

April 2024

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



**Round 2:** UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) Financial Year 2024/25

(For applications relating to: Local Business, Community & Place, People & Skills)



**Contents:**

What is the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)? ..... 2

What is the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)?..... 2

What advice and information is available to help applicants? ..... 2

Who can apply for grant funding?..... 3

What do I need to know before applying? ..... 4

What can be funded using UKSPF grants? ..... 5

What cannot be funded using UKSPF grants?..... 6

Can I apply for funding for an ongoing project, or apply retrospectively? ..... 6

When should I apply to Dorset Council for a UKSPF grant? ..... 6

What financial contribution will I need to make if I receive a grant? ..... 7

Can I apply for more than one grant?..... 7

Who decides whether an application is successful? ..... 7

What criteria will my application be judged on? ..... 7

What is the difference between an output and an outcome in the UKSPF prospectus? ..... 8

What is considered capital and revenue expenditure in the UKSPF prospectus?..... 8

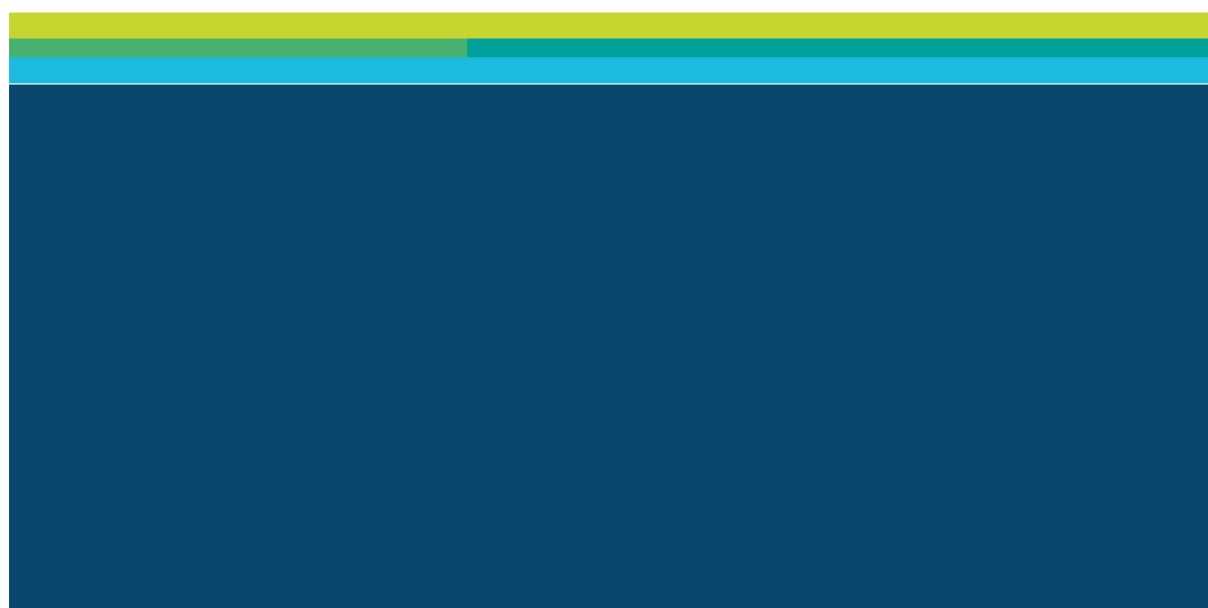
Can UKSPF funding be used to pay for my time to develop a specific project?..... 8

Can start-up businesses apply?..... 9

What documents will start-ups need to provide? ..... 9

Are farms and farm parks eligible for UKSPF and REPF funding?..... 10

Key links and grant application dates. .... 10



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## **What is the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)?**

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK by investing in communities and place, local business, and people and skills.

This fund succeeds previous EU funds and seeks to invest in domestic priorities by enabling local decisions to be made on how local communities and businesses can best be assisted, in line with the Levelling Up objectives.

For further information on the background, delivery, objectives, and parameters of the UKSPF please see the 'UK Shared Prosperity Fund Prospectus', available at: [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus).

## **What is the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)?**

The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) is an accompaniment to the UKSPF which succeeds EU funding from LEADER and the Growth Programme, which were part of the Rural Development Programme for England. It aims to use capital funding for small businesses and community infrastructure to address specific challenges faced by rural areas such as: lower productivity rates, poorer connectivity, and poorer access to key services.

For further information on the REPF please see the 'Rural England Prosperity Fund Prospectus', available at: [Rural England Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus).

