

Local Economic Partnership

Business Transformation Grant

Applicant Guidelines 2026-2027

Contents

Section 1: Introduction & Background	2
Section 2: Eligibility Criteria	5
Section 3: What Can be funded	7
Section 4: Grant levels and match funding requirement	10
Section 5: Procurement Requirements	11
Section 6: Application Process	15
Section 7: Assessment Criteria	18
Section 8: Post Award Process	26
Section 9: Verification & Monitoring	29
Section 10: Terms & Conditions	34
Section 11: Quick Guide for Applicants	42

Section 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Programme Overview

The Business Transformation Grant forms part of the Derry Strabane Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Action Plan 2025–2028, funded by the Department for the Economy’s Regional Balance Fund and delivered by Derry City and Strabane District Council.

The programme is designed to support micro and small businesses, including social enterprises, within the Derry City and Strabane area to:

- Accelerate business growth
- Improve competitiveness
- Create employment opportunities

1.2 Key Programme Details

Grant Level:	Minimum £5,000 – Maximum Grant £25,000 per business
Grant Rate:	70% funded. 30% match funding required by applicant.

1.3 Key Timelines

Application Opens:	9 th June 2026
Application Closes:	16 th July 2026 at 12 noon
Letter of Offer Issued:	October 2026
Project Delivery:	Projects must be completed within 12 weeks of the Letter of Offer being issued.
Claim Deadline:	January 2027

1.4 Information Sessions

Join us at one of three information sessions to explore the programme in more detail, ask questions, and identify how your proposal could align with funding priorities.

Date	Time	Location	Registration
12 th June 2026	12 noon	Online	Register for online workshop
17 th June 2026	12.30pm	Bishop’s Gate Hotel, Bishop Street, Derry	Register for in person workshop
24 th June 2026	10am	Council Offices, 47 Derry Road, Strabane	Register for in person workshop

1.5 Purpose of the Grant

The Business Transformation Grant is designed to support micro and small businesses, including social enterprises, in the Derry City and Strabane area to achieve sustainable, measurable growth.

The programme aims to:

- **Increase productivity and efficiency within local businesses;**
- **Strengthen expansion & competitiveness through investment in new technologies;**
- **Encourage innovation and adoption of new or improved business practices;**
- **Contribute to regional economic growth and balance.**

This support is targeted at businesses that are:

- **Ready to grow**
- **Facing investment barriers**
- **Able to demonstrate clear outcomes from funding**

1.6 What is Transformational Growth?

For this grant, transformational growth refers to:

A significant step-change in how a business operates, performs or competes, resulting in measurable increases in productivity, capacity or market reach.

1.7 Examples of Transformational Activity

Projects demonstrating growth may include:

- Introducing **new technology or automation** that significantly improves efficiency
- Increasing **production or service capacity** to meet growing demand
- Developing **new products or services** enabled by investment
- Implementing systems that **fundamentally change business operations**

1.8 Core Principle of Funding

To be considered transformational a project must:

- **Enable growth that would not otherwise occur, or**
- **Significantly accelerates growth, and**
- Lead to **clear, measurable outcomes** (e.g. increased turnover, job creation, higher productivity)

Section 2: Eligibility Criteria

2.1 Who Can Apply?

Your business will be eligible if it meets the following criteria:

- ✓ The business is an existing private business or social economy enterprise that is actively trading commercially, for a minimum of 12 months from date of application; evidenced by providing your self-assessment number or Limited Company details and bank statements.
- ✓ The business employs a maximum of 49 full-time equivalent employees.
- ✓ The business has a registered trading address in Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) area.
- ✓ Operational dedicated business bank account.
- ✓ NOT currently in receipt of Invest NI or other grants for the same expenditure.
- ✓ The business is appropriately insured or prepared to obtain appropriate insurance if awarded a grant (building, contents or public liability insurance as appropriate).
- ✓ The applicant is aged 18 or above at the application deadline.
- ✓ The business can deliver the project, pay the suppliers and submit the grant claim in the given timeframe.

2.2 Who Cannot Apply?

You are NOT eligible if:

- ✗ Your business is currently receiving Invest NI grant funding or other grants for the same expenditure.

