

Vale Business Start-Up and Early Growth Bursary: Guidance Notes



The Vale of Glamorgan Council is committed to supporting economic development and businesses across the county and has secured funding to deliver the Vale Business Start-Up and Early Growth Bursary, funded by the UK Government via the Local Growth Fund.

The bursary supports individuals, groups, and very early-stage businesses to start or grow a business in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Strategic Fit to Vale of Glamorgan's Regeneration Programme

The Vale of Glamorgan Council is committed to supporting economic development and businesses across the county and has secured funding to deliver the Vale Business Start-Up and Early Growth Bursary, funded by the UK Government via the Local Growth Fund.

This bursary supports that ambition by enabling entrepreneurship, innovation and business growth, supporting community resilience, and creating opportunities, contributing to long-term prosperity and wellbeing within the Vale.

Supporting Business Growth and Productivity

The Council recognises the important role that high-growth businesses play in driving employment, productivity, and economic growth. This scheme places a clear emphasis on supporting businesses with high growth potential. This is defined as businesses demonstrating the potential to achieve around 20% year-on-year growth in turnover and creating at least 1 full-time equivalent (FTE) job within 12 months of trading following receipt of the grant.

Priority sectors include:

- Advanced Materials and Manufacturing (including food manufacturing)
- Compound Semiconductors
- Construction
- Creative
- FinTech
- Human Foundation Economy: (Education, Health, Social Care, Childcare & Emergency Services (excluding statutory services))
- Human Foundation Economy: (Hospitality, Retail & Tourism)

The above sectors will be given precedence when reviewing applications.

Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis subject to their potential contribution and value to the local economy.



Application Window

The grant will be open for applications between the 7 July and 31 October 2026 (or until funding is allocated).

Claims must be submitted within 4 months of the offer letter or by 19 February 2027 (**whichever is the earliest date**).

Amount of Bursary Award

Up to £7,500 (max. 80% of project costs). Applicants must contribute 20%. Please see working examples below:

- *Example 1: Total Project Cost: £4,500 attracts a bursary award of £3,600 with the remaining £900 to be met by the applicant*
- *Example 2: Total Project Cost £9,375 attracts a maximum bursary award of £7,500 with the remaining £1,875 to be met by the applicant*

Please note that project costs exceeding £9,375 will attract the maximum bursary of £7,500. Any excess cost is to be funded by the applicant.

General Principles

- Clear need for funding demonstrated and barriers identified
- Measurable outcomes
- Evidence of market gap
- Credible and viable business plan, supported by a 2-year cash-flow projection
- Growth potential
- Alignment with Council priorities.

Who can apply?

You can apply for a Vale Business Start-up Bursary and Early Growth Bursary if:

- You have an idea for a business or community enterprise, or are an early-stage business (up to 2 years trading), and need support to implement or grow it
- You are aged 18+ and eligible to work in the UK
- You are a resident in the Vale of Glamorgan and are listed on the current electoral register
- Applicants wishing to relocate to the Vale of Glamorgan can apply for a bursary beforehand, but will not have access to the funding until documentary evidence is provided to confirm that the relocation has taken place
- There is a firm commitment to business development. Businesses may begin on a part-time basis; however, applicants must demonstrate a clear and credible plan to transition to full-time trading within 12 months, or demonstrate equivalent growth in business activity. You have a viable business plan and cash flow to support your idea
- The bursary would be essential in order to start the business, and you would not be able to launch your business without the equipment or services that any bursary award would support
- There is no other source of money available to fund the equipment/services you have applied for
- The business may be a new start-up (pre-trading) OR an early-stage business, trading established not before the 1 April 2024
- For existing businesses, applicants must demonstrate that:
 - The funding will support a **significant step-change in growth of 20% increase in revenue**, and
 - The proposal is not for business-as-usual activity
- Taking an existing business over is not permitted and will not be considered

If already trading, the applicant must provide:

- A clear growth plan showing how the bursary will accelerate business development by at least a 20 % increase in revenue or equivalent, supported by a 2-year cash flow projection
- If your intended business is to be set up as a limited company, records held at Companies House must show the registered address of the business to be located within the Vale of Glamorgan, and at least one listed Director must reside within the Vale of Glamorgan
- **Those who have previously run a business can apply**, but first-time entrepreneurs will be given priority. Evidence for all applicants will be required to show that your new business idea is fundamentally different to previous business commitments in terms of its overall value proposition and target market
- Previous recipients of the Vale Start-up Bursary (grant received since 2022) cannot apply for another new start-up grant, but can apply for further support if they meet the early growth eligibility criteria.
- You agree to provide evidence that any bursary awarded has been used for the approved purpose
- You must inform us of any other grants or funding you are applying for when you make your application to us.
- Priority will be given to businesses demonstrating strong growth potential,

Who cannot apply?

