, and therefore payments towards deposits or hire purchase are not eligible.

For each item that you wish to purchase using grant funding, complete the table using information from the quotes you have obtained.  You should label the table in the top row, and then complete each line as required.

The quote reference should be used to label each of the quotes you submit to us, so we can clearly see which quote relates to each item. Please make sure it is clear to us which quote relates to each item in your application**.**

You must tell us whether your organisation is registered for VAT.  We may ask you to provide evidence that your organisation is not VAT registered.

If your organisation is VAT registered, or VAT is recoverable from HMRC for another reason, you must **not** include VAT in your grant amount requested.

If your organisation is not VAT registered, you can include VAT in your grant amount requested.

Wherever possible we expect applicants to progress the best value quote – that means getting the best value on the market and so you are expected to use the cheapest supplier for each project item. Where a more expensive quote has been selected, you should provide sound justification as to why this is the most economically advantageous quote for your organisation.

If you are not able to provide the required number of quotes, you should contact **bedfordukspf@bedford.gov.uk** as soon as possible. In exceptional circumstances where it is clear that comparable quotes cannot be obtained for very specialist items, we will agree an alternative way to demonstrate value for money.

## 4.    Statutory consents

### 4.1.    Property ownership and permissions

Answer each question, to demonstrate that you have the permission and consent in place to carry out your project.

For leaseholders with less than 12 months left on the lease, we may ask you to contact your landlord to confirm that a further lease will be made available.

If you are undertaking works on a building that you are the leaseholder for, you must provide two pieces of evidence with your application:

- A copy of your tenancy or leasehold agreement
- A letter or email from the freeholder to confirm that the works are allowable. You should submit these with your Full Application.

Applicants must ensure that any necessary building/ planning or other statutory consents are obtained prior to commencing the project.

You must consider the planning process when assessing the timelines for your project.

If your application involves changing the use of a building, or eligible building works, you should provide a letter or email from the Local Planning Authority to confirm that planning permission is not required for the works.  If you are doing any works to a Listed Building, you must provide a copy of the Listed Building Consent for the works.

## 5.    Declarations

**Data protection**

By submitting this application form, you are consenting to any Personal Data collected being processed by Bedford Borough Council and shared with partners involved in the delivery of UKSPF and REPF. The Personal Data will be held for the purposes of contacting applicants and assessing forthcoming applications.

**UK subsidy control**

Information about grants or subsidies that your organisation has already received or is in the process of applying for is required to calculate whether your organisation is within the legally allowable thresholds of Subsidy Control (previously known as State Aid).

Please also note that according to Minimal Financial Assistance regulation, standalone subsidies up to the value of £315,000 are exempt from having to meet the subsidy control requirements. However, if an individual organisation's total subsidy receipts exceed £315,000 over a period of three financial years, the exemption no longer applies, and the relevant subsidies must be assessed against the subsidy control principles. Recipient organisations must inform the Council if this £315,000 threshold is due to be exceeded.   Further information is available here, via the Government website.

You should reconfirm at this section whether you have applied for or been awarded any additional grants or subsidy.  If you answer 'yes' to this question, please ensure that you provide further details of the awarded/applied for grants with your application.

**Fraud statement**

Please read this section and make sure that you are in agreement with and can meet the requirements set out in it.

The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud. Any organisations caught falsifying their records to gain additional grant money will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to claw back as may any grants paid in error.

**Declaration by the applicant**

The declaration must be signed by a person an appropriately authorised individual.

You should sign using your hand signature, using ink. The declaration page should be scanned or photographed and sent electronically with your application.

By submitting the application you will be agreeing to the declaration.

**6.     Supporting Documents Checklist**

You must tick each box in the checklist to confirm that it has been provided, or type N/A.  There is a comments box for you to provide an explanation if necessary.  If we don't receive all of the supporting documents required for your project, we won't be able assess it, and it may be automatically rejected.  Please make sure that your supporting documents meet the following requirements:

| Document | Requirements |
|---|---|
| Required number quotes or on-line listings for each item you are purchasing. | Refer to section 3.3 above to confirm the detail needed on each quote. <br><br> Please note that any attempt to provide false or misleading information will result in your grant being rejected, or clawback of the grant. |
| A copy of the most recent financial accounts for the applicant organisation. | We require the most recent set of full audited or unaudited accounts. |
| Confirmation and evidence of co-funding. | See requirements in section 3.2 of guidance. |
| If your project involves eligible building works or change of use, ensure you include <br><br> Evidence of planning permission <br><br> Listed Building Consent <br><br> Tenancy/leasehold agreement (if applicable) <br><br> Confirmation that works can be undertaken on the property from the freeholder. | If you are undertaking any refurbishment or works that require planning permission, please provide a full copy of the Full Planning Permission. <br><br><br> If you have a tenancy, and are undertaking building works, please provide a copy of your tenancy agreement and a letter or email from the freeholder confirming that these works are agreed. |

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**1      What is the Rural England Prosperity Fund?**

Some local authorities have been eligible for funding from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). This fund is a top-up to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support activities that specifically address the particular challenges faced by rural areas.

