



Funded by
UK Government



Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) Grants Policy

Introduction

The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) supports the aims of the government's [Five Missions](#), as well as [The Farming and Countryside Programme](#). It is designed to fund capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure in rural areas to help to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.

The UK government is committed to delivering 5 missions to secure long-term prosperity for the country. The Rural Fund will support the government's mission in rural areas to:

- kickstart economic growth
- break down barriers to opportunity
- build an NHS fit for the future

REPF will provide capital grant 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 outside of agriculture.
- Support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy.

Projects must take place in a rural area. For REPF purposes, rural areas are defined as:

- 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.

Eligibility for the scheme is based on project location and will be determined through DEFRA's [Magic Maps](#). If a project is not in an eligible area, applicants will be informed that we cannot accept the application.

Applicants can apply online through the [council's website](#), where full guidance is available to help the applicant submit the best possible application.

What type of project will the scheme fund?

Funding must be used on capital projects. This means grant funds must be spent on lasting assets such as equipment. For further details of what constitutes capital costs for REPF purposes please see our Identifying Capital Expenditure for Grant Purposes guidance [here](#). The grant funds cannot be spent on running costs or promotional activities. We will not award grants towards loans, mortgages and revenue costs, for example, maintenance, rent, clothing or salaries. We will not fund projects which could prevent the council from achieving aims outlined in our [corporate plan](#).

This is a competitive grant scheme, and therefore it will not always be possible to fund every eligible application. Due to the time constraints on this funding, **projects must have secured the required match funding and have all relevant consents in place before applying for this scheme.**

REPF funding can not be used for retrospective costs, it can only be used for costs that are incurred after our funding decision is made. We will consider projects that have already started, but applicants must clearly show that the costs they are applying for will not be incurred until after our funding decision is made (September 2025), and that the works will complete before the scheme deadline of 31 January 2026.

Who can apply to the scheme?

- Town and Parish Councils.
- Public sector organisations.
- Higher and further education institutions.
- Private sector companies.
- Registered charities.
- Social enterprises, for example CIC's.

- Arms-length bodies of government.

Who is not eligible?

- We cannot support projects that have received funding from other Defra schemes. This includes:
 - [The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme](#)
 - [The Farming Investment Fund](#)
 - [The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund](#)

REPF funding can support farm businesses with diversification projects outside of agriculture, for example, creating rural leisure and tourism facilities. REPF cannot fund costs related to agricultural projects, or diversification within agriculture. There are alternative Defra schemes that fund the purchase of farm equipment and provide funding support for farm-owned businesses diversifying within agriculture. More information on the [Farm Investment Fund can be found here](#).

- We cannot fund projects or costs if there is a statutory duty for them to be provided.
- We cannot support projects that include energy improvements for premises that function primarily as domestic accommodation or for agricultural purposes.
- We cannot support projects for building improvements to premises that function primarily as domestic accommodation or for agricultural purposes.
- We cannot fund agricultural / farming equipment or other agricultural projects.
- We cannot fund projects that take place outside of the South Oxfordshire District Council REPF area, as defined by the Magic Maps boundaries.
- We cannot support projects that are also applying to [South Oxfordshire District Council's Capital Grant scheme](#) for 2025/26

What can be funded?

Applications are welcome under four themes. Applications need to be in one of the intervention areas detailed in the bullets under each theme. Examples are listed for each theme. Reasonable alternatives and comparable ideas are welcome and potential applicants are encouraged to [contact us](#) for project advice before applying.

Theme 1: Healthy: Improved health and wellbeing – your application must fit into the following:

- creation of and improvements to local rural green spaces
- active travel enhancements in the local area.

Example projects include:

- new or improved park amenities and facilities that encourage visitor numbers
- equipment that enables community energy schemes
- new cycle paths or facilities.

Theme 2: Inclusive: Bringing communities together and tackling homelessness – your application must fit into the following:

- local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities
- investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups
- rural circular economy projects
- impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital
- investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities.

Example projects include:

- establishment of rural community facilities, for example, community shops
- new or improved digital connectivity at village halls or community centres
- equipment to support local arts programmes.

Theme 3: Thriving places: Development of the visitor economy – your application must fit into the following:

- the development and promotion of the visitor economy
- existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local heritage offer
- local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities.

Example projects include:

- improvements to cultural, historic and heritage facilities and amenities
- improvements to rural tourism facilities and amenities
- accessibility improvements to rural cultural buildings
- equipment or assets that support rural events.

