

RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND
2022-2025

**Winchester District Rural England Prosperity Fund
Guidance 2024-25
Updated March 2024**

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About the Rural England Prosperity Fund

In September 2022 Government announced a top-up to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund with an additional grant allocation to local authorities under the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). Winchester City Council has been allocated £745,096 of funding to be spent on support for rural businesses and rural communities.

REPF funds **capital** projects for businesses and community infrastructure to help improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities, by enabling investment in **capital** projects and spend on lasting assets such as buildings or equipment.

Prospectus: [Rural England Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The Rural Fund provides capital funding to:

- support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy. This includes farm businesses looking to diversify income streams,
- support new and improved community infrastructure that helps provide essential community services and facilities for local people and businesses which benefit the local economy.

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Projects must be in a rural areas of Winchester district and 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:

- DEFRA Map to show REPF eligible areas: Magic Map Application
- Under 'Table of Contents' select 'Administrative Geographies' then 'Other Administrative Boundaries' then select 'Rural England Prosperity Fund'
- Search for the location by entering the postcode within the search bar (top left of page) or manually zoom in on a location
- 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

This means that the city centre (town wards) is excluded from this fund as well as areas around Whiteley.

Fund Information

We welcome applications for grant awards in the £15,000 to £40,000 range and encourage you to contact prosperity@winchester.gov.uk for a preliminary discussion, regardless of the size of your project. We are keen to support larger projects (over £40,000) so it is worth discussing your ideas with us if you feel they may be eligible

Opening Date: Sunday 10 March 2024

Closing Date: Friday 17 May 2024, 5pm

Applicants Notified: July 2024

- Any enquiries regarding the fund or submission of an application should be directed to prosperity@winchester.gov.uk
- This is a competitive fund for applications and applications will be assessed against the published evaluation criteria.
- Only one application can be made per organisation, per year.

Grant funding priorities

We are looking for businesses and community groups working on projects that align with the priorities outlined below. Most priorities are given a code (e.g: 1.1). These refer to Government "interventions" or areas of activity identified as eligible for funding. Projects can span more than one priority – e.g. micro-enterprise grants and cultural venue grants.

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REFP UKSPF
code code Project type

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH GRANTS – Combatting climate change and going green

1.1 Rural Business Grants

These are grants that help businesses to start-up, grow and diversify. Eligible beneficiaries might include, but are not limited to, landowners with unused buildings who are looking to make them energy efficient or to generate power through roof mounted solar PV installations. Installing electric vehicle charging points for delivery vans and finding new uses for land that help with climate change are also likely to be eligible projects.

Any business that needs equipment to grow, especially in the environmental sector, is welcome to apply.

Those that are reviving traditional skills such as blacksmithing or stonemasonry can apply for equipment and tools.

All rural businesses may be eligible for filters and insulation that reduce the sound, smell or dust created by their activity and lessen the environmental impact.

2.2 E11 Strengthening Local Communities

These grants are designed to help rural communities stick together and develop a sense of pride in where they live. Examples of eligible projects could include:

- Improving the fabric of a community building by installing insulation, double glazing, LED lighting etc
- Installing charging points for electric vehicles (EVs)
- Generating energy via the installation of solar panelling, ground source heat pumps etc
- Creation of flood defences
- Provision of equipment for community kitchens, pantries, men's sheds, allotments etc
- Development of a community energy scheme

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- 2.7** **Circular Economy Grants**
These are grants designed to support local initiatives to reduce waste by encouraging the reuse or recycling of unwanted materials such as timber, metal and textiles. An example could be a refurbished barn, complete with tools, used as a repair shop, men's shed, artists' co-working space or as an educational centre for training local residents to mend, forage or create. Storage for material and the creation of local scrap stores may also be eligible.
- 2.6** **E7** **Support for Active Travel Enhancements**
Private vehicle use is now estimated to cause 185 grams of CO2 emissions per mile. Staying active while we travel, by walking or cycling, reduces emissions and contributes to mental and physical fitness. These grants will fund the creation or improvement of footpaths and cycle paths as well as funding equipment such as bicycles, parking racks, ebike docking bays and safety barriers.