- X Your business is registered as a primary agriculture, forestry or fisheries business.
- X Your business is not actively trading for a minimum of 12 months.
- X You are located outside the Derry City and Strabane District Council area.
- X You employ 50 or more full-time equivalent staff.
- X Your business is in difficulty, (as defined under the State Aid rules, see section 2.4 Financial Viability), or has entered administration, receivership or liquidation.
- X You have outstanding debts to DCSDC or any government department.
- X You have been convicted of fraud in the last 5 years.

2.3 Other conditions relating to the funding include:

- Only one application per business/legal entity will be accepted. If your business operates multiple trading names under one legal entity, only one application is permitted.
- Group companies under common ownership are treated as a single entity.
- Applicants will be given a 12-week timeframe to complete their project, from the point of Letter of Offer. After this time DCSDC reserves the right to cancel the funding award. This will not apply in exceptional circumstances where the delay is beyond the control of an applicant and DCSDC have been notified and approval sought in advance.
- DCSDC reserves the right to cancel a funding award if we suspect fraud has been committed in any aspect of the funding.
- There is no automatic right granted to applicants or to appeal the decision about a funding application. However, applicants can resubmit for further Calls, providing funding has not concluded.

- DCSDC reserves the right to refuse or disallow any business whose activities may bring the Council into disrepute.

2.4 Financial Viability:

Regulations are in place to ensure that businesses which are supported under the programme are financially viable enterprises. At the point of application, all applicants are required to confirm that the business is not in difficulty as defined under the State Aid rules, the definition of which includes the following criteria:

- That more than half of its capital has not disappeared because of accumulated losses.
- That the business is not subject to collective insolvency proceedings, and that it does not fulfil the criteria under UK law for being placed in collective insolvency proceedings at the request of its creditors.
- That the business has not received rescue aid and has not yet reimbursed the loan or terminated the guarantee or has not received restructuring aid and is still subject to a restructuring plan.

All applicants are required to declare that the business is not in financial difficulty as defined by the above statements. DCSDC may carry out financial scrutiny of an applicant's business to ensure they meet these requirements.

Section 3: What can be funded

3.1 Eligible Expenditure Categories

This is a capital grant scheme to support the purchase of new capital items of equipment or machinery. The grant supports the following intervention areas:

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

Purchase of new capital equipment, machinery or technology to enhance business operations. Examples include:

- Manufacturing equipment and machinery
- Specialist tools and apparatus
- IT hardware
- Software (outright purchase only – subscriptions not permitted)
- Point-of-sale systems
- Commercial equipment
- Production line equipment
- Storage and handling equipment

SUSTAINABILITY & DECARBONISATION

Investments that reduce environmental impact and support net-zero targets. Examples include:

- Energy-efficient equipment and technology
- Renewable energy systems (solar, heat pumps)
- Waste reduction systems and equipment
- Electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- Energy management systems

3.2 Ineligible Items

The following items are NOT eligible:

- Second hand or refurbished equipment
- Servicing of existing equipment

- Vehicles (cars, vans, lorries)
- Mobile phones
- Capital improvements or building works to business premises that require planning or building control approval are not eligible. However, where all necessary approvals are already secured and the project can be completed by the claim deadline, DCSDC may consider applications on a case-by-case basis.
- Projects requiring statutory approval (e.g. Building Control & Planning permissions) that is not already in place at the time of application.
- ‘Business as usual’ activity (e.g. stock, routine upgrades, overheads, business running costs, consumable items, salaries).
- Hire Purchase arrangements.
- Cash payments made for purchases.

Please note this list is not exhaustive.

3.3 Cross-Category Projects

You may apply for support across multiple intervention categories within a single application, provided:

- Total grant request is a minimum of £5,000 (minimum project costs of £7,142.86)
- Total grant request does not exceed £25,000 (minimum project cost of £35,714.29)
- Each element clearly contributes to overall business growth objectives
- All elements can be delivered within the project timeframe

Section 4: Grant levels and match funding requirement

4.1 Grant Amount and Subvention Rate

- The minimum grant available is £5,000.
- The maximum grant available is £25,000.
- A maximum of 6 items can be applied for. Applicants are permitted to ‘bundle’ related items to one line item provided this is clearly outlined in the specification and returned quotations.
- The grant will cover 70% of the total eligible project cost
- Applicants must provide the remaining 30% as match funding.