Theme 4. Support for business: Advice and support for businesses – your application must fit into the following:

- growing the local social economy and supporting innovation
- small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas.

Example projects include:

- diversification of farm buildings outside of agriculture (conversion of buildings) such as the creation or expansion of rural tourism facilities
- equipment to support the promotion of local food and drink products
- creation of multi-functional rural business units or hubs
- equipment that supports rural business innovation (outside of agriculture)
- equipment that supports development of new business products or services.

How much funding is available?

- The Council's budget for the scheme is £219,934.

- Applicants can request a minimum of £2,500 and a maximum of £30,000.
- The council has the discretion to fully fund projects up to the value of £10,000.
- For all successful applications above £10,000, the council will only offer funding of up to 75 per cent of the total project costs, with match funding required to cover the difference. This match funding must already be secured, and you must be able to provide evidence of it in your application to be eligible.
- In exceptional cases, like a major funder pulling out of a project that offers significant benefits to our residents, we may consider a request for funding of more than 75 per cent of the project. To request an exceptional amount, applicants must get approval from [economic development](#) team before applying.
- We cannot award more than the amount requested.

Amount of funding needed	Applicability
<£2,500	Not applicable for this scheme
£2,500-£10,000	Applicable for this scheme Full funding can be applied for.
£10,000-£30,000	Applicable for this scheme Up to 75% of full funding costs, with evidence of match funding secured prior to application
>£30,000	Not applicable for this scheme

Opening and closing dates

Funding for 2025/26 will open 3 June 2025 and close at midday on 30 June 2025.

Funding decisions will be made in September 2025. Funding for 2025/26 is subject to the council receiving funding from the government, and no funding decisions will be made until the council has confirmation that we have received our government allocation.

Scheme eligibility criteria

In addition to meeting the requirements above, applicants must provide:

- a copy of the latest statements for any bank/building society accounts in the name of the organisation as identified in the application and on their constitution or company documentation
- evidence that the organisation is located within an eligible REPF area. This could be official correspondence (utility bill, bank statement, HMRC letters etc) that clearly shows the organisation's name address and postcode. The organisation, or project must be located in an eligible area as defined by the boundaries in DEFRA's Magic [Maps](#)
- two quotes are required for all elements of the project. If you are purchasing equipment, we will need to see two like-for-like quotes for each item
- two formal quotes must be included for any building work. Unfortunately, professional estimates or quantity surveys are not acceptable in isolation of a formal quote
- a breakdown of the budget for the project
- evidence of the secured match funding for the project. This could be bank statements showing the funds available or grant offer letters showing the amount of funding secured. Failure to provide evidence of secured match funding will result in applications being deemed ineligible, and it will not be presented to the grant panel. Only projects costing less than £10,000 and requesting full project funding do not need to provide match funding evidence
- copies of any necessary planning permissions, listed building, diocese faculty, landlord or headlease consents, compliance with any restrictions on the property title and other relevant permissions. Please note that REPF cannot fund planning permission and building regulations costs. We may request evidence that planning permission is not needed for some projects, such as installation of bike racks, solar panels, or other building improvement works
- evidence of ownership of the property, either a freehold interest in the property or a lease with at least five years remaining, including a copy of the Land Registry Title Register and plan of no more than 3 months old. If the property is leased, or the Land Registry documents show another organisation has a claim on the title, please provide valid permission for the works from the third party (freeholder) / landlord

- the applicant's most recent financial accounts. A detailed working budget and financial plan for the year is acceptable for start-up or early-stage organisations. Parish Councils are required to submit their full accounts.
- a project plan including ongoing maintenance arrangements
- charities and community organisations must provide a constitution that demonstrates that the project they are applying for matches the organisation's objectives and confirmation that they are a 'not for profit organisation' and the trustees don't receive benefits (except parish or town councils, churches or similar organisations that are governed by a central body and don't have their own constitution)
- private sector businesses must provide either a UTR number or a company registration number, and evidence that they are actively trading.

Applicants must confirm:

- they will sign up to our grant terms and conditions before proceeding with the application. These are available to download from the [website](#) and the grants system
- they have the correct authority in place for their representatives to apply and enter into the Grant Agreement and legally bind the organisation. Parochial Church Councils and Parish Councils have their governing arrangements for this, which should be followed
- the project will not be completed before a decision has been made, which is usually 8 - 10 weeks from the closing date, as we cannot pay for retrospective costs.
- they have not received any Minimal Financial Assistance, more than £315,000 in this financial year and/or in the previous two financial years. The organisation is to provide relevant evidence if a subsidy / Minimal Financial Assistance has been received.

