

Mid Suffolk Town & Village Centre Business Improvement Fund

Guidance Notes

About the Fund

This grant scheme, funded by Mid Suffolk District Council, is designed to support small businesses based within town and village centres by enhancing the visual appearance of their premises and the practical use by all types of customers, improving operational productivity and strengthening long-term sustainability.

By improving business frontages and key locations within town centres, the scheme seeks to encourage increased footfall and make vacant units more attractive to occupiers. It aims to contribute to a vibrant and diverse retail environment accessible to all, while providing direct support to businesses investing in their premises and future growth.

Priorities of the fund

- Delivery of an enhanced visitor experience to the district
- Improved customer experience
- Increased footfall in town and village centres
- Projects supporting job creation and increased productivity
- Improvements to business resilience and sustainability
- Improvements to environmental performance including lower carbon footprint

Who can apply

Small Businesses, Shops and Landlords of commercial or community run properties that the public visit, or will visit, trading within a town centre in Mid Suffolk. Town Centre Locations include but are not limited to:

- Stowmarket
- Eye
- Debenham
- Stowupland
- Elmswell
- Woolpit
- Thurston
- Needham Market
- Great Blakenham
- Claydon

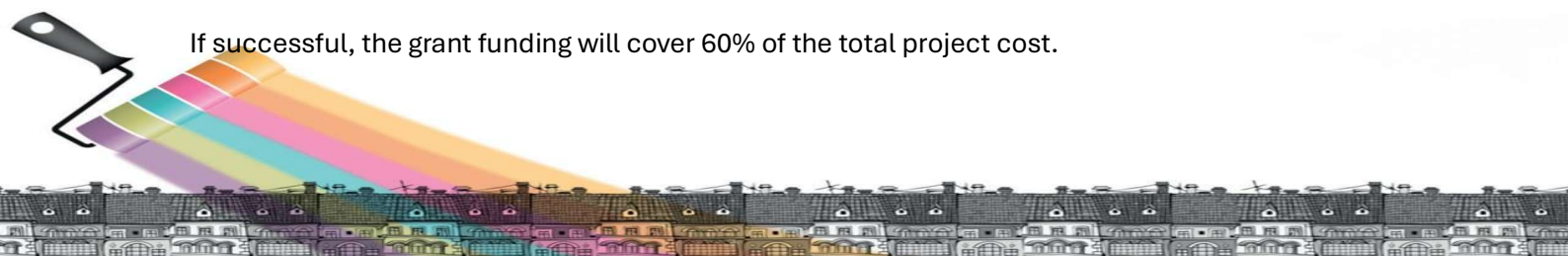
If you are located within Mid Suffolk and your town or village is not listed, please contact us at BMSDCEconomicDevelopment@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk to check eligibility.

Grants available and Match Funding

Grants range from a minimum of £500 up to a maximum of £10,000 per property.

Each application will have a 40% match funding rate. This means the business must cover 40% of the total project costs. Evidence of match funding will be required as part of the application.

If successful, the grant funding will cover 60% of the total project cost.



Grant funding cannot be matched against other Mid Suffolk District Council funds.

Flexibility in match funding and upper limit of grant can be considered for priority improvements such as energy saving initiatives and customer and staff accessibility & inclusivity.

What can be funded but not limited to:-

- Rebranding shops with new signage
- Internal and external lighting
- New energy efficient windows/ fully accessible doors
- External security or reinstatement of traditional or historic features that have been lost
- Internal refurbishment works e.g. upgrading customer toilets
- Installation of solar panels
- Purchasing equipment which will enable business growth and improved accessibility and inclusivity, e.g. a new till system
- Purchasing equipment which will make the business more sustainable e.g. energy efficiency improvements, building fabric upgrades and machinery upgrades
- Improvements to access such as widening of doorways, ramps for doorways or removal of steps, handrails, portable ramps, power assisted doors, disabled access signs to ensure properties are accessible and enabled

Quotations for work and services

As part of your application, you will need to provide quotes for each item/works/service you wish to purchase

Value of Purchase/Works	Requirement for quotes
£0 - £5,000*	For projects totalling under £5,000 or where multiple items are under this amount, only one quotation per goods, works and / or services will be required.
Over £5,000	Three written quotes or prices sought from relevant suppliers of goods, works and / or services will be required for any goods or services totalling £5,000 or more in one transaction.
Exemptions	In exceptional circumstances we may accept one quote, you will be asked within the application form to give reasoning why you have only been able to supply one quote. Examples may include there only being one specific supplier of a specialist item, or you are under contractual arrangements to a specific supplier.



Planning permission and license requirements

If you are applying for any physical upgrades or improvements that will require planning permission or building control permissions, grants will only be approved if the relevant permissions have already been provided.

To find out more about how to gain planning permission, please visit:

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning>

Businesses / organisations must have all the required permissions and licences relevant to the business / organisation e.g. registered food business, a satisfactory Food Hygiene Rating. You will also be asked within the application form to declare any other permissions or licences that are required for your project and when they will be obtained.

If your project is taking place on rented / leased / tenanted land or premises, please ensure you submit a letter of authority from the land or premises owner or that the owner applies for the grant funding direct.