The Vale Business Start Up and Early Growth Bursary rules prohibit the following from applying:

- Those who are outside the geographical limits noted above
- Anyone with start up costs exceeding £25,000
- Statutory bodies
- Businesses with charitable fundraising as their focus
- Applicants without a legal right to work in the UK
- Political groups
- Those not willing to commit themselves to equality of opportunity in respect of language, race, sex, sexual orientation, creed or, as far as practicable, disability
- Businesses that have been trading for more than 2 years
- Businesses where the application relates only to maintaining current operations rather than supporting growth or expansion
- Any business where there are ethical or reputational considerations. For example: gambling, weapons manufacture, unsustainable wood, money lending, adult entertainment, tobacco products or cannabis products not authorised as medicines, debt factoring, hire purchase financing, pyramid schemes, projects focused on the promotion of political or religious views or illegal or immoral activities.

What can be funded?

Typical examples of expenditure that can be funded through this grant, but not confined to:

- Capital equipment that directly links to your business.
- Mandatory Business Insurance
- Software/website development fees.
- Rent of a dedicated premises from which to operate your business
- Associated costs of membership to recognised, affiliated Professional Bodies, costs of relevant continuing Professional Development to include training courses and examination fees
- Support and expert advice to develop your business idea such as market research, legal and accountancy costs, feasibility related fees

- Cost of marketing materials to promote your business launch such as leaflets, business cards and banners
- Online promotion and advertising in the first 6 months of trading to support your business launch
- Investment to support business expansion, including scaling production, entering new markets, or increasing capacity
- Equipment, systems, or technology that improve productivity or efficiency
- Items bought via credit cards are eligible. ** Limited Companies must use a company credit card for purchases. We encourage sole traders and partnerships to use business banking / credit cards.

Please note that if you are not VAT registered then you can include VAT in your costs claimed. If you are VAT registered, then VAT must be excluded from your costs.

What cannot be funded?

- Retrospective expenditure where goods and services have already been obtained and paid for. Where advance payments have been made to website design companies, which is standard practice within the profession, any decision is deemed to be discretionary and decided by the bursary panel
- Costs that are not auditable such as cash payments unsupported by an approved petty cash system
- Fast moving consumable goods e.g. stationery, printer ink, or any items required on a regular basis to trade
- Ongoing license fees
- Loan repayments
- Applications for unspecified items. For example, cash in reserve.
- Repairs or improvements to land
- Repairs to buildings to support the business launch is discretionary and decided by the Bursary Panel
- Any activity associated with religious or political views or campaigns
- Any activity which is illegal or which, in the opinion of the Panel, advocates law-breaking or anti-social behaviour
- Any activity involved in pornography, offering sexual services of any kind, any illegal activities,
- Any kind of activity which in the opinion of the Council could bring the Council into disrepute or be novel or contentious, which includes but is not limited to non-regulated and invasive procedures, products and treatments, nude or semi-nude modelling, gaming centres, sun bed services, medicines, vape shops, tobacconists, social media influencing, counselling, life coaching, tattooists, speculative building, complimentary medical treatments, cosmetic products, aesthetic procedures, CBD oil products and cryptocurrency.
- Second-hand equipment is discretionary and decided by the Bursary Panel
- General maintenance or refurbishment works not deemed relevant or essential to trade
- Servicing of existing equipment
- Costs towards banking charges and / or repayment of debt
- Recreational training courses not linked to employment
- Courses currently funded elsewhere
- Activities which are party-political in intention, use or presentation
- Salary costs
- Alcohol, gratuities, gifts and prizes
- Purchase of stock for general trading purposes, unless deemed to be necessary to successfully launch the business in its infancy

