

**NEATH PORT TALBOT**

**COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LOCAL BUSINESS PRIORITY FUND 2**

**GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS**

**Mae’r prosiect hwn [yn cael ei gyllido/gyllido’n rhannol] gan Lywodraeth y DU drwy Gronfa Ffyniant Gyffredin y DU.**

**This project is funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.**



**Supporting business development**

Neath Port Talbot Council considers investment in new business start-ups, the development of existing businesses and the attraction of inward investors as critical to supporting local communities and the economy.

Investment in the development of local businesses is essential to ensuring the long-term sustainability of any venture, through building resilience, capacity, increasing productivity, improving skills and developing their flexibility to respond to the changing needs of the wider economy. Furthermore, there is the need for investments that reduce businesses impact on the environment.

With such investment, Neath Port Talbot cultivates a more dynamic, innovative, greener and versatile economy, with a skilled and flexible workforce that is able to withstand the challenges that face the global economy over time.

Funds are discretionary and applications considered on a case-by-case basis

**Aim of the Grant**

Grants are aimed at supporting projects and investments that contribute to the Council’s priorities for economic growth.

These include:

* **Business growth and development** e.g. through attracting new customers, introducing new products/services, diversification, expanding into new geographic markets or sectors, etc.
* **Commercial Property improvement**. For property owners and occupiers to improve the quality and quantity of appropriate, modern and well connected commercial premises.
* **Improved operational efficiency and productivity** e.g. projects that assist you to run the business more efficiently such as through the use of software, or apps, investing in a website, etc. or that enable you to increase your capacity for example by purchasing new machinery and equipment.
* **Job creation and safeguarding**. Projects that support or create new jobs and/or safeguard existing roles.
* **Innovation.** Supporting businesses in the Research, Development and Innovation sector at all stages of their lifecycle/development.
* **Diversification**. Projects that support a business moving into new markets.
* **Supporting local supply chains**. We are keen to encourage businesses to explore local supplier options.

**What funding is available?**

Grants are available to assist new business start-ups (with the potential to achieve growth), existing businesses and inward investors with projects. Grants are also available to occupiers or property owners to improve the quantity, quality or refurbishment of commercial property.

**What business sectors are eligible?**

Funding can support businesses in most sectors with projects that meet the above objectives but as this is a competitive bid, priority will be given to businesses operating in one of our key sectors i.e.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Construction
 | * Creative & Media
 | * Energy
 |
| * Engineering
 | * Environmental
 | * ICT
 |
| * Manufacturing
 | * Renewables
 | * Research, Development & Innovation
 |
| * Services
 | * Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure
 |  |

**What activities, if any, are ineligible?**

Whilst a wide range of sectors and activities are supported, the list is not exhaustive. The Council will not support any illegal activity or any other activity which the panel deem may bring the Council’s reputation into question. The following lists **activities** that are **excluded** from grant support.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Nude or semi-nude modelling
 | * Counselling
 |
| * Offering of sexual services of any kind
 | * Life coaching
 |
| * Pornography
 | * Acupuncture
 |
| * Gambling
 | * Tattooists
 |
| * Gaming Centres
 | * Promotion of particular religious or political activities
 |
| * Sun bed services
 | * Speculative Building
 |
| * Alternatives therapies, products and medicines.
 | * Complimentary medical treatments, cosmetic products and aesthetic procedures.
 |

**What costs does the grant support?**

The grant will support both capital and revenue costs associated with the project and examples of each follow.

*Examples of expenditure on capital items:*

* Plant, machinery and equipment that increase capacity, productivity, reduce energy consumption, etc.
* Commercial property refurbishment and improvements, including works to premises to increase capacity, support diversification, or measures that reduce energy consumption.
* Measures directly supporting innovation.
* Measures to increase and manage stockholding.
* IT infrastructure and hardware that supports the adoption of new technologies in the business, improves operational efficiency and processes, supports changes in working patterns, etc.

**NB:** some capital items may be ineligible.

*Examples of eligible revenue costs include:*

* Activities requiring specialist advice e.g. linking or integration of IT systems to support improvements in operational efficiency and processes, changes in working practices; development of marketing and e-marketing strategies to align with changes in customer buying behaviour, targeting new customer markets, etc.; feasibility studies to assess development opportunities, etc.
* Measures directly supporting innovation.
* Development of marketing and promotional materials, including websites where the aim is to support the business in attracting new customers, adopting new sales channels, introducing new communication methods, or promoting products or services.