CULTURE AND TOURISM GRANTS

- 1.3** **E17** **Development and promotion (both trade and consumer) of the visitor economy**
Funding for new attractions, trails, experiences, signage etc
- 2.4** **E4** **Enhancing existing cultural, historic & heritage institutions**
Grants are available to improve the visitor experience and accessibility of galleries, theatres, museums, parks and gardens, cathedrals etc. Ramps, lifts, all-terrain wheelchairs, multilingual audio guides and improved signage are all examples of costs that could be eligible
- 2.5** **E6** **Cultural venue grants for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities**
The emphasis of this grant is on the venue as opposed to the visitor (2.4). The grant is for funding the creation of new venues and the refurbishment of existing ones e.g. the remodelling of a storeroom into additional exhibition or performance space.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

- 1.2** **E26** **Growing the local social economy**
This capital grant aims to support all stages of community business including start-ups. The awards are intended to fund infrastructure such as broadband and EV charging points, premises for community owned shops and equipment to showcase local food and drink products such as regional information display boards

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- 2.1 E15 Digital connectivity for community facilities**
This grant is designed to help rural residents to access faster Internet speeds at village halls, post offices, pubs and other buildings widely used by the community, by upgrading the broadband to gigabit capability. Projects must align with Project Gigabit.
- 2.8 E9 Impactful Volunteering and Social Action**
This grant will finance the purchase of equipment and improvements to premises that will enable volunteers to undertake charitable or social activities. An example might be the refurbishment of a refugee centre.

GREEN SPACES ENHANCEMENT

- 2.3 E3 Enhancing rural green and blue infrastructure**
These are capital grants to establish or improve community gardens, green spaces, watercourses and embankments, the provision of trees and plants along streets and paths and the incorporation of natural features into wider public spaces.

All projects must account for the ongoing maintenance costs and responsibility for this will remain with the asset owner. No asset liability shall be transferred to council as a consequence of any grant funding.

Eligibility - Who can apply

Any organisation with legal status can receive funding to deliver a REPF intervention. This may include:

- sole traders, freelancers
- businesses and social enterprises
- local authorities / Parish Councils,
- public sector organisations,
- higher and further education institutions,
- voluntary organisations and registered charities.

Organisations based outside the Winchester district can apply but all project activity, beneficiaries and outcomes must be delivered within the district.

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- Businesses are required to match fund their project following the scheme outlined in the table below.

Size of business	Description/criteria	Amount of match funding required
Sole trader/freelancer Social enterprise Community interest company	A self-employed person who owns and runs their own business as an individual. A business with specific social objectives among its primary purpose A special type of limited company that exists to benefit the community rather than private shareholders	None
	Under the Companies Act 2006 a business must satisfy two or more of the following requirements:	
Micro business	Turnover: not more than £632,000 Balance sheet total: not more than £316,000 Number of employees: a headcount of staff of not more than 10	10%
Small business	Turnover: not more than £10.2million Balance sheet total: not more than £5.1million Number of employees: a headcount of staff of less than 50	25%
Medium and large business	Turnover: not more than £36million Balance sheet total: not more than £18million Number of employees: a headcount of staff of less than 500	50%

- We will accept revenue as a match funding contribution
- All project spend must be completed by March 2025.

You cannot apply for funding for a project already being supported by Defra funding including:

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme
- The Farming Investment Fund
- The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund

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What we are unable to fund:

<i>Organisations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organisations whose main objective is to raise funds for other charitable organisations• Political organisations
<i>Activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local or national appeals and fundraising activities• Activities which are of a wholly and exclusively political or religious nature, or organisations supporting political activism• paid for lobbying, entertaining, petitioning or challenging decisions, which means using the Fund to lobby (via an external firm or in-house staff) in order to undertake activities intended to influence or attempt to influence Parliament, government or political activity including the receipt of UKSPF funding; or attempting to influence legislative or regulatory action• payments for activities of a party political or exclusively religious nature• VAT reclaimable from HMRC• gifts, or payments for gifts or donations• statutory fines, criminal fines or penalties• payments for works or activities which the lead local authority, project deliverer, end beneficiary, or any member of their partnership has a statutory duty to undertake, or that are fully funded by other sources• contingencies and contingent liabilities• dividends• bad debts, costs resulting from the deferral of payments to creditors, or winding up a company• expenses in respect of litigation, unfair dismissal or other compensation• costs incurred by individuals in setting up and contributing towards private pension schemes

Subsidy Control

You are required to consider the UK Subsidy Control Scheme as part of your application. [UK subsidy control regime - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-subsidy-control-regime)

Financial Sustainability

Applicants must be able to demonstrate the financial sustainability of their organisation. The council has the right to withdraw any offer of grant aid if, on scrutiny, it becomes apparent that the organisation is not sustainable.