If you are unable to provide the required evidence for the application, please liaise with the team at business.support@southandvale.gov.uk prior to submitting your application. Applications missing supporting evidence may be rejected and deemed ineligible.

The Head of Development and Corporate Landlord can decide to accept applications that don't meet all the above criteria and will do this on a case-by-case basis. Applicants must give clear reasons why they can't meet a particular criterion for an exception to be

considered. For example, where there would be a significant impact to the community if the project were unable to go ahead, an exception may be considered.

Organisations must formally accept the grant offer within four weeks of the date of the offer letter, or the offer will be withdrawn.

All projects must be completed before 31 January 2026.

Decision making

Economic Development Team

The Economic Development Team will review eligibility before using the scoring matrix in appendix one to recommend scores to the Grants Panel. We will also flag any concerns or issues for additional consideration, to support the panel's recommendations.

Head of Service

The Council's Head of Development and Corporate Landlord (using delegated powers) will decide:

- if we will accept requests for over 75 per cent of the total project cost
- if we will accept applications that don't meet all the eligibility criteria
- We reserve the right to not pay all of the grant funding up front if there are concerns about the deliverability of the project within the scheme deadline.
- whether to amend award percentages beyond what was originally agreed, as requested by applicants. Increases will stay within the 75 per cent maximum limit for the scheme.

Grants Panel

The Grant Panel considers officers' suggested scores and comments and makes funding recommendations.

Even if an application scores enough points, the panel can recommend **not funding** it if they:

- have serious concerns around the management of the project now or in the future.

- believe the applicant has sufficient unrestricted reserves to fund the project themselves.
- have serious concerns about the appropriateness of the project or its financial viability, such as if the organisation has not demonstrated that they have secured the remaining required funding for the project.
- believe the project doesn't meet the criteria, does not help to deliver or is otherwise detrimental to the council's Corporate Plans.
- Strongly believe that the project will not complete prior to the deadline.

Should the application not receive enough points to be awarded any funding, the Grant Panel also have the discretion to **recommend a grant award of up to £10,000** if:

- an award can be justified as an important project for the community.
- there are concerns that failure to fund the project or activity could result in a net disbenefit to the wider community.

The Grant Panel recommendations are presented to the Council's Head of Development and Corporate Landlord who has final approval to make awards.

Standard conditions for all grant awards

All organisations need to accept our standard conditions before proceeding with the application.

We may add extra conditions to any grant if we consider it necessary. These conditions will be determined in consultation with the Grant Panel and Head of Development and Corporate Landlord for consideration.

The Head of Development and Corporate Landlord has delegated authority to add or remove any agreed grant conditions.

We will confirm that applicants have met all the conditions before making any payment. Failure to meet all the agreed conditions may delay payment or, in extreme cases, result in us withdrawing our grant offer.

Payment of grants

We will only pay towards costs incurred after the date of the council's decision to award a grant.

We will pay the grants in full when we receive a valid signed acceptance form and standard conditions. We will request a project update in December 2025 and will require before and after project photos to be uploaded along with invoices showing project costs. We will also ask for a short report on your project's outputs and outcomes. The council reserves the right to make retrospective grant payments on completion of a project and presentation of project invoices, should the grant panel recommend this.

Local Government Reorganisation

All local authorities are moving towards local government reorganisation and so it is possible that restrictions upon applications for specific grants or classes of grants might apply if the Secretary of State was to issue relevant notices. It is not anticipated that this will impact grants once issued. The council will work to keep all parties informed on the position on capital grants through the reorganisation so that impacts can be fully understood

Appendix one: Scoring and award matrix for REPF Grant applications

Applications will be ranked based on their final score, and we will fund as many projects as allowed by the overall budget in order of high score. The council reserves the right to exclude any project achieving fewer than 8 points or projects that they believe to be detrimental to the council's Corporate Plans.