Example 1 – Minimum Grant (£5,000)

- Minimum eligible project cost: £7,142.86
- Grant (70%): £5,000
- Applicant contribution (30%): £2,142.86

Example 2 – Maximum Grant (£25,000)

- Minimum eligible project cost: £35,714.29
- Grant (70%): £25,000
- Applicant contribution (30%): £10,714.29

VAT is not eligible as part of the grant.

- If your business is VAT registered, the grant will be calculated on the net cost (excluding VAT).
- If your business is not VAT registered, the grant will be calculated on the gross cost (including VAT).

4.2 Match Funding Requirements

Applicants must provide a minimum of 30% match funding from own resources. DCSDC may request evidence of your match funding if it is not clearly shown in the bank statements submitted with your application as business reserves or savings. This evidence can include letters of commitment, loan agreements etc.

Section 5: Procurement Requirements

5.1 Procurement Thresholds

You must obtain quotations as follows:

Total Cost per Item	Minimum Quotations Required	Acceptable Format
Up to £10,000	2 quotations	At least 2 Price-checks per item from <u>different</u> suppliers/ internet quotations are acceptable
£10,001 and above	3 quotations	At least 3 written quotations per item from <u>different</u> suppliers (internet quotations cannot be used)

5.2 Specification Requirements

✓ Applicants must prepare a detailed written specification as per **Template B – Specification** to include the following:

- Technical requirements and features
- Quantity required
- Quality standards
- Delivery/completion timeframes
- Installation requirements (if applicable)

✓ Applicants must share the completed **Template B** with potential suppliers to request quotations.

✓ Request certified quotations on supplier letter-headed paper based on your specification.

✓ Applicants must retain emails to and from suppliers where written quotations are necessary and make these available to DCSDC upon request.

✓ DCSDC will carry out checks on suppliers for verification purposes

5.3 Quotation Requirements

You must obtain and submit the minimum level quotation requirement per each item costed. All quotations must:

✓ Be submitted in digital format. For quotations up to £10,000 only screen shots displaying the URL and date/time stamp are acceptable, please do not provide ‘live’ URL links as this will deem your application ineligible.

✓ Be dated before application deadline and within 3 months of application.

- ✓ Be from different suppliers (not multiple quotes from same supplier).
- ✓ Be 'like-for-like', the same specification should be provided to all suppliers. Quotes should meet the stated specifications to enable a true comparison and verify value for money.
- ✓ Include supplier name, address, VAT Status and contact details.
- ✓ Clearly show whether costs are inclusive or exclusive of VAT.
- ✓ Be itemised with clear descriptions.
- ✓ Include delivery and installation costs where applicable.
- ✓ Submit **Template C – Supplier Quotes** providing a breakdown of quotations in the original excel format.

5.4 Selecting Suppliers

You should normally select the lowest cost quotation unless:

- You can provide clear justification for choosing a higher cost option.
- Justification relates to quality, service, warranty or technical superiority.
- The difference is reasonable and represents value for money

5.5 Conflicts of Interest & Transparency

- Applicants must declare that no personal or financial relationship exists with any potential supplier detailed.
- You or your business cannot supply goods or services for a project you may receive funding for.

- If quotations are obtained from a family member (immediate or extended), the relationship must be disclosed in writing to LEP@Derrystrabane.com before procurement begins.
- In such cases, secure three quotes in total – two from independent suppliers in addition to the family member’s quote for items under £10,000 and four quotations, three from independent suppliers in addition to the family member's quote for items over £10,000, to ensure cost reasonableness.

Please note: Council officers, DfE officers and programme auditors may contact suppliers of quotations and/or invoices to verify that the quotation/ invoice has been provided to the applicant as part of audit checks at application and grant claim stage. Any quotation/ invoice that cannot be verified by the supplier will be passed to relevant fraud agencies for further investigation.

5.6 Evidence to Submit

Your application and supporting documents must be submitted by 16th July 2026 at 12.00 noon. The online system closes at this date and time and therefore no late applications will be accepted. It is recommended that that you submit your application as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.