- Any project that requires planning permission where that permission is NOT already in place may not be able to proceed due to the time-bound nature of the Bursary funding – which necessitates that all project spend is completed, claimed and evidenced by the 19 February 2027. Cash purchases will not be considered for grant payment.
- Items purchased through lease purchase, hire purchase, extended credit agreements/finance leases will not be considered for grant funding.
- Purchases from private sellers / individuals will not be considered, e.g Facebook Marketplace, etc. We only consider purchases from commercial sellers / suppliers
- Grants will not be payable where an applicant's business rates and/or council tax are in arrears.
- VAT where recoverable

Payment Process

The bursary will be paid in line with the criteria below:

- Application process is completed in full
- You have presented your business idea to an online panel of assessors, made up of representatives from the Public and Private Sector, and have been successful in your bursary award
- We have received your signed 'Funding Letter' agreeing to use the bursary for the purpose it is intended.

You have purchased the panel-approved item(s) or service(s) agreed and provided your claim with proof of purchase in the form of a payment receipt (e.g. screenshots or photographic evidence, and equipment serial numbers where applicable) along with a copy of your bank statements showing evidence of payment. Upon receipt of this, the bursary will be paid within 28 days.

Ordinarily grants are paid retrospectively and require upfront purchase by applicants, and then claim the grant value from the Vale of Glamorgan Council following the claims process outlined in the terms and conditions.

To support cashflow, the grant team will also offer an alternative staged payment structure, this option will be offered as part of your funding letter.

Application Process

Expression of Interest followed by full application (if eligible)

You are required to complete an Expression of Interest, this provides the Council with an outline of your business idea. Your online submission will generate a dialogue (via telephone, an online teams call or email exchange) with a Senior Regeneration Officer who will follow due process to establish an initial pass or fail eligibility rating for you to apply.

If you are deemed successful to progress to the application stage, a link will be emailed to you which includes an online application form and links to templates for the following documents:

- Business Plan Template
- Financials using Microsoft Excel (**Two years Cashflow Forecast and Profit & Loss**).
- Procurement Plan using Microsoft Excel

Guidance on completing the application process **outlined above is provided by a dedicated Advisory Officer** from [Business Wales](#). How to register with Business Wales and access the Advisor will be explained when you are informed that you are able to proceed to full application stage.

All sections must be completed as fully and concisely as possible

- Processing your application will not commence until **you have received advice from Business Wales** and you have submitted your complete application form and all the required information/attachments. To further discuss your proposal and eligibility, please email: vsubursary@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
- Quotations in the form of screen shots or formal quotes will need to match and accompany the items listed on your Procurement Plan, please see the table below. **These will need to be available at the stage of mentoring and advice with Business Wales, so that the values can be fully incorporated into your Business Plan and supporting financial information.**

Value of each item or service to be purchased	Procurement Action required
Under £150	No quote required
Below £500	One written quote from a supplier on letterhead, email or screenshot
£500-£5,000	Two written quotes from a supplier on a letterhead, email or Screenshot. It is important to be specific because small things can have a big impact on the overall cost of a product. Please give as much detail as possible about the quality in the quotes provided.
Over £5,000	Three written quotes from a supplier on a letterhead, email or screenshot. Please be specific in your specification , this is your chance to set the quality standard for this work. Unless justifiable and with agreement of the Vale of Glamorgan Council you are required to go with the lowest quote. This is done to ensure value for money.

Please note this is your chance to set the quality standard for this work, unless justifiable and with agreement of the Vale of Glamorgan Council you are required to go with the lowest quote. This is done to ensure value for money.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council encourages applicants when considering quotes to explore the marketplace to establish if there are any businesses within the Vale of Glamorgan that can provide the goods and services that you are seeking and include them in your invites to quote. Businesses operating in the Vale have an important role to play in the supply chain development and economic growth.

Grant assessment process

Every application that is received will be assessed for the following:

- Eligibility to apply to this bursary initiative.
- Reassurance of the applicant's relevant credentials and previous experience to support the business
- The business idea addresses a gap and subsequent need in the market, with supporting evidence
- The uniqueness of the product or service
- What contingencies are in place to meet applicant's monthly household commitments as the business develops?
- The potential for the business to grow, including:
 - Revenue growth
 - Job creation
- Transition from part-time to full-time trading
- The extent to which the bursary will enable a step-change in business performance
- Contribution to productivity, innovation, or market expansion
- What other barriers to success have been considered, e.g., slower trading conditions, and what measures are in place to mitigate potential risk?