* Software that enables the business to improve efficiency, increase capacity, manage stock, integrate business processes, manage new ways of working, etc.

* Software or system development costs.
* Audit and registration fees for accreditations supporting business growth, improved operational processes, diversification into new sectors, etc.
* Product certification and testing.
* Staff training that enhances skills, workforce flexibility, etc.

**Programme Outputs and Outcomes**

As part of your proposal you will need to demonstrate how you meet specific and measurable outputs and outcomes which contribute to the overall Shared Prosperity Fund aims.

Projects which secure funding via the Local Business Priority Fund 2 will need to demonstrate at least one output and at least one outcome from the list below. All outcomes need to be achieved and evidenced by 31st January 2026.

**Outputs**

• Number of commercial buildings developed or improved.

• Amount of commercial buildings developed or improved (m2).

• Number of businesses receiving grants.

**Outcomes**

• Jobs created.

• Jobs safeguarded.

* Number of businesses introducing new products.
* Number of businesses with improved productivity.
* Increased number of innovation active SMEs.
* Number of businesses adopting new or improved products or services.

• Diversification into new sectors or markets.

*See* ***Appendix 1*** *for description and evidence requirements for outputs and outcomes*.

**Project Consents**

It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that all relevant and statutory permissions are in place to enable the proposed project to be delivered prior to commencement. Consequently, applicants will need to obtain any listed building consent, building control or planning permission prior to applying or, will need to evidence an achievable timescale for securing such permissions.

Any property included in the application for enhancement and/or improvement ***must*** be either held in freehold by the applicant or, the applicant will need to have a lease in place and secured their landlords written agreement to any proposed works.

**How much can I apply for?**

Grants of between £25,000 to £100,000 are available.

There is a limited allocation of grant funding, which will be awarded on a competitive basis

Grants for both capital and revenue costs will be calculated at up to 70% of the eligible costs and will be awarded at the discretion of the Neath Port Talbot Council.

The grant rate will be set at the minimum level needed for the project to proceed. This will be determined on an individual project basis, at assessment stage, taking into consideration anticipated project outputs and outcomes, in line with the aims of the fund and, the project’s potential to deliver value for money and economic benefit.

**Please Note:**

* **You cannot commit to expenditure** before receiving a written offer from the Council.
* The Council has the discretion to check whether a business or applicant is in arrears with any payment to Neath Port Talbot Council and, if found to be so, the offer of support may be withdrawn.
* This Funding is subject to the UK Government Subsidy Control Act (2022).

**Indicative Timetable (subject to change):**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Fund opens with a time limited open call for Expressions of Interest and Full Applications  |  Wednesday 2nd April 2025 |
| Closing date for Expressions of Interest | Tuesday 15th April 2025 |
| Closing date for Full Applications  | Monday 21st April 2025 |
| Assessment of Applications  | 22nd -6th May 2025 |
| Funding Panel (decisions made)  | 7th – 9th May 2025 |
| Delivery period | 12th May 2025 – 31st January 2026 (8.5 months) |

**Please note that capital projects will be required to demonstrate that they have all statutory consents (e.g. planning, listed building consent, etc) in place prior to applying for funding.**

**ALL PROJECTS MUST BE COMPLETED BY 31ST JANUARY 2026.**

**How to I apply?**

There is a two-stage application process:

1. **Request an application** via the link that will be advertised once the “call for applications” is open. You will be sent an application form to complete, and this will need to be submitted along with quotes for your project expenditure.
2. **Complete an Application Form** and return to business@npt.gov.uk by the advertised deadline. Receipt of your application will be acknowledged via email, along with the proposed timescale for project appraisal and when you can expect to receive confirmation of whether your project has been successful.

**Procurement Guidelines**

It is a requirement that all services and works are procured in line with the SPF Procurement Guidelines and the Council’s Corporate Procurement Rules (CPR’s).

*See* ***Appendix 2*** *for guidance.*

**All applicants must adhere to this procedure**.

Failure to fully comply with the procurement guidelines will render the costs ineligible for assistance under this fund.

