

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Covid 19 Revitalisation Recovery Programme Business Grants

Scheme, Call 2. Guidelines for Applicants

Background

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is working in collaboration with the Department for Communities (DfC), the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to deliver the DfC-led Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Programme.

As part of this Programme, MEABC were accepting applications for a Covid-19 Town Centre Revitalisation Fund - this scheme was open to applications from 1 September to 28 September 2020, and was overseen by the Town Centre Recovery Group. This scheme was open to eligible businesses within the town centre boundaries of Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus, as well as the villages of Ahoghill, Broughshane, Cullybackey, and Whitehead. This scheme is now closed.

Following on from the success of the Covid-19 Town Centre Revitalisation Fund, MEABC is now offering grants to all eligible business in the Mid and East Antrim Borough whose business premises are located outside town centre boundaries.

Please note that businesses whose premises are located within town centre boundaries are not eligible to apply for this grant scheme.

Mid and East Antrim Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme

The Mid and East Antrim Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme is now offering a grant programme for eligible businesses in the Mid and East Antrim Borough whose business premises are located outside town centre boundaries. If you are uncertain if your business is located in an eligible area please contact recoverygrants@midandeastantrim.gov.uk. You can also refer to the maps on the Grants section of the Council website indicating town centre boundaries to determine eligibility - <https://www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk/resident/grants>

The programme will offer grants ranging from £500 to £2,000 to businesses to help them address some of the specific challenges presented due to the ongoing difficulties in the operating environment presented by the pandemic.

This will be complemented by additional investment by the council in the infrastructure and life of our town and village centres to make them safer and more attractive, and to increase footfall.

The grants programme will open on 5 November 2020. The programme budget is limited, and funding will be allocated on a first come first served basis. It will be open for a period of just over 4 weeks, closing on 7 December 2020, or earlier if the available funds are allocated.

Only applications from eligible businesses and for eligible equipment or works will be offered a grant. The grant can cover 100% of the cost of eligible items or works up to a maximum of £2,000 per business. The minimum level of grant funding to be awarded is £500. **Any expenditure incurred prior to the issue of a Letter of Offer will not be eligible for grant assistance.**

All works approved and listed in the Letter of Offer must be completed and paid for before a claim for grant payment can be submitted to council. Applicants commit to completing all works / expenditure and lodging all invoices to complete claiming of funds from Council by 26 March 2021 at the latest. Please note that any expenditure / invoices submitted after this date may not be eligible for grant funding.

Who can apply for funding?

The grant programme is open to eligible businesses in the Mid and East Antrim Borough whose business premises are located outside town centre boundaries.

The following types of business are eligible to apply:

- Independent retailers (engaged in the retail sale of goods)
- Independent private coffee shops, cafes, bars and restaurants
- Independent hair and beauty businesses
- Independent health and fitness related businesses
- Independent service providers such as estate agents, financial advisors, mortgage and insurance

Ineligible businesses / organisations are as follows:

- Non-independent businesses (i.e. those that are part of a multinational chain or company)
- Political parties / organisations
- Banks and financial institutions
- Public sector buildings and service providers e.g. libraries, council buildings, etc.

To be eligible, businesses must also:

- Have been trading on or before 15th March 2020
- For business that are currently closed, commit to re-opening within a defined timescale (which will be a condition of any letter of offer)
- Have a business bank account

Business that have previously applied for or received Government grants to fund the items / works that are eligible under this scheme may not be entitled to further grant assistance. This will be assessed on a case by case basis.

What Can Be Funded?

The grants programme is specifically designed to address issues that the business may experience as a direct consequence of the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and each applicant will have to clearly demonstrate the need that the works or equipment is designed to address.

This could include, but is not limited to;

- Awnings or other minor works to facilitate queuing
- Canopies, barriers, planters, furniture, outdoor heaters and equipment to accommodate outdoor dining or other outdoor sales provision (e.g. collection lockers, market stands)
- Protective equipment such as hand sanitizer stations, screens, barriers, etc.
- Personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves, visors
- Signage
- Internal social distancing measures
- Queueing systems
- PA / tannoy systems
- Digital screens
- Online ordering, booking or payments systems
- Contactless payment or app development for booking systems
- Shop frontage improvements - only available for businesses with on-street shop frontage

Please note that it is the responsibility of the applicant to clearly explain the need for the works or equipment, and how it will help them to address issues that the business is experiencing in relation to COVID-19. If a clear explanation is not provided then grant funding may not be awarded.

Some items may require statutory permissions. Where required, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that these are obtained.

Only items or works that have been procured in line with the following guidance will be eligible.

It is crucial that quotes for all separate works are itemised and a sufficient number of quotes are returned to establish value for money - failure to do this may result in your application being rejected.

- For works up to £1,000 at least **two written quotations** must be provided.
- For works between £1,000 and £4,999.99 at least **three written quotations** must be provided.