**2      What community grants are available in Bedford Borough under REPF?**

Bedford Borough Council has identified the following priority for supporting rural community organisations and will offer grants to fund projects in this area**:**

**Table 1 – REPF Grant Schemes**

| Grant scheme and allocation (£) | Grant range |
|---|---|
| Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups (£40,000) | Minimum grant £5000<br><br>Maximum grant £30,000 |
| Impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital (£10,000) | Minimum grant £500<br><br>Maximum grant £5,000 |
| Creation and improvements to local rural green spaces (£15,675) | Minimum grant £500<br><br>Maximum grant £5,000 |
| Active travel enhancements in the local area (£70,000) | Minimum grant £5000<br><br>Maximum grant £20,000 |

REPF funding is for **capital investment only**. This means that it must be spent on assets such as a building or equipment which are expected to be used for a period of at least one year.

**3.      How much funding is available?**

The minimum amount and maximum amount for each grant scheme is given in Table 1 above.

**4.    When will I receive payment of the grant?**

Grants will be paid in arrears. This means you will need to make the purchase before you receive the grant money. You will need to provide us with proof of purchase/payment to enable us to pay you the grant funding. Payment will be made once all of your purchases are complete and you have submitted an official claim form to Bedford Borough Council with evidence that your approved items have been purchased, received, installed and are in working order.  A Monitoring and Evaluation Report on the outputs and outcomes of your project will be required.

**5.    What will the REPF grant fund?**

Grants may only be made for capital projects.  This means that they must be spent on assets such as a building or equipment which are expected to be used for a period of at least one year.  This may include enhancements to existing assets which:

- Significantly lengthen the life of the asset.
- Significantly increase the value of the asset.
- Significantly increase usefulness of the asset.
- You can use the grant to purchase new or, in some circumstances, second hand equipment or machinery.
- Items purchased using the grant must be kept for a minimum of 5 years.  If disposal or sale is needed within 5 years of receipt of the grant, permission must be sought from Bedford Borough Council.

The grant cannot be used for the following:

- Minor repairs and routine maintenance.
- Funding domestic property improvements or to buy private vehicles.
- Revenue costs such as running costs, commissioning advice, design and project management costs for any projects, or promotional activities.
- Costs that have already been incurred by the organisation. Costs that are incurred before the date of the Grant Funding Agreement are not eligible. You must not purchase any items you wish the grant to fund, until you have agreed the Grant Funding Agreement that confirms the terms and conditions on which the grant is issued.
- Reclaimable VAT

**6.    How will Bedford Borough Council decide whether I can have a grant?**

Applications will be reviewed using assessment criteria. There are checks that we must complete to ensure that grant funding is only being given to legitimate organisations and is for projects that meet the objectives of the REPF grant.  Only applicants that meet the criteria, including the below, may be offered grant funding:

a)  Rural location

The organisation must be based in an eligible rural area.

For REPF purposes, rural areas are:

- towns, villages and hamlets with populations below 10,000 and the wider countryside
- market or 'hub towns' with populations of up to 30,000 that serve their surrounding rural areas as centres of employment and in providing services

To see whether you are located within an eligible area for REPF, open the link to DEFRA's Magic Map and follow the instructions below:

1. DEFRA Map to show REPF eligible areas: Magic Map Application

2. Under 'Table of Contents' select 'Administrative Geographies' then 'Other Administrative Boundaries' then select 'Rural England Prosperity Fund'

3. Search for the location by entering the postcode within the search bar (top left of page) or manually zoom in on a location.

4.  You will find a toolbar of icons above the map. Select the 'Identify' icon and click on the location of your project on the map. A pop-up box will appear notifying you if the area is considered rural for the purposes of REPF.

b)  Capital projects.

The grant can only be used to fund capital projects. This means that they must be spent on assets such as a building or equipment which are expected to be used for a period of at least one year.  This may include enhancements to existing assets which:

- Significantly lengthen the life of the asset.

- Significantly increase the value of the asset.

- Significantly increase usefulness of the asset.

c)  Timescales

The project is achievable within the timescales of the grant.

d)  The organisation has the capacity, resources and capability to deliver the proposed project and has a robust plan which demonstrates the viability and success of the project.

e) The application is within the grant threshold and any co-funding has been confirmed.

f) It will not include minor repairs and routine maintenance. Grant recipients cannot use grants to fund domestic property improvements or to buy private vehicles. Grant recipients cannot spend grants on revenue costs such as running costs, commissioning advice, design and project management costs for any projects, or promotional activities.

   Costs that are incurred before the date of the Grant Funding Agreement are not eligible. You must not purchase any items you wish the grant to fund, until you have agreed the Grant Funding Agreement that confirms the terms and conditions on which the grant is issued.

