

SURREY BUSINESS GROWTH GRANT

Guidance Handbook

We know applying for funding can be daunting - this handbook is designed to make that process as clear and supportive as possible - helping you understand what we're looking for and how to give your application the best chance of success.

1 Purpose of the Business Growth Grant

The Business Growth Grant supports local economic growth and job creation in Surrey. It helps small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) expand through investment in:

- New equipment or technology
- Product or service development
- Workforce training and upskilling

The grant is part of the wider Surrey Economic Growth Fund, which brings together national and local investment to boost productivity, innovation, and skills development across the county.

2 Economic Growth

For the purpose of this grant, economic growth means activities that enable Surrey-based businesses to expand, innovate, and contribute positively to the local economy. Projects should be designed to deliver tangible benefits for both the business itself and the wider county.

Economic growth projects:

- **Create new jobs** – generating genuine additional employment opportunities for Surrey residents.
- **Improve productivity** - helping businesses to operate more efficiently and increase output.
- **Enable innovation** - developing new products, services, or processes that enhance competitiveness.
- **Support workforce skills** - providing training and upskilling opportunities to strengthen employee capability.
- **Leverage investment** - bringing in match funding or private investment to add value to public funding.
- **Benefit the local economy** - strengthening Surrey's business base and contributing to sustainable growth.
- **Build resilience and sustainability** - ensuring businesses are better placed to adapt to future challenges and opportunities.

We expect applicants to show clearly **how their project delivers growth outcomes** such as

measurable increases in employment, turnover, productivity, or skills development.

3 Eligibility Checklist

Applicants must:

- Be a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) based in Surrey.
- Propose a project focused on business growth, creating measurable economic benefits.
- Secure match funding (the grant covers a maximum of 50% of eligible costs).
- Have not exceeded the £315,000 Minimal Financial Assistance limit across 2022–2025.

 Eligible	 Not eligible
New machinery, technology, or equipment.	Solely covering day-to-day running costs.
Research, design, product development.	Repaying debts/ hire purchase agreements.
Workforce training.	Replacing existing funding streams.
Expansion activities leading to job creation.	Projects with no clear growth or job creation outcomes.

4 Funding available

- Grant size: £10,000–£75,000.
- Match funding required: Grant covers 50% of eligible project costs. This approach ensures public funds are only released against verified expenditure - protecting both you and the Council. It also demonstrates your commitment to the project and strengthens your case for investment.
- Example: If your project costs **£40,000**, you may request **£20,000**, with **£20,000** match funding secured.

5 Successful Applicants

Grant recipients are expected to:

- Publicise support received (acknowledging Surrey County Council).
- Share case studies or project outcomes upon request.
- Participate in evaluation and monitoring activities to demonstrate impact.

6 Key Tips

- **Be specific:** Quantify jobs, turnover, and outputs.
- **Be realistic:** Overambitious claims weaken applications.
- **Avoid duplication:** Each section has a distinct focus.
- **Provide evidence:** Back up claims with data or letters of support.
- **Check eligibility:** Ensure you meet SME and funding rules.

7 What requirements are there to mitigate risk on the part of Recipients?

Applicants must demonstrate that the proposed project and match-funding arrangements will not place the business under financial strain or create commercial risk. The assessment will consider the organisation's overall financial health and its capacity to deliver the project without jeopardising day-to-day operations.

To mitigate risk, applicants should confirm that:

- The business has sufficient working capital and reserves beyond the amount ring-fenced for match-funding.
- The project will not be financed through hire purchase, loans, or other debt instruments that could compromise business stability.
- The business can continue to meet existing financial obligations and maintain normal operations during the project period.
- The investment has been reviewed by senior management or directors as being financially sustainable and proportionate to business size.
- Evidence (e.g. recent management accounts or bank statements) can be provided on request to demonstrate financial viability.
- Surrey County Council reserves the right to request additional financial information to ensure that the project poses no undue financial or commercial risk to the applicant or to public funds.

8 How will funding awards be determined?

It is important to note that in undertaking the evaluation, each evaluator will consider the level of funding you are requesting, as well as the tangible impact your proposal will have. In practice, this will mean that bidders seeking more funding will need to demonstrate greater impact than those who are requesting less funding.