Points	Proxy value of REPF outcomes delivered	
0	The project will deliver minimal measurable benefits (less than £1k).	The value of benefits will be calculated using our list of proxy values. Points will only be scored where sufficient rationale for the figures presented has been provided to demonstrate how the outcome will be achieved.
1	The project will deliver benefits of £1,000 to £9,999.	
2	The project will deliver benefits of £10,000 to £20,000.	
3	The project will deliver benefits in excess of £20,001.	
+ 1	Evidence or local intelligence suggests a significantly better value than included within proxies (equivalent to more than 25% of the proxy value).	Such as an FTE job created being of higher salary band.
- 1	Evidence or local intelligence suggests a significantly lesser value will be achieved than suggested within proxies (equivalent to more than 25% of the proxy value).	Such as a lower value job being created, or visitors being only to free entry, isolated locations.

Points	Monitoring & evaluation
0	No details have been provided about how the success of the project will be monitored, or evidence is irrelevant to the project.
1	Limited details have been provided about how the project will be monitored, and minimal baseline data is available or has been provided.
2	Satisfactory details have been provided about how the project will be monitored, and baseline data are evident.
3	Substantial details have been provided about how the project will be monitored, giving high confidence in the evaluation potential. Robust baseline data have been evidenced.

Points	Deliverability	
-1	The applicant has failed to deliver a previously funded project within the deadline.	The council reserves the right not to fund applicants that were unable to deliver previously funded projects within an agreed deadline.
0	The project has a single substantial risk, or multiple interlinked risks that will prevent completion by the scheme deadline.	This may include complex building projects that require multiple contractors or the coordination of multiple funding sources to complete. The council reserves the right not to offer funding to a substantially risky project through REPF.
1	The project has moderate risks that could prevent completion by the scheme deadline.	This may include building projects with a single contractor completing all elements of the work and all consents and surveys in place, or customised equipment purchases or installations that require equipment to be custom-built or installed by specialists, i.e. solar panels, or specialist food production equipment. The council reserves the right not to offer funding to a moderately risky project through REPF.
2	The project has limited/minimal or no risks to completion by the scheme deadline.	This may include projects that involve the purchase of readily available equipment that requires no specialist manufacture, build or installation. The project has multiple potential suppliers and typically has a short delivery time frame with limited exposure to external factors.

Points	Need for Project	
0	No evidence of need for project has been provided	
1	Limited evidence for need for project has been provided.	A small-scale survey of employees or service users has been carried out.
2	Good evidence of need for project has been provided.	A larger-scale survey has been carried out asking the wider community.
3	Detailed evidence of need for project has been provided.	A full business plan or formal community consultation has been provided.
+ 1	Evidence that no other projects like this are located locally has been provided.	Is there a similar facility or business within a reasonable distance? For example, EV charging points, will the project provide the only charging point in a village, or are there already several public charging points available locally?

Points	Climate Action	
-1	The project will negatively impact on the council's climate agenda.	The project will have a detrimental effect on the local environment without any mitigation in place. This could be via destruction of green space and wildlife habitat, increase in greenhouse gas emissions, installation of non-energy efficient equipment, or purchase of new diesel or petrol vehicles etc.
0	The project has not considered its impact on the environment, or not provided any information in this area.	No evidence of environmental impact of the project has been provided in the application form.
1	The project will have some positive impact on the council's climate agenda.	Small scale improvements such as replacing some lightbulbs with energy efficient ones, installing bike racks, implementing an energy smart meter. Applicants have demonstrated that they have considered climate actions as per the guidance
2	The project will have a positive impact on the council's climate agenda.	Installation of EV charging points, renewable energy systems, creation of green spaces for nature, creation of new cycle paths or active travel routes. Applicants have demonstrated that they have incorporated multiple climate mitigations as per the guidance above into their project.
+ 1	The organisation applying also has a sustainability/climate action forward plan or strategy in place.	Evidence of a climate action policy has been provided.

Appendix two

Proxy values table

Outcome	Proxy Value (£)	Measure
Increased use of cycleways or footpaths.	2	Per user/day
Increased users of facilities/amenities.	3.5	Per visit
Increased visitor numbers.	40	Per visitor
Jobs created as a result of support.	38,480	Per FTE job
Jobs safeguarded as a result of support.	20,000	Per FTE job
Number of new enterprises created as a result of support.	20,000	Per new business
Number of enterprises adopting new to the firm technologies or processes.	12,000	Per business
Number of enterprises engaged in new markets.	15,000	Per business
Number of enterprises with improved productivity.	10,000	Per business
Improved engagement numbers.	2	Per participant
Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage, and creative programmes as a result of support.	10,000	Per programme
Number of volunteering opportunities created as a result of support.	5,000	Per volunteer/year