Please include with your application:

1. Template A: Subsidy Declaration
2. Template B Specification - detailed description of each item
3. All quotations obtained
4. Template C including rationale for chosen supplier

Do not submit:

- Web links or cloud storage links (will not be reviewed)

- Incomplete or illegible quotations
- Quotations more than 3 months old

Section 6: Application Process

6.1 Key Dates

Milestone	Details
Applications Open	Online application portal opens on 9 th June 2026
Application Deadline	Application closes on 16 th July 2026 at 12 noon. No late applications will be accepted
Eligibility & Assessment	Initial eligibility checks & independent panel scoring against assessment criteria
Letters of Offer Issued	October 2026
Project Delivery Period	Projects must be completed within 12 weeks of the Letter of Offer being issued
Claim Deadline	Final claims and supporting documentation returned to Council by January 2027

6.2 Before You Apply

STEP 1: Check Eligibility

- Review Section 2 eligibility criteria carefully
- Verify your business location within DCSDC area

- Attend a Pre- application workshop:

Date	Time	Location	Registration
12 th June 2026	12 noon	Online	Register for online workshop
17 th June 2026	12.30pm	Bishop’s Gate Hotel, Bishop Street, Derry	Register for in person workshop
24 th June 2026	10am	Council Offices, 47 Derry Road, Strabane	Register for in person workshop

STEP 2: Develop Your Project

- Identify specific business growth needs
- Determine which intervention category(s) apply
- Calculate total project costs and grant request
- Ensure project can be delivered by the project end date

STEP 3: Prepare Documentation

- Gather business registration documents
- Obtain two bank statements to demonstrate that the company is actively trading for a minimum of 12 months. Applicants must submit two statements from dates one year apart, with the latter being your most recent statement.
- Prepare (**Template A**) Declaration

- Prepare specifications for items/services (**Template B**)
- Obtain required quotations (see Section 5)
- Prepare **Supplier Quote Breakdown (Template C)**
- Collect any supporting evidence

STEP 4: Review Assessment Criteria

- Read **Section 7** carefully
- Prepare evidence-based responses
- Quantify expected outcomes

6.3 How to Apply

Applications must be submitted to [Derry City and Strabane District Council — Grants](#)

The application form includes:

1. Business Information

- Legal entity details
- Trading status and registration numbers
- Contact information
- Sectoral information

2. Financial Information

- Turnover details
- Employee numbers
- VAT status
- Bank account details

3. Project Details

- Project description and need
- Itemised cost breakdown
- Procurement evidence
- Expected outcomes and benefits

4. Supporting Documents To be Uploaded with your Application

- Business registration evidence
- Bank statements (2 months dated one year apart, with the latter being the most recent statement available)
- State Aid/ Subsidy Control declaration (Template A)
- Specifications (Template B), Quotations & Quotation Breakdown (Template C)
- Any additional supporting documents

6.4 Submitting Your Application

- ✓ Complete all sections of the form
- ✓ Review your application thoroughly
- ✓ Submit before deadline of **16th July 2026 at 12 noon**
- ✓ Retain your submission confirmation email

Section 7: Assessment Criteria

7.1 Assessment Process

Every application received will be assessed to ensure the following:

- The business/ social enterprise is eligible to apply
- The business/ social enterprise has the capability to deliver the proposal, and
- To assess how effectively the proposal addresses business need and supports transformational growth.

Applications will go through two stages:

Stage 1: Eligibility Assessment

- Checks compliance with eligibility criteria
- Reviews completeness of application
- Verifies supporting documentation
- Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will be declined and the reason will be outlined to you.

Stage 2: Assessment & Scoring

If your application satisfies the eligibility criteria your application will be scored according to the established assessment criteria shown in the table below.

- Eligible applications will be scored against criteria as outlined below
- Individual applications will be reviewed by an independent assessment panel and ranked by total score
- Letters of offer will be allocated to highest-scoring applications until funds are exhausted

7.2 Assessment & Scoring

Eligible applications will be assessed competitively against the criteria below. Applicants should ensure responses are clear, evidence-based and directly address each question.

Score	Rating	Description
5	Excellent	Comprehensive, detailed and evidence-based response demonstrating exceptional understanding
4	Good	Clear, relevant response with good detail and supporting evidence
3	Acceptable	Adequate response showing reasonable understanding, but lacking some detail
2	Poor	Limited response with insufficient detail and/or weak evidence
1	Very Poor	Minimal response with serious concerns about deliverability
0	Unacceptable	No response, or a response that completely fails to address the question

The application will be assessed against 5 criteria, with each criterion attracting a score between 1-5. Each question is weighted, and the score obtained will be multiplied by the weight to get an overall score out of a possible 100. The criteria and weighting are:

Section	Criteria	(a) Score out of 5	(b) weighting	Overall Score (a x b)
D1	Business Growth Plan		X 5	/ 25
D2	Business Performance to Date		X 4	/ 20
D3	Expected Outcomes & Impacts		X 4	/ 20
D4	Deliverability		X 3	/ 15
D5	Innovation & Competitiveness		X 2	/ 10
D6	Sustainability & Environment		X 2	/ 10
	Total			/ 100

Applications must score at least 65 marks to be considered for funding.