   If your organisation is VAT registered, or VAT is recoverable from HMRC for another reason, you must **not** include VAT in your grant amount requested.

g) Supporting documents

   All required supporting documents are submitted with the application, including 3 quotes for each item to be purchased.

h) Legitimacy

   Completion of checks to ensure the legitimacy of the organisation, and suppliers of quotes.

i) The applicant has demonstrated value for money, additionality and considered net zero and nature recovery. Priority will be given to projects that deliver greatest economic, environmental and social benefits.

j) Consents

   All necessary consents required for the project are in place.

k) REPF grant scheme

   The project clearly meets the criteria of the REPF grant scheme and can demonstrate this clearly.

l) There is a specific exclusion for REPF funding that it cannot be used to support projects that have received funding from other DEFRA schemes, including the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme, the Farming Investment Fund or the Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund.

The initial assessment of each application will be undertaken by a Bedford Borough Council Officer. Applications will be reviewed and approved or rejected by a Grant Panel.

**7.     What is a Grant Funding Agreement?**

A Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) is an agreement that sets out the terms of the grant that the recipient organisation must adhere too.  Successful applicants who are offered a grant will need to follow the terms of the GFA. This will include the requirements for the **installation of a plaque** at a location readily visible to the public, bearing the appropriate UK government logos, project name and standardised text.

**8.     How can I find out what is happening with my application?**

There is no need to make contact with the Council about your application. Applicants will be advised by email if their application has been successful or not as soon as a decision has been made.

**9.     I have not been awarded a grant – what can I do?**

There is no automatic right to a Grant, and not all applications will be successful. There are a number of reasons why the application may be unsuccessful. Applicants will receive email confirmation if their application is unsuccessful, which the Council will briefly outline why they have not been awarded a grant.

The decision of the Council is final and there is no right of appeal.

**Appendix 1: Assessment Criteria of the REPF Grants**

Your application will be assessed to confirm that it meets all the criteria of the scheme, as detailed in the FAQs. Successful applicants will have demonstrated that they are eligible under three headlines:

- Organisation Criteria

- Funding and Eligibility of expenditure

- The project meets the objectives of the selected grant scheme.

The full criteria for each of these headlines are set out below.

**Organisation criteria**

| Criteria | How we assess this |
|---|---|
| Your organisation is located in Bedford Borough | Confirmation of location |
| The project is located in a rural area (towns, villages and hamlets with populations below 10,000 and the wider countryside<br><br>market or 'hub towns' with populations of up to 30,000 that serve their surrounding rural areas as centres of employment and in providing services). | Reference to DEFRA's Magic Map |
| Organisation is not in administration, insolvent, in receipt of a striking-off notice or under investigation for fraudulent activities | Declared by the applicant. Subsequent checks may be undertaken by Bedford Borough Council. |
| The organisation has an active bank account. | A copy of a recent bank statement is provided by the applicant, showing an active bank account for the organisation. |
| The organisation has up to date policies and procedures as listed on the application form | Declared by the applicant. Subsequent checks may be undertaken by Bedford Borough Council |

| | |
|---|---|
| Organisation has required insurances in place | Declared by the applicant. Subsequent checks may be undertaken by Bedford Borough Council |
| Receipt of other funding. | Declared by the applicant and subsidy assessment by Bedford Borough Council |
| Any commercial, financial, legal, professional or personal links to Bedford Borough Council or it's Councillors or Officers are listed | Declared by the applicant and assessed by Bedford Borough Council. |
| The applicant has a track record in delivering projects of this type, and receiving public sector funding | Assessment of information on application form |
| Applicant has the capacity, resources and capability necessary to deliver the project. | Assessment of information on application form |

**Costs and funding**

| Criteria | How we assess this |
|---|---|
| Items to be purchased and associated costs meet the requirements of the grant scheme and REPF | Assessment of information on application form |
| Meets the criteria set out in the FAQs, and in the guidance document. | Assessed against criteria given in FAQs and guidance. |
| 3 quotations have been supplied for each aspect of the project or has a clear explanation been supplied | Assessment of information on application form |
| Selection of preferred supplier | Assess information given on application form. |
| Is compliant with the Procurement requirements | Assess information given on application form. |
| REPF amount (£) requested meets the limits of the grant scheme | Assess information given on application form. |
| Co-funding secured to meet the remaining costs | Assess information given on application form. |
| Latest set of accounts provided | Assessment of information supplied |

**The project meets the priorities of REPF**

| Criteria | How we assess this |
| --- | --- |
| Project description clearly describes the activity and how well the project fits with the objectives of the grant scheme | Assessment of information on application form. |
| Would the project proceed, or only be delivered on a smaller scale without REPF? | Assessment of information on application form. |
| All proposed purchases clearly related to the proposed activity, eligible and proportionate to deliver the activity | Assessment of information on application form. |
| Value for money, additionality and positive impact on nature detailed on application | Assessment of information on application form. |
| Stated outputs and outcomes reflect the project activities and appear realistic and achievable | Assessment of information on application form. |
| Clear details of measurement of outputs and outcomes and baseline information | Assessment of information on application form. |
| Project can be delivered within set timeline, with project completed and report submitted by 31st January 2026. | Assessment of information on application form. |