



Graduate Grant Support - Guidance for Grant Applicants

Please read the guidance **before** preparing your grant application

What is Here2Help Business Develop?

Worcestershire County Council has launched a Here2Help Business Programme to provide a range of support to companies impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Within this offer the **Graduate Development Programme** aims to support Worcestershire SMEs to recruit recent graduates.

This will;

- enable knowledge and skills transfer
- improve business productivity
- increase employment opportunities for graduates whilst retaining their talent for the benefit of the local economy

The programme provides grant support of up to £10,000 to contribute up to 50% of the Graduate salary costs for a one-year period. The remaining 50% to be provided by the business. The grant will be paid retrospectively on a quarterly basis on production of the required claim paperwork. This programme is inclusive of Post Graduates.

Important Application Notes

- The Graduate must fill a new position created with this grant offer.
- The new opportunity will only be advertised following the award of the grant to the applicant business. Employers are responsible for the process of the recruitment and selection themselves.
- It is expected that the appointed Graduate will be a current Worcestershire resident or a Graduate from the University of Worcester.
- The opportunity should be advertised in an open forum eg a recruitment site, advertisement, professional platform etc accessible to Worcestershire residents and on the University of Worcester **myCareer** portal where appropriate.
- The grant is available to appoint those who fully graduated in 2018, 2019 or 2020 and not for those on a work placement or internship as part of their ongoing university studies.

- Confirmation of appointment eg evidence of an accepted offer and start date plus a planned Training Programme will be required within one month of the Graduate commencing
- 100% of each gross monthly salary cost must be covered upfront by the business, 50% of which may be claimed retrospectively; evidence of costs incurred must be supplied as instructed.
- On costs such as National insurance cannot be included or claimed as part of the grant.
- Only one Graduate Grant may be issued per SME.
- Continuance of the grant will be subject to satisfactory quality feedback from the Graduate against the agreed Training Programme submitted at the start of the role.
- If the appointment ends early the SME may request to use the remaining grant to appoint another graduate. This will be at the discretion of the Project Manager.
- The maximum value of the grant is set at the initial grant agreement value and may not increase over the course of the grant support.
- Applicants must comply with the eligibility criteria.
- Claims must comply with the eligibility criteria.

Who can apply for grant funding? Applicant eligibility:

Eligibility guidance is given below and is indicative only; exceptions can be made at the discretion of the Project Manager.

Eligible Applicants:

Eligible applicants must be;

- operating within Worcestershire and have a Worcestershire business address;
- a small/medium size enterprise (SME, as described below);
- a sole trader or partnership; (Trading over 12 months)

And operating within;

- Manufacturing (incl science and medical, food and drink)
- Information Technology (Cyber Security/digital and creative)
- Business and Professional Services (this is restricted to business to business and non-brokerage services)
- Agri-technology
- Construction

- Transport and logistics

The definition of an SME eligible for grant funding (Application - Section 4) is as follows:

- Has fewer than 250 employees;
- Has either (a) an annual turnover not exceeding €50 million or (b) an annual balance sheet total not exceeding €43 million;
- 25% or more of the capital or the voting rights are not owned by one enterprise, or jointly by several enterprises falling outside this definition of an SME;
- Does not own more than 25% of the capital or voting rights in an enterprise falling outside of this definition of SME.

Evidence of Appointment

On appointment the SME are required to provide;

- Copy of the accepted offer letter and or copy of work contract
- Copy of the planned Training Programme
- Copy of degree certificate
- Confirmation of current address

Evidence for Claim Payment

The *maximum* value of grant funding available from the grant scheme is £10,000 which will represent up to 50% of the annual gross salary ie an appointment at £16,000 per year would generate a grant of £8,000 paid quarterly at approximately £2,000 per quarter on provision of the following paperwork;

- Monthly timesheets signed by both the Graduate and the employer;
- Extract of Company Payroll showing graduate payment and total company payroll value certified as true copies;
- Proof of defrayal payment ie Bank Statement to be stamped and signed for "as true copies".

Output Requirement

The project aims are to support Worcestershire SMEs to offer a one year employment opportunity to graduates to enable knowledge and skills transfer, innovation and improved business productivity. It will also help to address the impact on youth unemployment due to the Covid-19 pandemic, increasing employment opportunities for graduates whilst retaining their talent for the benefit of the local economy

It is important that employment opportunity meets the needs of both the SME and the Graduate and therefore the situation will be reviewed by the Project Manager throughout its course. Both parties are required to provide evidence during and at the end of the project detailing what has been achieved and the impact it has had on their future.

If the employment opportunity results in a permanent position you will be asked to sign a written declaration.

De Minimis State Aid Declaration (Application – Section 6)

Under European Commission De Minimis State Aid Rules and General Block Exemption Regulations (GBER) for applicants to be eligible for the Grant, they must not have received more than €200,000 of state funding during the preceding 3 year period; *including* the total amount of the grant for which they are applying. The 3 years includes the business' current financial year and the two previous full financial years.

Financial Assessment

As part of the assessment process, applicants of the Grant funding will be required:

- To declare any historic, current, or known future irregularities and civil/criminal actions that may have an impact on the successful award of a Grant.
- To administer their use of funds in a transparent and responsible manner that will conform to their contractual and moral obligations under the terms of the grant agreement.

The Grant team may independently investigate applicants above and beyond the material contained in the application form. This may include, although not exclusively, the following areas:

- Company Credit Check
- Eligibility- including: company formation, ownership, trading history, and State Aid payments.
- Directors' backgrounds- including: criminal records, disqualifications, historic relations with other funds.
- Trading history, accounts, and match funding.

The Grant Application Process

Please contact Wendy Garrad, Project Manager to discuss your project *before* completing the application form.

STAGE	ACTIVITY
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1	Read the application guidance and complete the grant application form . Submit the application via email to sustain&grow@worcestershire.gov.uk .
2	Your application will be appraised by the Project Manager and you will be advised of the outcome.
3	You will receive an offer letter and grant agreement which will be the approval to comment the recruitment

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- 4 On appointment the SME will submit copies of the accepted offer and/or contract with start date, training programme and the **signed grant agreement** which form a contractual agreement between the applicant and WCC.
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- 5 You can retrospectively claim the grant funding on a quarterly basis for **50% of the gross quarterly salary**. You should use the **grant reclaim guidance** to assist you. Completed reclaim forms and accompanying evidence should be submitted to WCC via email.
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- 6 Your grant reclaim will be checked to ensure the **grant reclaim form** and **evidence** is compliant. Once approved, the invoice will be sent to WCC's central finance team for payment. Payment should then be made within 31 days however we endeavour to issue payment earlier where possible.
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- 7 When you have completed your project spend and reclaimed your full grant, the team will arrange a suitable time to conduct a **grant closure meeting** when you will be asked for evidence of the agreed outputs and assess the impact of the project on the business.
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You are encouraged to contact the Grant team at any stage to discuss your application or any issues that arise during the course of the project.

All paperwork relating to the grant must be kept until 2027 five years after the planned close of the programme in September 2022.

Here2Help Graduate Grant Team *Worcestershire County Council (WCC)*

If you have any queries around the Graduate Grant Fund or any aspect of the Here2Help Business Programme in general please contact the team below;

Wendy Garrad, Programme Manager (WCC)

01905 844595

wgarrad@worcestershire.gov.uk

Emma Anderson, Project Support Officer 01905845306

EAnderson@worcestershire.gov.uk