## **What advice and information is available to help applicants?**

Dorset Council offers online information on the UKSPF and REPF, available at: [UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Dorset Council](https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/levelling-up). This includes separate webpages and advice specific to business and community applications:

- Dorset Council information on business grant applications: [Business grants from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Dorset Council](https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/levelling-up/business-grants).
- Dorset Council information on community grant applications: [Community group and organisation grants from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Dorset Council](https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/levelling-up/community-group-and-organisation-grants).
- Dorset Council UK Shared Prosperity Fund Grant Scheme Document: [UKSPF Scheme Doc - 09 March 2023 \(dorsetcouncil.gov.uk\)](https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/levelling-up/ukspf-scheme-doc-09-march-2023).

Alongside providing access to the Grant Scheme Document, these webpages also include a link to the 'Checklist for Applicants', which gives guidance on the process of gathering the information needed for our application process.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) provides additional information about the UKSPF and REPF that you can access. If you would like further, detailed information on these please see [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: frequently asked questions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-frequently-asked-questions)

If you require further assistance from Dorset Council on any matters related to the UKSPF and REPF, such as if there any questions our FAQ document has not been able to answer, please email: [sharedprosperityfund@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:sharedprosperityfund@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk).

### Who can apply for grant funding?

The UKSPF and REPF are intended to help communities across the country, people living/working in the UK and businesses operating in the UK. In Dorset, enterprises and community organisations located and active, inside of the Dorset Council geographical area, are eligible to apply for funding. Any organisation with legal status can apply for funding. This may include:

Local authorities	public sector organisations
Higher/further education institutions	private sector companies
Voluntary organisations	registered Charities.
Community Interest Company (CIC)	Limited Companies
Sole traders	Cooperative or Community Benefit Society

Those outside of the Council area may be eligible providing that all activity funded by the UKSPF and REPF through Dorset Council takes place within the local authority area. Maps of these areas are available here: [Magic Map Application \(defra.gov.uk\)](https://defra.gov.uk/magic-map-application), using the filters available in the table of contents.

To access a map of the area in which UKSPF funding is available, follow:

'Table of Contents' -> 'Administrative Geographies' -> 'Other Administrative Boundaries' -> 'Counties, Metropolitan Districts and Unitary Authorities (GB)'.

The Dorset Council area is the region delineated in red surrounding the county town of Dorchester.

To access a map of the areas in which REPF funding is available, follow:

'Table of Contents' -> 'Administrative Geographies' -> 'Other Administrative Boundaries' -> 'Rural England Prosperity Fund'.

Businesses and organisations within Bournemouth and Christchurch and Poole (BCP) should apply directly to the BCP council for details of their UKSPF funding arrangements.

### **What do I need to know before applying?**

A checklist is available through this link: [Business grants from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund \(REPF\) - Dorset Council](#), to check documentation required for upload with your grant submission. You need to be aware that we expect applicants to demonstrate:

- The business/organisation has sufficient financial resources available to cash flow the project and provide the match funding required.
- Businesses must represent the applicant's primary source of income.
- Businesses must be registered either on Companies House or with HMRC and have a unique tax reference (UTR). Farm based businesses will need a single business identifier (SBI) number.
- Charities need to provide their charity reference number plus Companies House reference (if applicable). Community organisation should quote their CIC number or affiliated status ie. Sports club.
- Value for money by providing comparative quotes or catalogue listings. If below £1500 2 quotes or references are acceptable. For items above £1500 3 quotes or references should be supplied. If the above is not possible you need to explain why.
- Planning permission should be in place before a submission is made. You should have a realistic timeframe for completion. Note that no funds are available after March 2025.
- No work should start before a grant funding award is made. Any expenditure committed or incurred prior to accepting and signing a Grant Funding Agreement is entirely at the applicant's own risk.
- All awards are made in arrears on completion/delivery of the project. Please ensure that you have sufficient funds to bankroll the project to completion.
- The eligible grant amount will be reimbursed on production of receipted invoices/evidence/photos of payment from a business bank account and evidence of delivery/completion of the project. Grant payments will normally be made in a single payment upon completion – for large projects stage payments may be negotiated on an individual basis.
- Where the cost of the project has decreased the award will be reduced in line with meeting 50% of the project costs. No increase in project costs will be accepted once the grant has been agreed.

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## What can be funded using UKSPF grants?

Grant interventions are available through Dorset Council for projects relating to 'Communities and Place' and 'Local Business'. These interventions are listed in the [Grant Scheme Document](#).

Three interventions relating to 'Communities and Place' are available for grants through Dorset Council:

1. E2: Community Infrastructure Grants, these grants are to provide support for grassroots community led local development, supporting local groups to lead on what their community needs and wants. Community infrastructure is the facilities, structure, and environment of a neighbourhood (sometime referred to as the built environment), which contributes to the quality of life and overall safety and health of a community.
2. E12: Community Infrastructure Grants specifically for Parish and Town Councils only.
3. E13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change. (Delivered through Healthy Homes Dorset for domestic properties.)