To this end the council will undertake financial due diligence by carrying out a Dunn & Bradstreet check on the organisation making the application.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome in writing.

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Planning permissions and licences

Since this is a capital grant, designed to finance assets such as buildings and equipment, we are expecting to receive some applications for activities that may require permission. If you are unsure whether elements of your project may need approval, please check [here](#). The process of applying for planning consent can be lengthy and might affect your ability to complete your project by the end of March 2025. If your project requires planning consent, please do not apply for any grant under the Rural England Prosperity Fund until consent is granted.

Policies and Insurances

Organisations should have the relevant policies and permissions in place in order to operate, deliver projects and or provide their service. As a minimum this should include where applicable:

- a Adequate Third Party Public Liability and Employers' Liability Insurance
- b Data Protection Policy
- c Conflict of Interest Policy
- d Antislavery Policy
- e Anti-fraud Policy
- f Environmental Policy
- g Equality and Diversity Policy
- h Health and Safety Policy
- i Volunteer Policy
- j Safeguarding Policy

Organisations working with children, young people or vulnerable adults must have a robust protection policy in place and ensure that all active staff and volunteers have undertaken a DBS check. If you do not have one of these policies in place, you must provide us with an adequate reason, or a date which you commit to implementing the policy.

Delivery Timeline

Activity can start from April 2024 onwards, once a signed funding agreement is in place. We cannot retrospectively fund work that has already taken place. All financial project activity must end by March 2025. We reserve the right to amend this date if for example the government makes changes to the REPF programme.

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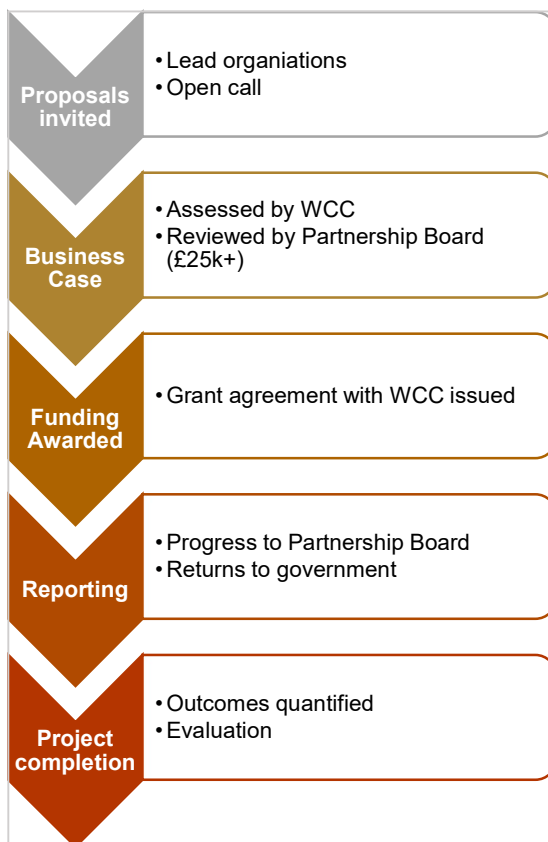
Submitting your application

Applications should be made via the official application form and submitted by the agreed deadline found [on our website](#).

We use an online system called Flexigrant to manage the grant application process. You will need to register with Flexigrant if you have not made a previous application with Winchester City Council. Guidance is available alongside the questions, but if you require any additional support please contact prosperity@winchester.gov.uk.

Evaluation and Grant Award Process

Grants application and approval process for projects



This is a competitive fund and each application will be assessed and scored against the grant eligibility and criteria by a panel of Officers.

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Additionally, applications for funding over £25,000 will be reviewed by the Partnership Board.

At the time the application is submitted, to enable the Council to assess applications fully, all sections must be completed with all the information you wish considered together with all the documents requested. There will not be a further opportunity to provide additional details.