Surrey County Council reserves the right to make partial grant awards to bidders, where there are a range of similar grant applications.

9 How do I apply for funding?

To apply for this grant funding, you must submit a completed application via the Business Surrey website.

If you have any questions about the grant process or the details in these guidance notes, please email: growth.fund@surreycc.gov.uk. Whilst we will aim to respond as quickly as possible to any questions received, please plan around a minimum of three working days for a response.

10 How will delivery be measured and monitored?

Project delivery will be monitored against the outputs and outcomes identified in the application form. These indicators will form the foundation for measuring progress and impact, although specific targets may be refined in consultation with the Surrey County Council team to ensure that all Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are realistic, relevant, and achievable.

Monitoring will take place throughout the delivery period and may include regular email updates, virtual check-ins, and on-site visits. Milestones and key project activities will be reviewed to confirm that delivery is on track and that the grant is being used as intended.

All successful applicants will be assigned an Account Manager and invited to an introductory virtual meeting to discuss reporting requirements, documentation, and next steps in detail.

11 How will Grant funding be paid?

Grant funding will be released in a series of instalments, typically across two to three payment stages, aligned with key project milestones.

Payments will be made in arrears and only after the necessary evidence of expenditure has been submitted and approved. Applicants will be required to provide quotes and supporting documentation prior to making any purchases, ensuring all costs are eligible and in line with the approved project budget.

Detailed payment schedules and evidence requirements will be confirmed in the Funding Agreement issued to successful applicants.

12 Timeline

1. BGG (Round Two) opens 10th October 2025
2. BGG (Round Two) closes at 11:59 16th November 2025
3. All final decisions will have been made by the Investment Panel by 12th December 2025
4. Successful applicants will receive Award Letters and next steps by 19th December 2025

13 Your Application

The table below is designed to help you understand the focus of each section in the application and how the questions differ from one another. Use it as a guide to ensure your answers are clear, focused, and cover all aspects of your project without unnecessary overlap.

Section	Main Focus	Pitfalls to Avoid
Strategic Fit	Alignment with Surrey's priorities (skills, business growth, infrastructure); clear problem/opportunity; measurable benefits to Surrey's economy (jobs, supply chains, productivity, skills).	Too generic ("will help Surrey's economy" with no specifics); benefits only to the business with no wider link; repeating outputs instead of explaining fit with Surrey strategy.

Innovation & Unlocking Growth	Novelty or significant improvement in product/service/process; strengthens competitiveness or opens new markets; evidence of R&D, trials, or partnerships.	Describing “business as usual”; vague claims of innovation with no detail; overclaiming novelty that isn’t substantiated; confusing efficiency improvements with genuine growth unlock.
Expected Benefits – Outputs/Outcomes	Realistic, measurable forecasts (jobs, turnover, new markets, carbon reduction); forecasts consistent with project scale.	Overinflated numbers not credible for grant size; leaving sections blank; double counting outputs; focusing only on narrative with no numbers.
Expected Benefits – Qualitative Summary	Explanation of how outputs make a difference; evidence of sustainability and monitoring; legacy beyond the grant.	Failing to explain <i>how</i> benefits will last; not addressing monitoring/evaluation.
Expenditure & Payment Schedule	Detailed breakdown of costs; clear link to project activities; match funding identified; timings aligned with milestones.	Costs listed without explanation; grant request not matching eligible items; missing match-funding evidence; unrealistic timings.
Public Investment / Need for Funding	Case for public investment; urgency and timing; why alternative funding is not sufficient; wider community/social/environmental impact.	Weak justification (“we’d like help”); no explanation of funding gap; ignoring wider value beyond profit.
Project Viability	Skills and experience of project lead/team; realistic delivery approach; credible finances; evidence of demand (letters, surveys, customer data).	Overly vague on who will deliver; no evidence of demand; unrealistic or incomplete financials; ignoring long-term sustainability.
Deliverability	Clear project plan with start/end dates; milestones; risk management; monitoring and evaluation approach.	No timeline; ignoring risks; claiming “no risks”; unrealistic milestones; no evidence of readiness (permissions, procurement).

