

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework

Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2026/27

GUIDANCE NOTES

The Rural Business Development Grant Scheme (RBDGS) is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) as part of the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework.

The Scheme is being administered by local Councils.



Section 1 – Introduction, Eligibility and Submitting Your Application

1.1 Background to RBDGS

The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework's Rural Business Development Grant Scheme (RBDGS) aims to support the sustainability and growth of rural micro-businesses across Northern Ireland by providing a small capital grant for the business. The TRPSI Framework is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, and this grant aid Scheme is administered by local Councils.

The Scheme is open for applications from Monday 29 June 2026 until 12 (midday) on Thursday 30 July 2026.

Before applying for the RBDGS 2026/27, you MUST attend a Pre-Funding Workshop. If you do not attend a pre-funding workshop your application will not be considered for funding.

Details of pre-funding workshops are available by contacting your local Council, contact details can be found at Annex 1 of this document.

All projects must be fully operational, with claims and all supporting documentation submitted to Council no later than 3pm on Monday 21 December 2026.

Applications for the Scheme will be invited from rural micro businesses, submitted by the business owner, employee of the business, or by an authorised representative. Applications will only be accepted from businesses with an address located in a rural area and whose primary services/activities are provided in rural areas.

For the purposes of the RBDGS 2026/27, rural Northern Ireland means all those areas outside the statutory development limits of those towns with a population in excess of 5,000 inhabitants plus the areas of Strathfoyle, Newbuildings, and Culmore in Derry/Londonderry Urban Area (OUA) and Milltown, Helens Bay, Crawfordsburn, and Groomsport in the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA).

1.2 Levels of Grant Award

The Scheme can provide funding of up to 50% of costs for capital items up to a **maximum of £7,500**. The minimum grant awarded will be £500. The total cost of the capital project must be a minimum of £1,000 and must not exceed £30,000. Applicants must provide the remaining match funding for the project.

This is a competitive process, and all grants awarded will be determined on the basis of merit.

1.3 Who Can Apply?

Grants are available to support the sustainability and development of existing micro businesses based in rural areas. You can apply for a Rural Business Development Grant if:

- The business is based in a rural area. Applications for the Scheme are invited from rural micro businesses. Applications will only be accepted from businesses located in a rural area and whose primary services/activities are provided in rural areas.
- The business currently employs less than 10 full-time equivalent employees.
- The business is an existing, registered private Business or Social Economy Enterprise that is actively trading commercially; evidenced by providing your self-assessment number or Limited Company details and sales turnover details.
- Sports Clubs and Community Groups can only be considered if they are commercially trading and generate sales revenue from selling goods and services to customers who are not exclusively Club or Community Group members. The grant can only be used to support the sustainability, survival, and/or development of this commercial element, and not for the club or community group on its own. Projects that can be supported from other funding sources, such as Sport NI, are not eligible to be considered under this scheme.
- 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 has a dedicated bank account used by the business.
- Two price checks or written quotes have been provided for items as required.
- The applicant is aged 18 or above at the application deadline.
- **The applicant has attended a pre-funding workshop.**
- The business can deliver the project, pay the suppliers, and submit a grant claim in the given timeframe.
- Only one application can be accepted per business/legal entity.

1.4 Who Cannot Apply?

The grant scheme cannot support:

- Businesses based in urban areas.
- New start businesses who have yet to commence trading (all business sectors).
- Agricultural Businesses registered to a Category 1 DAERA Business ID, or any other business registered to a Category 1 DAERA Business ID, undertaking mainstream agricultural activity.
- If you are linked to a Category 1 business, you must provide evidence that the business you are applying for is a separate business entity.
- Farm diversification projects where the diversified activity has not started trading.

All other existing registered micro-businesses and social economy enterprises (that are commercially trading) based in a rural area are eligible to apply for support.

1.5 What can be funded?

This is a capital grant scheme to support the purchase of new capital items of equipment or machinery or to set up an e-commerce website. The minimum spend on one, or a combination of, eligible items is £1,000 and your project must not cost more than £30,000.

If you are VAT registered, the lower and upper thresholds are based on the net cost of items. If you are not VAT registered, the lower and upper thresholds are based on the gross cost of items.

Examples of eligible expenditure includes:

- New equipment/ machinery
- Mobile machinery, such as scissor lifts, forklifts, push and ride-on lawn mowers, mini excavators.
- IT equipment, e.g., computers, laptop, printer.
- Computer software (outright purchase; staff training costs or ongoing license fees are NOT eligible).
- E-commerce Websites to allow online purchase capabilities.