Six interventions relating to 'Local Business' are available as grants through Dorset Council:

1. E18: Supporting Made Smarter Adoption: Providing tailored expert advice, matched grants and leadership training to enable manufacturing SMEs to adopt industrial digital technology solutions including artificial intelligence; robotics and autonomous systems; additive manufacturing; industrial Internet of Things (IoT); virtual reality; data analytics.
2. E20: Research and development (R&D) grants supporting the development of innovative products and services.
3. E24: Funding for business support in addition to grants for Startups and growth and development of enterprises.
4. E26: Support for growing the local social economy, including support for community businesses, co-operatives, and social enterprises.
5. E28: Export grants to support businesses to grow their overseas trading, supporting local employment.
6. E31: Funding to support relevant feasibility studies potentially leading to new projects.

To find further information on who can benefit from funding allocated for 'People and Skills', see:

- The Dorset Council website for 'UKSPF People and Skills'.



- Further maths skills opportunities, provided under “Multiply”, with information available on the Dorset council webpage [Multiply initiative - Dorset Council](#).

### **What cannot be funded using UKSPF grants?**

Section 7.2 of the [Grant Scheme Document](#) (p.24) outlines what is ‘ineligible expenditure’ for UKSPF and REPF grants in the Dorset Council area. Examples include daily running costs, stock, motor vehicles.

### **Can I apply for funding for an ongoing project, or apply retrospectively?**

The UKSPF does not fund business-as-usual activity. If an application ties into an ongoing project through a new phase, this may be a suitable piece of ongoing work for a UKSPF grant, provided it meets the objectives set out in the scheme document and the timeframe for Round 2. (even if it only covers one phase or aspect of the work).

Grant applications can only be made for projects that are going to be undertaken between the grant award date and December 2024.

Retrospective applications are not possible.

### **When should I apply to Dorset Council for a UKSPF grant?**

The next round of applications for Dorset Council UKSPF and REPF grant funding opens on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April and closes on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June.

To begin an application as a business, please visit: [Business grants from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund \(REPF\) - Dorset Council](#) and complete your application form within the timescale outlined above. Please note that all business grant applicants must undertake a business support meeting with our partner, WSX Enterprise, prior to making this application.

To begin an application as a community group/organisation, please visit: [Community group and organisation grants from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Dorset Council](#) and complete your application form within the timescale outlined above. If you would like help with your application, support is available through the Community Action Network (CAN) from [bekki.stalker@can100.org](mailto:bekki.stalker@can100.org) and from their website: [Community Action Network \(can100.org\)](#).

Please be aware that any funds awarded following a successful application will need to be spent on your project, and accounted for by Dorset Council, by the end of December 2024.

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## **What financial contribution will I need to make if I receive a grant?**

'Local Business' grants under UKSPF will require 100% match-funding from applicants. Grants can range from £2,000 to £20,000 per business and the size of the grant applied for will, therefore, affect the amount of money your business will need to contribute. For example, a grant award of £5,000 will require match-funding of £5,000 from the recipient for their project, which should cost £10,000 in total.

'Community and Place' grants will require 10% match-funding from applicants in cash or funding-in-kind. These grants can range from £1,000 to £15,000 per organisation, so the match-funding required in the case of a successful grant award will vary from £100 to £1,500 depending on the size of the grant requested.

## **Can I apply for more than one grant?**

Each business, partnership, or community group/organisation can only receive one grant award through the UKSPF.

However, if an application to Dorset Council for the first round of funding (2023-2024 financial year) was unsuccessful, it is still possible to submit another application for further rounds of applications (in the 2024-2025 financial year).

Please note that grants under 'Low Carbon Dorset' are also UKSPF funded and count as an award under the scheme.

## **Who decides whether an application is successful?**

Dorset Council's UKSPF Grants Panel made up of internal Officers and independent reviewers will individually assess each scored application and assess against the scheme criteria. The Grants Panel will make all decisions as to whether to award in full, in part, or reject. Please see the Grant Scheme document for further information, at: [UKSPF Scheme Doc - 09 March 2023 \(dorsetcouncil.gov.uk\)](#).

## **What criteria will my application be judged on?**

All grants are competitive. An application will be judged based on the criteria in the Scheme Document. However, the information you provide should include reference to:

- How you will contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the prospectus and scheme document.



- Where a project is set to take place ie. within a valid funding area.
- Whether it will be possible to achieve within the timeframe required.
- Whether the application requests support for one of the uses listed as being ineligible for funding.
- How the grant will bring a greater amount of good to the local area and/or your enterprise.
- How your grant will be a match to Dorset Council's priorities and values.
- How you have considered sustainability and environmental impact.