Your application will be ranked according to the score obtained and available funding will be allocated to the highest-ranking applications. Applicants who fail to achieve a score of at least 65 marks will be advised that they have been unsuccessful. Applicants who score above 65 marks, but who do not score high enough to be awarded funding due to lack of available funding will be notified of this.

7.3 Breakdown of Assessment Criterion

D1. Business Growth Plan

Assessment Criterion 1 (25%, maximum 700 words)

Applicants should explain:

- How the proposed project will deliver transformational growth for the business.
- How the project relates to and builds upon current business activities.
- Any research, planning, feasibility work, market analysis, or preparation already undertaken.
- How the project aligns with the business strategy and supports future growth ambitions over the next 3–5 years.
- The additionality of the project, including:
 - Why the investment is needed now.
 - What barriers exist without support.
 - The likely consequences of not proceeding with the project.

Responses should clearly demonstrate strategic thinking, commercial opportunity, and long-term business impact.

D2. Business Performance to Date

Assessment Criterion 2 (20%, maximum 700 words)

Applicants should provide an overview of current and recent business performance, including:

- Turnover, operating profit, and employee trends for at least the last two financial years (or most recent available period if trading for less than two years).
- Key business growth milestones achieved to date.
- Customer trends, including:
 - Existing customer base.
 - Customer growth.
 - New contracts or sales secured.
- Challenges encountered by the business and how these were addressed.

Responses should demonstrate business stability, growth potential, and the organisation's ability to adapt and perform.

D3. Expected Outcomes & Impacts

Assessment Criterion 3 (20%, maximum 700 words)

Applicants should outline the economic outputs and wider business benefits expected from the project, including:

- How the investment will support:
 - New or improved products/services.
 - New processes or technologies.
 - Expansion into new markets or export opportunities.
- The anticipated impact on turnover following project implementation.
- Any expected job creation, including likely new roles.

Applicants must also complete the projected outputs table covering:

- Jobs sustained (FTE)
- Jobs created (FTE)
- Turnover increase (%)
- Export growth (%)
- Number of new products, processes, or services introduced
- Any additional measurable outcomes

Figures should be realistic, evidence-based, and aligned with the narrative provided.

D4. Deliverability

Assessment Criterion 4 (15%, maximum 500 words)

Applicants should demonstrate their ability and capacity to successfully deliver the project, including:

- Relevant qualifications, training and experience of key personnel.
- Management, operational and financial expertise within the business.
- Business achievements, accreditations, or awards where relevant.
- Any previous experience of delivering similar or funded projects.
- Understanding of the practical requirements, timelines, and resources needed to implement the project successfully.

Responses should provide confidence that the project is achievable and well managed.

D5. Innovation & Competitiveness

Assessment Criterion 5 (10%, maximum 400 words)

Applicants should explain how the project will strengthen the competitiveness of the business and support long-term growth.

This should include:

- How the project introduces innovation within the business, such as:
 - New technology.
 - Improved processes.
 - New products or services.
- How the investment will differentiate the business from competitors.
- How the project positions the business for future growth and market opportunities.

Responses should clearly show the commercial advantage created by the project.

D6. Sustainability & Environment

Assessment Criterion 6 (10%, maximum 400 words)

Applicants should describe the environmental and sustainability benefits of the project, including:

- How the project contributes to sustainability and net-zero objectives, for example through:
 - Reduced energy consumption.
 - Reduced waste.
 - More efficient use of resources.

- The organisation's wider commitment to environmental sustainability and responsible business practices.

Responses should demonstrate both the direct environmental benefits of the project and the business's broader sustainability approach.