There are a number of pass or fail questions in the application form. If any of these are scored as a fail, the application will not be considered any further. In addition to these the application will be tested against the criteria outlined below and considered either acceptable or unacceptable, In the instance that the assessment is deemed unacceptable the application will not be considered any further.

The Council's decisions with regards to funding are discretionary and no appeals process is available.

Successful applicants will be required to sign a grant funding agreement with Winchester City Council. An example of the grant agreement is published on our website.

Applicants must be ready to start delivery immediately after signing the funding agreement.

All applications will be assessed and evaluated using a consistent approach and scored against the criteria set out below:

Assessment Area	Responses to the following questions will be considered	Scoring weighting
Achievement of fund priorities, outputs and outcomes	4.1 Project Details 4.2 Project Impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiaries • Equality & diversity • Sustainability 4.3 Outputs and Outcomes	50%
Deliverability	4.4 Project Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dates & milestones • Experience & capacity • Risks 	20%
Monitoring and Evaluation	4.5 Monitoring & Evaluation	10%
Funding	5.1 Project costs 5.1 Finance Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value for money & affordability 	20%

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Score	Each assessment area will be scored in accordance with the following scoring model.
5 – Excellent	The response exceeds the required standard, answers the area of assessment with precision and relevance, and adds value and innovation as appropriate. Exceptional demonstration by the applicant of the relevant ability, understanding, skills, and quality measures required to provide meet the requirements of the fund. Strong evidence to support the proposal is provided, where appropriate.
4 – Good	The response meets the required standard, answers the areas of assessment fully and with relevance. Good demonstration by the applicant of the relevant ability, understanding, skills, and quality measures required to meet the requirements of the fund. Good evidence to support the proposal, where appropriate.
3 – Satisfactory	The response meets the minimum required standard in an acceptable level of detail. Satisfactory demonstration by the applicant of the relevant ability, understanding, skills and quality measures required to meet the requirements of the fund. Standard or generic evidence is provided to support the proposal, where appropriate.
2 – Minor Reservations	The response partially meets the minimum required standard and relevance but with some detail missing or not answered. Contains minor shortcomings in the demonstration by the applicant of the relevant ability, understanding, skills and quality measures required to deliver the requirements of the fund. Limited evidence is provided to support the response, where appropriate.
1 – Serious Reservations	The response fails to meet the minimum required standard. Inadequate detail is provided, which is not relevant to the requirements of the area of assessment or there are significant omissions meaning there are considerable reservations of the applicant’s relevant ability, understanding, skills, and quality measures required to meet the requirements of the fund. Little or no evidence to support the response is provided and raises many concerns.
0 – no score – Fail	Applications that ‘Fail’ will not be considered further No response or information is provided to allow proper evaluation, ability is not evidenced.

The council reserves the right to reject the application entirely if it receives scores of ‘2 - minor reservations’ or ‘1’ – serious reservations’.

Payments

The grant will be paid to you in arrears upon receipt of proof of defrayal (payments), an updated output and outcome report, and a project narrative. This will all be managed through the same online system that manages your application. Claims can be made on a quarterly basis, with a maximum of three staged payments. Final claims should be received no later than 10 March 2025.

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Reporting Requirements

Applicants must ensure that governance is in place to achieve the reporting requirements of the fund, including expenditure, outputs and outcomes. Applicants will be expected to submit reports on the following dates. These are subject to change:

1st October 2024

2nd January 2025

1st April 2025

The REPF also requires all projects to be reported to the WTO – this will be included in the reporting form and will not be a separate requirement.

Publicity

Applicants must adhere to the published branding and marketing requirements of Rural England Prosperity Fund which will be included in contract information.

Procurement

All grant spend must follow the below Procurement guidance. Any costs not following this guidance will not be permitted.		
Minimum procedure	Minimum procedure	
Obtain single verbal or written quotation, or use suitable framework agreement	£0 - £2,499	Direct award
Determine the evaluation criteria and model Invite a minimum of three written quotations	£2,500 - £24,999	3 written quotations or prices sought from relevant suppliers of goods, works and / or services

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All grant spend must follow the below Procurement guidance. Any costs not following this guidance will not be permitted.		
Minimum procedure	Minimum procedure	
Formal competitive tenders have been invited either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by Public Invitation to Tender (Open Tender) 	Over £25,000	Formal tender process