If you need advice, please email business@npt.gov.uk to request a call back.

**Further Procurement Guidance to avoid conflicts of interest**

We recognise that it is possible that applicants / developers or persons connected with them (such as relatives, business partners or friends), may wish to tender for a contract being offered by the applicant/developer. This is acceptable, but applicants will need to ensure that the tendering process is an open, transparent and fair manner, i.e. you do not give one person or company any advantage over another.

As appropriate measures must be taken to identify, remedy and prevent any conflicts of interest, if an applicant/developer or any other person connected with them, has an interest in any of the potential bids for a contract offered as part of the project, the applicant should ensure:

* The interested party involvement is declared to the Council at application stage.
* Specifications and evaluation criteria are not biased or tailored to favour one solution or any one party over another.
* The person or party with an interest is not part of any tender evaluation so the process is fair to all.
* It is clear who has the final approval even if it’s the grant applicant.
* Every stage of the procurement process is formally recorded.
* If contract would normally be subject to a single tender procedure, written quotes from at least two other suppliers is recommended.

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that there is fairness in the spending of public money and that the integrity of the applicant is not compromised.

Funding recipients must employ an appropriately qualified professional to assess tenders, supervise project works and provide certificates for completed works. This cost may be included in the qualifying expenditure for funding assistance up to a limit of 10% of the total project cost provided, it has been accounted for in the application form and written agreement has been sought from the Council prior to the engagement of consultants. Consultant must hold qualifications appropriate to the nature of the works being proposed as part of the project.

**Changes to the specification or contract**

If any changes are required to the specification after seeking quotes / tenders which affects the original scope of the requirement, a new procurement exercise may need to be undertaken to ensure the best value for money has been achieved. This may occur where there are unforeseen additions to the original requirement, where tenders are received in excess of the available budget, where funding levels change etc. The grant applicant must inform the Council who will offer appropriate advice.

**Can I use credit cards and cash as well as my bank account to pay my project costs?**

Payments for project expenditure must be made from a business bank account as follows:

**Self-employed and sole traders** – must use a dedicated business account separate from that used for personal living expenses.

**Partnerships, Limited Companies, etc.** – must use a bank account in the business name.

Purchases by **credit card** will be accepted where the card is held in the name and address of the grant applicant. Payments against credit card statements must be made from the above business bank account. Evidence will be required to show that the value of such credit card purchases have been paid off the relevant statement.

Payments by **cash** **will not** be accepted.

In submitting your application, you confirm that you:

* Are able to complete the project and draw down the grant within **timescales being advertised for this project.**
* Have a nominated business bank account from which you will make the project payments.
* Acknowledge that Neath Port Talbot Council will use your business and project details in future promotional activity e.g. press releases, case studies, etc.
* Acknowledge that Neath Port Talbot Council is required to publish details of grant awards.

**Assessment Process**

Applications will be assessed and prioritised in line with the following criteria:

* Ability to meet one or more of the Fund Priorities.
* Can demonstrate a clearly identified and articulated need.
* Will deliver against outputs and outcomes.
* Can deliver within the timeframe (all projects must be completed by 31st January 2026 at the latest).
* Value for money.
* All applications will be considered by a Funding Panel which will include NPT Council lead officers.
* Applicant will be informed of decision and offer letter issued.

*See* ***Appendix 3*** *for details on assessment criteria.*

**How do I draw down the funding?**

Your offer letter will include details of evidence that we will require e.g. copy invoices, **dedicated business** bank statements, evidence of other funding sources, etc.

**Will I receive any ongoing support?**

The Economic Development Team will stay in contact with you and will visit you to monitor your project. Ongoing advice and assistance is available by contacting the Team.

**Can I apply for further funding?**

Further applications may be made, if funding is available. However, any previous projects must have been completed and the grant fully drawn down. The new project will need to evidence job creation and/or safeguarding distinct from that in previous applications.

**General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)**

Your information will be processed in line with the Neath Port Talbot CBC – [Economic Development Services Privacy Notice](https://businessinneathporttalbot.com/privacy-policy/)  a hard copy of which is available on request.