Section 8: Post Award Process

8.1 What happens if an application is successful

If your application is successful, Council will issue you with a Letter of Offer which is a legal agreement with your business to deliver on the proposals outlined in your application form. If your application is successful, you **must attend** a Letter of Offer workshop. This session will provide comprehensive guidance outlining the detail of the Letter of Offer and associated conditions. Your Letter of Offer will include the following details:

- Confirmation of the grant award amount
- Terms and conditions of the grant funding
- Eligible costs approved
- Project completion deadline
- Details claim requirements

You must:

Read the Letter of Offer carefully

- Accept within 10 working days (electronic or wet signature)
- Not commence project before accepting Letter of Offer
- Comply with all terms and conditions

Please note: Any costs incurred before accepting your Letter of Offer are ineligible and will not be reimbursed.

8.2 Project Delivery Requirements

Timeline:

- Projects must commence after Letter of Offer acceptance.
- All items must be purchased, delivered, operational and have cleared in your business bank account by the project end date.
- Your claim must be submitted to Council with supporting documentation by the date outlined in your letter of offer.

During Delivery:

- Purchase items from suppliers quoted in application (or approved alternatives)
- Obtain invoices for all expenditure that are clear and legible.
- Pay suppliers from your business bank account
- Keep all receipts and proof of payment
- Take photographs of capital items purchased
- Inform Council in writing immediately of any project changes

8.3 Changes to Your Project

If you need to make changes:

Minor changes (under 10% of total costs, same intervention category):

- Email request to LEP@Derrystrabane.com
- Provide justification
- Await approval before proceeding

Major changes (over 10% of total costs, different suppliers, different intervention categories):

- Email request to: LEP@Derrystrabane.com
- Provide justification
- May require reassessment
- Approval not guaranteed
- Project timelines may be affected

Supplier changes:

If a quoted supplier no longer available

- Provide evidence (e.g. item no longer in stock, company ceased trading)
- Provide new quote from alternative supplier
- Obtain approval before ordering by emailing: LEP@Derrystrabane.com

You cannot:

- Change your outlined project to something different
- Add costs not in the signed Letter of Offer

- Reduce the project significantly

8.4 Publicity Requirements

You must:

- Acknowledge Department for the Economy and DCSDC funding in all publicity
- Use logos provided by Council as per brand guidelines
- Include acknowledgement on website, social media, press releases
- Notify Council of any media coverage

Council may:

- Issue a press release about your grant
- Feature your project in promotional materials
- Visit your business for photographs/interviews
- Include your details in published list of grant recipients

8.5 Insurance Requirements

You must maintain adequate insurance for:

- Capital items purchased (building and contents insurance)
- Public liability insurance (minimum £2 million)
- Employer's liability insurance (if you employ staff)
- Professional indemnity (if applicable to your sector)

Insurance must be in place before claiming grant and maintained for minimum 3 years post-project.

Section 9: Verification and Monitoring

9.1 Grant Claim Process

This is a retrospective grant. You will be reimbursed after completing the project and submitting a valid claim.

9.2 Claim Requirements:

You must submit:

1. Completed claim form (provided by Council)
2. Original invoices from all suppliers (copies not accepted)
3. Proof of payment for all invoices:
 - Bank statements showing payments cleared
 - Transaction references matching invoices
4. Photographic evidence of capital items purchased:
 - Items in situ at business premises
 - Clear photographs showing items operational
 - Multiple angles if required
5. Delivery notes or confirmation of service completion
6. Any other supporting evidence as specified in Letter of Offer

9.3 Payment Methods - What's Acceptable

✓ Acceptable payment methods:

- Electronic bank transfer (BACS, Faster Payment)
- Debit card (statement showing payment cleared)
- Credit card (card statement and business bank statement showing credit card paid in full by the project end date)

X NOT acceptable:

- Cash payments
- Personal credit cards (not linked to business bank account)
- Partial payments (must be paid in full before claiming)
- Payment plans or hire purchase (must be paid in full)
- Cryptocurrency
- Barter or exchange arrangements

9.4 Verification Process

Stage 1: Initial Claim Check

Council officers will verify:

- All required documents submitted
- Payments match invoices
- Payments cleared through nominated bank account
- Costs align with Letter of Offer
- Photographic evidence adequate

Stage 2: Supplier Verification

Council may contact suppliers to verify:

- Invoices were genuinely issued
- Payments were received
- Goods/services were delivered
- Costs are accurate

Important: False documentation or fraudulent claims may result in prosecution.