Subsidy Control

If a grant is awarded, it will constitute a subsidy and will initially be available through Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA).

The maximum support through MFA is £315,000 and this is a cumulative total of all support received over the current, and the last two complete financial years through MFA, EU de minimis and Small Amounts of Financial Assistance Allowance.

If you are offered support through MFA, you will need to make a declaration that you have not already exceeded the £315,000, and/or with approval of the requested support, you will not exceed the £315,000 threshold.

For more information on UK subsidy control please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/subsidy-control-a-guide-for-beneficiaries/subsidy-control-a-guide-for-beneficiaries>

Project Plan - Hints and tips

What are you going to do? Provide a statement about the activity you want to fund using this grant money

Why do you want to do it? Describe how this will add value to your business and what difference it will make, for example, would it enable you to;

- Diversify your product range
- Improve your productivity
- Increase your useable customer space
- Access new customers
- Create jobs
- Encourage visitors to the area



Use of AI in Grant Applications

Businesses must disclose if AI has been used to prepare their grant application. This includes AI tools used for drafting responses or automating any part of the application process. Human oversight and intervention must be maintained to ensure that applications genuinely reflect the applicant's ambitions and capacity for delivery.

What we are unable to fund

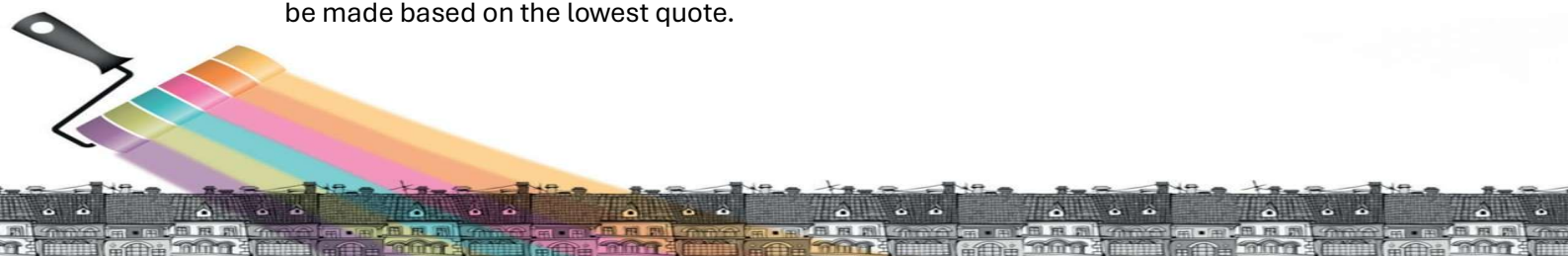
- Retrospective applications i.e. for works already completed or underway
- Annual/usual organisation running costs and core staffing costs
- Operational costs / equipment that is deemed essential for the business to operate such as laptops, mobile phones, telephony equipment, office furniture etc.
- Working capital or stock items for selling
- Professional fees or planning fees
- Recoverable VAT
- National charities, national chains, betting shops, vape shops
- Activities promoting political or religious beliefs
- Projects unable to start within 6 months of the grant award date
- Payments towards endowment funds, deficit funding or loans
- Sponsored or fundraising events
- Funding for trips abroad or hospitality to other organisations
- Repeat funding / projects that have already been funded by the Council – i.e. if MSDC has previously provided a grant for the same activity
- Applications from linked or partner enterprises who have already received funding from the Council
- Items or projects which only benefit an individual
- Projects that will displace existing provision
- Activities that are statutory obligations

How to apply

[Applications should be submitted online](#)

Applicants will be required to provide statutory information and upload the following evidence:

- Valid business/organisation insurance certificate
- A copy of a bank statement dated within the last 3 months in the business name which clearly displays the account number and sort code.
- Confirmation of compliance with Subsidy Control restrictions
- Evidence of match funding required (e.g., copy of savings account or bank statement)
- Quotes for the proposed works and justification for not choosing the lowest quote (if applicable) – multiple quotes will be required for projects over £5,000. Grant offers will be made based on the lowest quote.



Additional quotes and information can be sent to **BMSDCEconomicDevelopment@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk** Please reference your business name and grant reference number.

The process

- Once an application is received an automatic acknowledgement will be sent with important information including contact details.
- You will hear from a member of our team within two weeks if additional information is required or the application is incomplete.
- Grant decisions will be made at monthly panel meetings.
- Applicants will be informed of the decision by email, and for those that are approved the applicant will receive an offer letter which will need to be returned.
- All payments are normally made at the end of the process, so you will need to be able to fund the project fully by yourself before any reimbursements are made. We may be able to phase payments to assist with cashflow, but please contact us prior to applying if this is required.
- Funding cannot be used to pay for items purchased prior to the grant being determined.
- Evidence of total costs of the project will be required for audit purposes.

Applications are reviewed on a first come first served basis, therefore, applicants are advised to apply as soon as possible. We anticipate there will be a high demand for this fund so not all applications will be successful.

Please note applications may close early if all funds have been fully committed.

Please contact the Economic Development team at BMSDCEconomicDevelopment@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk if you have any questions.