### **What is the difference between an output and an outcome in the UKSPF prospectus?**

An output is what is achieved by completing the project ie. refurbishing/improving a community sport changing room. The Outcomes are the wider benefit of that output ie. the number of people now using the facility; does it provide a better solution; is there an improved perception of the facility.

The UKSPF Grant Scheme Document ([UKSPF Scheme Doc - 09 March 2023 \(dorsetcouncil.gov.uk\)](#)) outlines the outputs and outcomes expected to be delivered by businesses and community groups/organisations by using the awarded grant for projects as described in their application.

### **What is considered capital and revenue expenditure in the UKSPF prospectus?**

Capital spend is usually a one-off outlay for an asset, such as machinery or infrastructure improvements. Revenue spend is a repeated expense but, in this fund, does not include typical running costs such as utilities, rent, rates, planning permission, replacement of equipment, land or stock.

### **Can UKSPF funding be used to pay for my time to develop a specific project?**

Although revenue funding is available to applicants, the use of a grant to pay for one's own labour as a business owner would not be in line with the terms and conditions outlined in section 7.5.1 of the UKSPF Prospectus, available at: [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). Staff costs are also unable to be paid from revenue funds awarded to an applicant.

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## Can start-up businesses apply?

Yes – if the business is within the first 1-36 months of trading and meet the eligibility criteria:

- You live in the UK.
- You are over 18.
- You have a UK based business that's been trading for less than 36 months.
- Does not exceed HMRC subsidy rules.

Start-up grants available are between £1,000 - £5,000 with 100% match funding (ie. 1:1). The fund is awarded to enable small, developing businesses grow, develop and stay in Dorset.

Business activity must be within the geographical are of Dorset Council and meet the objectives of encouraging new enterprise and improving economic growth and stability.

Particular focus is given to automation, digital capabilities and low carbon investments.

Those considering starting a business (pre-startups) can take advantage of the business support through our provider WSX, who can advise, support development of business plans, help you plan for other grants and funding opportunities.

As part of our due diligence in awarding grants further financial checks including credit checks may be undertaken.

Before application you will need to arrange a consultation with our business support partner who will support and advise you on your application. You will also need to obtain a reference number before making an online submission.

Further support is also available at Government Startup: [Get help and support for your business - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/get-help-and-support-for-your-business).

## What documents will start-ups need to provide?

It is recognised that supporting documents within the main scheme may not be appropriate for younger enterprises. Supporting evidence for Startup grants, required for upload at the submission stage includes:

- Company registrations number or UTR (for self-employed). Where this is not available, please explain why.
- Business Plan – 3yr minimum with Cash Flow (essential).
- Additional Questions we would expect to be answered within your submission includes:
  - Do you have previous experience of operating in the sector?
  - Can you prove business acumen or knowledge?
  - How do you see the grant being used
- Any previous supporting information, including linked businesses (as relevant)
- Evidence of match funding. (Essential)

- Relevant Insurances i.e. Employers' insurance, Public Liability (as relevant)
- An opening statement from an accountant with contact details. (where possible)

### Are farms and farm parks eligible for UKSPF and REPF funding?

Business applications relating to farming activities, agricultural food production, are ineligible for the UKSPF and REPF – as is the use of this funding to purchase farm equipment.

However, rural businesses and organisations, including farm-businesses, tourism enterprises and businesses with links to farms are eligible for funding and are encouraged to apply where it would benefit them to do so. For example, this includes farm business diversification projects outside of agriculture, such as creating rural leisure and tourism facilities, expanding or improving growth in your business through automation or new products.

For assistance with funding farming projects, other DEFRA schemes such as the 'Farming Investment Fund' ([Farming Investment Fund \(FIF\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)) are available.

### Key links and grant application dates.

Round 2 of funding applications is open from 29<sup>th</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024. All projects given UKSPF and REPF funding **must** be complete by the end of December 2024.

UKSPF Homepage: [UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Dorset Council](#)

REPF Webpage: [Rural England Prosperity Fund \(REPF\) - Dorset Council](#)

Business Applicants' Information Page and Portal: [Business grants from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund \(REPF\) - Dorset Council](#)

Community Applicants' Information Page and Portal: [Community group and organisation grants from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Dorset Council](#)

UKSPF Scheme Document: [UKSPF Scheme Doc - 09 March 2023 \(dorsetcouncil.gov.uk\)](#)

Contact the UKSPF team by email at [sharedprosperityfund@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:sharedprosperityfund@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk) for further enquiries or details.