Stage 3: Site Verification Visit

Council officers will conduct site visits to:

- Verify items are at business premises
- Confirm items are operational and being used for business purposes
- Discuss project outcomes
- Take photographs

You must:

- Provide access to business premises for verification
- Make items available for inspection
- Provide any additional information requested
- Cooperate fully with verification process

Stage 4: Payment Authorisation

Once verification complete and satisfactory:

- Claim processed for payment

- Payment made directly to business bank account (nominated in application)
- Payment typically within 28 days of satisfactory verification

9.5 Common Claim Issues & Rejections

Claims may be rejected or delayed if:

- Invoices don't match quoted suppliers (without prior approval)
- Payments not fully cleared through bank account
- Items purchased before Letter of Offer acceptance
- Costs exceed approved amounts
- Photographic evidence insufficient
- Bank statements don't show business transactions
- Cash payments used
- Items not delivered or not operational
- Supplier verification fails
- Documentation incomplete or illegible

9.6 Post-Project Monitoring

12-Month Monitoring (November 2027):

You will be required to submit information on:

- Actual outcomes achieved (vs. projected)
- Employment sustained/created
- Turnover/sales figures
- Productivity improvements
- Market expansion achieved
- Any challenges encountered

- Ongoing use of grant-funded items

24-Month Monitoring (November 2028):

Successful applicants are required to complete a final evaluation to assess:

- Long-term sustainability of outcomes
- Continued operation and growth
- Lessons learned
- Wider economic impact

9.7 Asset Register

All capital items purchased must:

- Be retained for minimum 3 years post-claim
- Remain at business premises
- Be used for business purposes
- Be adequately insured
- Be available for inspection

Durability Period: 3 years from date of grant payment

During this period, you cannot:

- Sell or dispose of grant-funded items without permission
- Relocate business outside DCSDC area without notification
- Cease trading without notification
- Change nature of business significantly

Section 10: Terms and Conditions

10.1 General Conditions

By accepting a grant, you agree to:

1. Use the grant only for approved purposes
2. Complete the project by the specified deadline
3. Maintain accurate financial records
4. Retain all project documentation for 3 years
5. Allow access for inspection and audit
6. Acknowledge funding in publicity materials
7. Participate in monitoring and evaluation
8. Report any issues or changes promptly
9. Comply with all applicable laws and regulations
10. Maintain adequate insurance

10.2 State Aid/Subsidy Control

This grant is provided under:

- UK Subsidy Control Act 2022 (services sector)
- De Minimis Aid rules under Windsor Framework (goods/manufacturing)

You must:

- Declare all other public support received in last 3 fiscal years

- Not exceed de minimis threshold (€300,000 over 3 years if applicable)
- Inform Council immediately if you receive other public support
- Maintain records of all public support received

False declarations may result in:

- Grant recovery with interest
- Prosecution for fraud
- Exclusion from future funding
- Referral to relevant authorities

10.3 Clawback and Recovery

The Council may recover grant funding if:

- False or misleading information was provided
- Terms and conditions are breached
- Items purchased are sold within 3 years without permission
- Business ceases trading within 3 years
- Project not completed as approved
- Items not used for business purposes
- Fraud or irregularity is detected
- Other public funding received for same costs (double funding)

Recovery may include:

- Full grant amount plus interest
- Proportionate recovery based on breach
- Legal costs and administrative charges
- Exclusion from future funding opportunities

10.4 Record Retention

You must retain for 3 years from date of final grant payment:

- Signed Letter of Offer
- All invoices and receipts
- Bank statements showing payments
- Quotations and procurement evidence
- Correspondence with suppliers
- Photographic evidence
- Insurance documents
- Employment contracts (if job creation)
- Monitoring reports submitted
- Any other project-related documentation

In the event your business ceases trading within 3 years:

- Documentation must be transferred to Council
- Notification must be provided within 28 days
- Grant recovery may be triggered

10.5 Data Protection & Privacy

Personal data you provide will be:

- Processed in accordance with UK GDPR

- Used for administering your application and grant
- Shared with Department for Economy, auditors, or other funders as required
- Retained in accordance with Council's retention schedule
- Protected with appropriate security measures

Your data may be used for:

- Assessment and decision-making
- Payment processing
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Fraud prevention
- Programme reporting and statistics
- Research and policy development

Your business details may be:

- Published as a grant recipient (business name, amount, location)
- Used in case studies and promotional materials (with consent)
- Shared with partner organisations for support purposes

Full privacy notice, available at: <https://www.derrystrabane.com/privacy-policy>

10.6 Freedom of Information

Information submitted may be disclosed under:

- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004

If you believe information is commercially sensitive:

- Clearly mark it as "confidential"
- Provide justification
- Note: Council is final arbiter of disclosure

10.7 Audit & Inspection Rights

The following bodies have right of access:

- DCSDC Council officers
- Department for the Economy officials
- Northern Ireland Audit Office
- Internal and external auditors
- Any other authorised government officials

They may:

- Inspect business premises
- Review financial records
- Interview business owners/staff
- Verify information provided
- Take photographs
- Request additional documentation

You must provide:

- Reasonable access during business hours
- Cooperation with requests

- Prompt responses to queries
- Any additional information required

10.8 Fraud Prevention

The Council will:

- Verify information through supplier checks
- Cross-reference with other databases
- Investigate suspected fraud
- Refer fraud cases to relevant authorities
- Pursue recovery and prosecution where appropriate

You must:

- Report suspected fraud immediately
- Provide accurate and truthful information
- Not engage in fraudulent activity
- Cooperate with fraud investigations

Fraud includes:

- False information on application
- Fictitious or inflated invoices
- Payments to related parties not disclosed
- Double funding from multiple sources
- Misuse of grant funds
- False claims of outcomes achieved

10.9 Limitations of Liability

The Council:

- Provides the grant at its absolute discretion
- Does not guarantee business success
- Is not liable for business decisions made
- Cannot be held responsible for business failure
- May withdraw or suspend the grant at any time with justification
- Reserves the right to amend terms and conditions

No liability is accepted for:

- Business losses or damages
- Consequential losses arising from grant award/refusal
- Delays in assessment or payment
- Changes to programme scope or budget
- Supplier failures or disputes

10.10 Eligibility of Expenditure

Eligible costs must:

- Be directly related to the approved project
- Be incurred after Letter of Offer acceptance
- Be paid in full before claim submission
- Be evidenced with proper invoices and proof of payment
- Represent value for money
- Comply with procurement requirements
- Fall within approved intervention categories

- Be reasonable and necessary

Ineligible costs include:

- Expenditure incurred before Letter of Offer acceptance
- VAT (for VAT-registered businesses)
- Bank charges, interest, late payment fees
- Fines, penalties, legal costs
- Expenditure funded by other public grants
- Entertainment and hospitality
- Routine business operating costs
- Depreciation
- Contingency amounts
- Bad debts

10.11 Procurement Rules

You must:

- Follow procurement rules in Section 5
- Obtain required number of quotations
- Select suppliers representing value for money
- Declare any conflicts of interest
- Provide rationale for supplier selection
- Obtain Council approval for supplier changes

Failure to comply may result in:

- Costs deemed ineligible

- Grant reduced or withdrawn
- Full recovery of grant if serious breach

10.12 Programme Changes

Council reserves the right to:

- Amend programme guidelines
- Reduce available budget
- Change timelines
- Introduce additional requirements
- Suspend or terminate the programme

Applicants will be notified of material changes.

Section 11: Quick Guide for Applicants

Local Economic Partnership Application Process Chart



1. Check eligibility

- Is business trading address within Derry City and Strabane District Council area.
- Is business been trading for at least 12 months.
- Does business employ 49 FTE or fewer staff.
- Does business have a business bank account.
- Can you complete your project within 12 weeks of the Letter of Offer being issued

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2. Read guidance and prepare documents

- Read the applicant guidance notes carefully.
- Gather quotations.
- Gather match funding evidence.
- Gather bank statements and any supporting documents.

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3. Complete the application form

- Fill in all sections fully and accurately.
- Include project details, budget, outcomes, and declarations.
- Make sure the main contact has authority to submit.

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4. Submit by deadline

- Submit completed application and all documents by 12 noon on 16th July 2026.

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5. Assessment process

- Eligible applications are assessed competitively.
- If successful, the applicant receives a Letter of Offer

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6. Accept offer

- Accept the Letter of Offer within 10 working days.
- **Do not start the project before the offer is accepted.**

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7. Deliver project

- Buy the approved items.
- Pay suppliers in full.
- Keep proof of delivery and payment.

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8. Submit claim

- Submit the claim with all required documentation within 12 weeks from Letter of Offer



Contact Details

For further information please contact us by:

Email: LEP@Derrystrabane.com

Telephone: 028 71 253 253 ask to be directed to a member of the LEP Team.