14 Annex

The application questions are provided below for your reference. Please note that the online application form is divided into sections, and you must complete each section before moving on to the next.

a. Proposal project summary

b. Estimated project cost and funding request

- a. Total estimated project cost
- b. Amount of grant funding requested (max 50% of costs up to £75,000)

c. Project timeline

- a. Expected start date
- b. Expected completion date

d. Strategic fit

- a. Explain how your project will benefit both your business and Surrey's wider economy. *A strong answer will focus on specifics and evidence. We're looking for clear links between what you plan to do, how it will help your business, and how that in turn benefits Surrey's economy (either directly or indirectly).*
 - i. Guiding Prompts:
 1. What problem or opportunity is your project addressing?
 2. How will it help your business grow (e.g. jobs, turnover, innovation, efficiency)?
 3. How will it add value to Surrey's economy (e.g. supporting local supply chains, boosting productivity, creating skills or employment)?
 4. Will your project support other businesses, industries, or Surrey residents?

e. Innovation and unlocking growth

- a. Tell us what would be new, significantly improved, or unlocked because of your project – whether in product, service, process, business model or capacity – and how it creates value. *A strong answer will clearly explain how your project strengthens your business and competitiveness or opens new opportunities, and why the change is meaningful for your business growth.*
 - i. Guiding Prompts:
 1. Is this a new product, service or way of working you didn't have before?
 2. How will it improve your offer, competitiveness or ability to grow?
 3. Are you building on any R&D, partnerships or trials?

f. Expected Benefits

- a. Please describe the outputs, outcomes, and overall benefits your project will deliver, providing forecast figures where possible. Include the tangible results you expect to achieve.
 - i. This can include:
 1. jobs created
 2. existing jobs safeguarded
 3. new products or services introduced
 4. premises improved or developed
 5. reduction in carbon emissions (%)
 6. economically inactive people supported into employment or education
 7. increase in turnover or productivity (%/£)
 8. new markets entered (UK or international)).
- b. Explain the practical difference your project will make, how you will measure success, and how the benefits will be sustained beyond the life of the project.

g. Need for funding

- a. Demonstrate why public investment is essential for your project. Explain the problem you are addressing, why the project cannot proceed without grant funding, and why now is the right time. *A strong answer will clearly show the urgency and necessity of public funding, explain why alternative funding is insufficient or unavailable.*
 - i. Guiding Prompts:
 1. Why is this the right time for support?
 2. Why can't you fully fund this project yourself or through other funding routes?
 3. What will happen if you don't receive this grant?
 4. What wider value does your project bring beyond just business profit (e.g. social, environmental, community, or economic impact)?

h. Project viability

- a. Help us to understand if your project is ready and achievable. *A strong answer will demonstrate that your team has the skills and experience to deliver, that your delivery approach is realistic and sustainable, that the financial plan is credible, and that there is clear evidence of demand or need. Do not focus on timelines or detail risk management here, which will be addressed in the next section.*

i. Guiding Prompts:

1. Project lead & team: Who is responsible, and what experience and skills make them capable of delivering this project?
2. Delivery model: How will the project operate, and how will it be sustained beyond the grant?
3. Financial summary: What is the total cost, what are your funding sources, and are there any conditions attached?
4. Demand evidence: What proof do you have that there is a market interest or a genuine need for this project (e.g. surveys, letters of support, customer data)?

i. Payment schedule and deliverability

- a. Please provide an indication of your project costs, funding sources, and delivery plan. *This section should demonstrate that your project is both financially viable and realistically deliverable. Strong answers will include clear milestones, timelines, and risk management strategies.*
 - i. Include the following details:
 1. Expenditure and Payment Schedule – provide a schedule with expected payment dates for key purchases or expenses. Indicate, where possible, which elements will be covered by grant funding and which by match funding.
 2. Readiness and Dependencies – explain what permissions, procurement processes, or other prerequisites are already in place – or still needed – before delivery can begin.
 3. Risk Management – identify the main risks to project delivery (e.g. delays, supplier availability, cost changes) and describe how you will manage or mitigate these risks.
 4. Monitoring and Evaluation – detail how you will track progress, monitor expenditure, and measure success throughout the project.