**Contact**

If you require any further information, please email: business@npt.gov.uk referencing LBPF2

**Appendix 1 – Programme Outputs and Outcomes**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Output** | **Definition** | **Audit Evidence – check below** |
| Number of commercial buildings developed or improved | The total number of commercial buildings developed or improved and are ready for occupancy immediately. | Details of work, completion photos |
| Amount of commercial buildings developed or improved (m2) | The total square meterage of commercial space developed or improved and are ready for occupancy immediately. | Details of work, completion photos |
| Number of Businesses receiving grants | Number of businesses receiving grants. Businesses here will either be:- The end beneficiary is the recipient of the award itself.- Grant means a cash payment that is not repaid.  | Project Monitoring Database, Monitoring Claim Form and supporting evidence |
|  |
| **Outcome** | **Definition** | **Audit Evidence** |
| Number of jobs created  | Number of jobs created as a direct result of the supported project. | Signed confirmation from employer of newly created job, recruitment process, job advert |
| Jobs safeguarded | A safeguarded job is a permanent and paid job that was at risk prior to support being provided, and which the support helped the business to retain. | Signed confirmation from employer of safeguarded job |
| Number of businesses introducing new products. | Number of new products introduced as a direct result of the supported project. | Signed confirmation from business owner/s  |
| Number of businesses with improved productivity. | Number of businesses with improved productivity as a direct result of the supported project. | Signed confirmation and explanation from business owner/s |
| Increased number of innovation active SMEs. | Number of innovation active SMEs. | Evidence of increased numbers. |
| Number of businesses adopting new or improved products or services. | Number of new or improved products or services adopted by business as a direct result of the supported project. | Signed confirmation and explanation from business owner/s |
| Diversification into new sectors or markets. | Number of businesses successfully entering new sectors or markets. | Signed confirmation and explanation from business owner/s |

**Appendix 2**

**Neath Port Talbot Council**

**UK Shared Prosperity Fund Procurement Guidelines**

The following must be adhered to:

1. **If you have your own Procurement Poilcy -** A copy must be provided to Neath Port Talbot Council’s UKSPF Programme Management Office for their records.

1. **If you do not have a Procurement Policy, you MUST follow the following rules to demonstrate value for money:**

Contracts up to £10,000 – **1 (one)** written quotation from a competitive source to demonstrate good practice and value for money. Copy of quotation retained for records. All figures include VAT.

Contracts £10,000 to £100,000 – A minimum of **2 (two)** quotations must be sought from competitive sources with at least **1 (one)** quotations being received. The quotations must be based on:

* the same specification of requirements
* the same evaluation criteria and evaluated on a like for like basis. It is good practice to establish an evaluation panel.
* the same closing date for receipt of quotes, after which no submissions will be accepted.

A documented record of the quotations sought, the evaluation process and the decision to award must be recorded for audit purposes.

\*In the event that only **1 (one)** quotation is received, you must contact the Council to provide details and justification of the procurement process you have undertaken. The decision to proceed to purchase must be approved by the Council on a case by case basis. Copy of all quotations and correspondence retained for records. All figures include VAT.

Over £100,000 up to Procurement Act 2023 threshold (currently £214,904 for goods/services and £5,372,609 for works). A minimum of **3 (three)** quotations must be sought from competitive sources. In the event that less than two quotations are received, you must contact the Council to provide details and justification of the procurement process you have undertaken. The decision to proceed to purchase must be approved by the Council on a case by case basis. Copy of all quotations and correspondence retained for records. All figures include VAT.

All those invited to provide a quotation must be provided with the same information:

* the same specification of requirements
* an outline of the evaluation criteria against which the contract will be awarded and
* the same closing date for receipt of quotes, after which no submissions will be accepted.

The evaluation process you follow must be consistent with the original evaluation criteria outlined and a justification sheet produced detailing on what basis the successful tender was awarded. It is the best practice to establish an evaluation panel to evaluation tenders.

For Procurement processes with a value above the UK Threshold, contact your Council Project Officer.