The Local Authority has committed to become net zero carbon by 2030 and is keen to promote sustainable business practices through its funding programmes. As part of the application, you will be asked how your business demonstrates a commitment to sustainable development. Consider signing up to the Welsh Government Green Growth Pledge: [Green Growth Pledge | Business Wales](#)

Who makes the decision?

The Vale Business Start-up and Early Growth Bursary is a discretionary grant and is subject to approval by the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

- A Bursary Panel will decide on each application. This is an online forum where you will be asked to present your business idea to panel members. The Senior Regeneration Officer will help you to prepare and provide practical help and support beforehand to build your confidence. The Panel meets three times per annum and is made up of three or four judges. Your allocated Senior Regeneration Officer will offer you the opportunity of a practice run beforehand to help you to deliver the best version of your presentation.
- The panel is composed of representatives from the Public and Private Sector. The Panel's decision with regards to applications is final. Applicants are entitled to feedback concerning the Panel's decision, which they can obtain by applying to vsubursary@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk [**Please note** all judges must conform to the same scoring mechanism, and for applicants to be successful, there must be consensus from all judges on the panel, with the need for each judge to provide a minimum scoring that represents a 'Pass']
- This is a competitive process, and all bursary awards will be determined on the basis of merit. Applicants are advised that those who have been successful in securing Council funding in the past will not automatically be guaranteed funding in the future.
- You will be advised by your allocated Senior Regeneration Officer of the outcome of your Panel presentation by telephone within 48 hours of your panel meeting. If your application is successful, the contract will be drawn up in the form of a 'Funding Letter' for you to read, sign and return. Upon receipt and acknowledgement of your response to this letter from the Vale of Glamorgan, you may purchase the panel-approved items accordingly.

- If you are not successful, you will be notified and provided with constructive and practical development support to address any areas considered to help you in the future
- Your Funding Letter will provide you with a timeline of when your claims must be presented to the Vale of Glamorgan for payment. If this deadline is not met, the Vale of Glamorgan reserves the right to ask for the funds to be returned
- The Vale of Glamorgan Council reserves the right to reduce the amount of funding awarded if we do not consider that the amount applied for represents value for money or if there are insufficient funds available to meet the request.

Please note applications will need to be proceedable before they are presented to panel so essential requirements such as match funding, planning permission (where applicable), etc., must be confirmed before your allocated Senior Regeneration Officer will prepare the application for consideration at panel. Exceptions to these conditions will be given consideration on a case-by-case basis.

IMPORTANT

- **Funds are limited.** While the scheme remains accessible to a wide range of start-ups, additional consideration may be given to businesses that can demonstrate strong potential for growth, job creation, or productivity improvements. The Vale of Glamorgan Council reserves the right to ensure a balance of applications are supported throughout the financial year, between entirely new start-up businesses and those trading for less than 2 years, in line with funding guidelines.
- **Applicants will need to adhere to strict deadlines throughout the process, failure to do so may prevent your application from progressing or may result in your funding offer being withdrawn.**
- **Your application must be approved before you make any purchases or start work, no grant money will be issued for any items purchased or works carried out prior to written approval being issued.**
- **All approved work must be completed and evidence of payment provided by the applicant before any grant award can be made.**
- Successful applicants will be expected to return any required evidence reasonably requested by the Vale of Glamorgan Council, after funding is awarded, in line with the funding guidance. Including evidence related to business growth achieved post funding, if applicable.

New Start-up businesses will be required to evidence as a minimum:

- A. Name of enterprise created.
- B. Company registration or HMRC evidence to show business creation
- C. Business Insurance to prove activity has started

Early growth businesses will be required to supply evidence of:

- A. Name of enterprise.
- B. Baseline and follow-up productivity data and/or
- C. Management declaration to demonstrate progress in the supported areas.

The Grant must be repaid in full, on demand, if:

- the applicant is found to have made any misrepresentation in connection with the application.
- the applicant has breached any applicable terms and conditions, or the business relocates within 5 years of the award to a location outside of the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Vale Business Start-up and Early Growth Bursary contact details:

**Vale of Glamorgan Council
Civic Offices
Holton Road
Barry
CF63 4RU**

vsubursary@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

The Vale of Glamorgan Council reserve the right to amend and make changes to the scheme in accordance with funding guidelines.