1.6 What cannot be funded?

The following items cannot be funded under the Scheme:

- Equipment or machinery costing less than £1,000 or more than £30,000. Individual items may cost less than £1,000, but you must have a minimum eligible spend of at least £1,000 through a combination of items.
- Secondhand equipment, including refurbished equipment.
- Servicing of existing equipment.
- Scaffolding and ventilation equipment
- General maintenance or refurbishment works.
- Capital Improvements, building works, refurbishments of any property (commercial or residential) or any project that requires Building Control permission or planning permission.
- CCTV, Signage
- Mobile Phones
- Fitness/activity trackers
- Solar panels and wind turbines, Generators, wood waste heaters.
- Purchase of port-a-cabins, pods, sheds, or any other building.
- Labour costs not directly associated with the installation of purchased equipment or build of e-commerce websites.
- Projects that have already started prior to a Letter of Offer.

- Any resource items, such as marketing materials, information websites (with no online purchasing capabilities), training courses (including training costs associated with online systems availed of through the grant), feasibility studies, market research.
- Annual fees associated with software equipment.
- Motorised vehicles, including vans, lorries, cars, boats, bikes, quads etc. that can be used as a means of transport.
- Any activity or action that is a statutory requirement of your business (e.g., for Health and Safety purposes such as Personal Protective Equipment) or the responsibility of another government department.
- Business running costs, such as staff costs, rent, rates, electric, insurance, stock.
- Bank interest charges, referral fees, and foreign currency transaction charges.
- **Consumable items used by businesses are replaced regularly because they wear out or are used up (for example hand sanitiser, masks, gloves, visors, high-visibility vests for staff, printer ink).**
- Staff Uniforms or clothing, including personal protective items.

Please note this list is not exhaustive, your local Council Officer can speak to you about your individual project.

1.7 What should I submit with my application?

Your application form must be fully completed online, and all supporting procurement documentation uploaded to the online system – this includes all quotes, specifications, and supplier/cover e-mails.

Section 2 – Accessing the online system.

2.1 – Identity Assurance

Applicants are required to:

- Use an existing or create a new NI Direct account with verification to LOA2 (Level of Assurance 2).
- Submit photographic ID (Driving License or Passport) for verification.

Recommended Steps:

- Access or create your NI Direct account as soon as possible to allow time for any verification issues.
- You can access an existing or create a new NI Direct account here-

<https://digitalapps2.daera-ni.gov.uk/RBDGS/StartPage>

2.2 Account Verification

- Existing account holders: Log in, submit your preferred ID document for verification, then proceed with the application.
- New account creators: Provide your preferred ID during sign-up; follow the prompts for verification.

- Guidance on the NI Direct Identity Assurance process is available at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/identity-assurance>

2.3 Applicant link to online application form

- Once your account is activated use-

<https://digitalapps2.daera-ni.gov.uk/RBDGS/StartPage-> to access the RBDGS online application.

2.4 Support and Guidance

- Guidance and a helpline are available for identity verification or application access issues.
- Log In and ID Guidance: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/identity-assurance>
- NI Direct Helpline: 0300 200 7868 or nida@nidirect.gov.uk
- Non-NI Direct: 0300 200 7840

2.5 Completing Your Application

- Fill in all relevant information and upload required documents (quotes, specifications, supplier e-mails).
- After submission, you will receive an auto-generated e-mail receipt confirming your application.
- Complete the Equality Monitoring survey to help the Department comply with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).

Section 3 - Procurement Guidance

3.1 Specification of items

Applicants should ensure that quotations are comparable. Details such as size, capacity, storage or weight should support a reasonable assessment of value for money.

Confirmation of a delivery date or the lead time required for each grant item must also be sought and evidenced to ensure the project can be delivered within the scheme deadlines.

3.2 Obtaining quotations.

You are required to obtain two or three quotes based on the value of the item you are applying for as outlined in the table below.

Total Estimated Cost per Item	Action & Minimum Number
Up to £10,000	At least 2 price-checks per item from <u>different</u> suppliers / internet quotations with evidence of delivery or lead time
£10,001 - £30,000	At least 3 Written Quotes per item from <u>different</u> suppliers with evidence of delivery or lead time (internet quotations cannot be used)

Quotes must be comparable to enable a true comparison and verify value for money. Quotes provided electronically must be submitted with the correspondence from the supplier (email, messaging apps, etc.) to provide a clear audit trail.