**Appendix 3**

**Application Assessment Criteria**

Each application to the grant fund will be assessed against the following weighted scoring criteria. Each criterion will be scored from 0-10.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Scoring Criteria** | **Maximum points to be awarded** | **Weighting****%** |
| Ability to meet one or more of the key themes of the fund and will deliver against a range of outputs and outcomes | 10 | 20 |
| Ability to evidence how the proposed project contributes to local economic priorities and cultivates a more dynamic, innovative, greener and versatile economy. | 10 | 20 |
| Extent to which the project can demonstrate building resilience, capacity, increasing productivity, improving skills or developing their flexibility to respond to the changing needs of the wider economy. | 10 | 15 |
| Sustainability of the proposal, what is the completion, continuation or exit strategy | 10 | 15 |
| Value for Money / Financially Sustainable | 10 | 15 |
| Extent to which the project is deliverable within the programme timeframe | 10 | 15 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Scoring benchmarks** | **Score** |
| **Excellent*** An excellent response provided, clearly demonstrating a very high level of understanding of the fund requirements.
* The response inspired an extremely high level of confidence in the applicant’s understanding of the fund criteria.
* No weaknesses or concerns.
 | **10** |
| **Very Good*** A very good response provided, demonstrating a very good level of understanding of the fund requirements.
* The response inspired a very good level of confidence in the applicant’s understanding of the fund criteria.
* Strengths far outweighed any weaknesses in the response.
 | **8** |
| **Good*** A good response provided, demonstrating a good level of understanding of the fund requirements.
* The response inspired a good level of confidence in the applicant’s understanding of the fund criteria.
* Strengths outweighed any weaknesses in the response in most but not all respects.
 | **6** |
| **Satisfactory** * A satisfactory response provided, outlining a satisfactory level of understanding of the fund requirements.
* The response inspired a satisfactory level of the fund criteria.
* Strengths marginally outweighed the weaknesses in the response.
 | **4** |
| **Limited** * A limited response provided, outlining a limited understanding of the fund requirements.
* The response inspired a low level of confidence in the applicants understanding of the fund criteria.
* Weaknesses far outweighed any strength in the response or contained significant omissions or concerns.
 | **2** |
| **Unacceptable** * No response or unacceptable or insufficient information provided.
* Response fails to meet the requirements with no relevant detail provided to demonstrate any understanding of the fund requirements.
* No strong aspects to the response.
 | **0** |

**Appendix 4**

**Subsidy Control**

 The Local Business Priority Fund is being operated under UK Subsidy Rules.

Each application will be assessed to establish whether the support amounts to a subsidy under the UK Subsidy rules. All applicants will be required to answer the following 4 questions.

If your answer to all 4 of the following questions is ‘yes’, the assistance is a subsidy. If one or more of your answers are ‘no’, it is not a subsidy. If you are unsure, more detail is provided in the statutory guidance (see also [Further Help](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/subsidy-control-rules-key-requirements-for-public-authorities/subsidy-control-rules-quick-guide-to-key-requirements-for-public-authorities#further-help)).

Applicants are required to a provide a rationale to their assessment in Section 9 of the application form.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Is the financial assistance given, directly or indirectly, from public resources by a public authority?** YES/ NO | ‘Public authority’ includes any entity which exercises functions of a public nature. This includes public authorities at any level of central, devolved, regional or local government and non-governmental bodies that are performing a public function.‘Public resources’ include public funds that are administered by the UK government, the devolved governments, or local authorities, whether they are given directly, through public bodies (such as agencies), or through private bodies. |
| **Does the financial assistance confer an economic advantage on one or more enterprises?**YES/ NO | The recipient must be an ‘enterprise’: any entity engaged in an economic activity, which means offering goods and services on a market.The financial assistance must confer an economic advantage, meaning that it is provided on favourable terms. Financial assistance will not confer an economic advantage if it could reasonably be considered to have been obtained on the same terms on the market. |
| **Is the financial assistance specific? That is, has the economic advantage been provided to one (or more than one) enterprise, but not to others?**YES/NO  | This covers financial assistance that is provided to specific beneficiaries determined on a discretionary basis by the government, as well as assistance that benefits (directly or indirectly) only enterprises in a particular sector, industry or area, or with certain characteristics. |
| **Will the financial assistance have, or is it capable of having, an effect on competition or investment within the UK, or trade or investment between the UK and another country or territory?**YES/NO |  |

Where there is a subsidy, we will work with you to ensure that any support is compliant with the public subsidy rules.