Where it is evident that one supplier can provide the product or service as one itemised invoice as opposed to a series of invoices, the project promoter should treat this as such and seek quotations according to procurement thresholds. This will ensure the best value for money. Separating the scope of works into sections for the purpose of invoicing below the procurement threshold, will be deemed by audit as purposely splitting work values to avoid due process. The correct number of quotes must be adhered to.

Council reserve the right to obtain additional independent quotes to assess value for money.

What cannot be funded?

The purpose of this funding is to support the needs of businesses in addressing the specific implications of the Coronavirus epidemic.

The grant can only be used towards the cost of capital works, purchase of equipment or the provision of services explicitly agreed and listed in a Letter of Offer.

Any costs associated with the day to day running of the business will not be eligible. In addition, costs involved in the completion of the application, in undertaking procurement, or the costs of securing any necessary statutory permissions cannot be funded.

Conditions of Grant

Any grant offered would be subject to the following conditions:

1. that no work is commenced until the applicant has received a Letter of Offer;
2. that the offer is accepted within one week of the date of Letter of Offer;
3. that work is carried out by the lowest quoting contractor or supplier (copies of these quotes must be supplied with the application) - **copies of invoices addressed to your business must be provided to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and these MUST match exactly with both the lowest quoting contractor and the amount specified in the grant offer.**
4. that Mid and East Antrim Borough Council are notified of the actual starting date together with an indication of the completion date for the work; **(work MUST be completed by and claims submitted by 26 March 2021 at the latest);**
5. that you will continue to maintain the property in a reasonable state of repair;
6. that you will give a written declaration to the fact that you as an applicant are VAT registered and will or will not be able to recover any VAT payable since the grant offer will only include VAT if this is not recoverable by you;
7. that you will ensure that any required statutory permissions for the work (such as DfI Roads Service consent for placing of scaffolding on the pavement or roadway, planning permission, listed building consent, advertising consent, building regulation approval or street trading licence) are obtained prior to commencement of the work;
8. that the work is completed to the satisfaction of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council; the grant may be reduced or withheld if the grant eligible work proves to be less than estimated or if the work is not carried out to a satisfactory standard;
9. that you as the applicant, your agent and your contractor are responsible for all risks in connection with public and employer liability associated with the work;
10. that Mid and East Antrim Borough Council or the Department for Communities does not accept liability or responsibility in respect of the grant aided work carried out to your property. Accordingly you should not rely on the inspection or payment of grant monies by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council as any proof or guarantee that the contractor you have engaged to execute the works has completed the said works to a proper standard prior to payment. You are strongly recommended to satisfy yourself that the works have been carried out to a satisfactory standard;
11. that following completion of the work, claims made for payment in the appropriate manner should be made immediately; all claims must be made by 26 March 2021 so that work or equipment purchased **may** be inspected and payment of grant made to you as soon as possible **thereafter**;
12. that Mid and East Antrim Borough Council or the Department for Communities may record the fact that a grant has been made in any publicity, annual report or other relevant publication;
13. that the contractor or supplier who provided the lowest quote for each agreed grant eligible works carries these out;
14. that copies of all invoices addressed to your business and evidence that any statutory permissions required for the work have been obtained are provided to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council by

- 26 March 2021 and totals match exactly with the amounts specified in the Letter of Offer;
15. that any proposed changes to the agreed grant eligible works listed must be advised to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council before work takes place (including any changes to the contractor or supplier who provided the lowest quotation).
 16. Upon completion Council, at its discretion, may contact suppliers directly to verify expenditure has taken place in accordance to the application for funding and any offer of funding by Council. Cases of suspected fraud involving Mid and East Antrim Borough Council funds will be reported to the police.
 17. The applicant must ensure they can receive emails from both grants@midandeastantrim.gov.uk and recoverygrants@midandeastantrim.gov.uk . Council will not be held accountable for non-responded or missed communications from either email which renders the application void.

Payment of grant

Payment of grant would be dependent upon inspection of satisfactory completion of the work and submission of a claim for payment with the invoice (made out to your business) along with bank statement showing proof of payment, and evidence that any necessary statutory permissions have been obtained.

Assistance and Queries

If you have any queries or would like further advice about making an application please contact Recoverygrants@midandeastantrim.gov.uk.

The applicant must ensure they can receive emails from both grants@midandeastantrim.gov.uk and recoverygrants@midandeastantrim.gov.uk . Council will not be held accountable for non-responded or missed communications from either email which renders the application void.

Applications will be assessed on a first come first served basis provided that the following information has been submitted:

1. Application form is fully completed.
2. The correct number of quotations have been attached to the application form.
3. Evidence of the businesses current public liability insurance has been attached to the application form.
4. All works proposed are eligible.

The outcome of all assessments made will be final.

Multiple applications for the same property are acceptable in the event that the applications are from entirely separate businesses located in the same property. If the two (or more) businesses located in the same property are connected in any way (apart from location) then only one of these businesses will be eligible for grant funding.