For items up to £10,000 where price checks can be undertaken without requesting quotations, for example on Amazon, Argos etc. Screenshots of the item can be used but the supplier's name, URL, item specification, and price **must** be visible. Multiple screenshots can be uploaded if required.

- Quotes must be dated before the application deadline and be less than three months old at the time of submission.
- Calculate procurement costs based on the entire item, not its parts or phases. For example, purchase a specialist computer as a complete unit rather than by components.
- Supplier's name and contact details must be included in each quotation.
- Quotes must be clear and readable.
- Do not submit web links or links to online storage (DropBox, OneDrive etc.) they will not be checked.
- Indicate clearly whether the quoted costs include or exclude VAT. If VAT is applicable, it should be clearly shown on the quotation to determine total project costs.
- All quotations must be uploaded and clearly labelled at the time of application.

3.3 Quotation Selection and Funding

- Select the lowest quotation and note the corresponding cost on the application form.
- Funding will cover 50% of the submitted procurement cost, or the final price paid, whichever is lower—up to a maximum of £7,500.
- Any price increase(s) following grant award must be paid by the applicant.
- Quotes in other currencies must be compared using the exchange rate on the date of the quote as listed on www.x-rates.com.

3.4 Conflict of Interest and Transparency

- 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 the Council before procurement begins. Supporting evidence must be included with your documentation.
- 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, DAERA officers and scheme auditors will 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. DAERA scheme auditors will also conduct pre and post payment site visits on a sample of claims.

Any quotation / invoice that cannot be verified by the supplier will be passed to DAERA Fraud Department for further investigation.

Summary of procurement documents you need to upload with your online application before submitting	√
2 or 3 comparable quotations as required for each item (refer to table in section 3.2 above)	
For each item - if you received quotations from suppliers via email or messaging apps, upload the supporting correspondence received from each supplier.	

3.5 Application Submission

Your application and supporting documents must be submitted via the online application system and uploaded by **12 midday on Thursday 30 July 2026**. The online system closes at this date and time and therefore no late applications will be accepted. It is recommended that you register, complete and submit your application as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.

If you require any additional help, please contact your local Council listed at **Appendix 1 on the DAERA website**.

The application form link will be available online and through your local Council at 9 am on Monday 29 June 2026.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL LATE APPLICATIONS BE ACCEPTED.

Section 4 - Completing your application.

All sections of your application form must be completed as fully and concisely as possible as this information will be used in the assessment of your project proposal. Incomplete applications will be deemed ineligible and will not be assessed for funding.

Please note maximum word limits per question.

Applicant Details

- 1) Please state trading name of business
- 2) Which term best describes your business (Sole Trader, Limited Company, Partnership or other)
- 3) HMRC Self-Assessment number
- 4) Website details may be input; however, this is optional.
- 5) Please state contact name, postcode and contact details.

Business Overview

- 1) Please state the date your business commenced trading.
- 2) Please provide your sales turnover for the last complete financial year, or year to date.
- 3) Please state your business address. The business must be located in a defined rural Council area to be eligible for grant aid.
- 4) Please tick what sector your business operates in.
- 5) Please provide an overview of your business, including a description of the range of products or services offered, where you sell them (such as in a physical shop, on your own website, or through third-party platforms), and who your typical customers are—whether they are individuals, businesses, or both. If you sell internationally, what percentage of your sales are exports and which countries you export to?
- 6) Please enter the current number of full-time and part-time employees (including yourself if applicable). Full-time employees must work at least 30 hours per week in the business and part-time work is a minimum of 16 hours per week.
- 7) *Note – in order to be eligible, the business or enterprise must employ less than 10 full-time equivalent employees. Contact your Council officer if you need help to calculate your full-time equivalent staff numbers.*
- 8) Please state if your business has been impacted by rising costs. If you answer yes, please provide brief details to explain how it was impacted.

Project Details

- 1) Please enter a short title for your project (e.g., Business Expansion, Business Sustainability)

- 2) Please provide an overview of the current business activity and describe the proposed project, detailing any changes to your existing activities and any new business activities such as a new product or services, new customers, or markets that you intend to target or new methods of selling. **Maximum 2500 characters.**
- 3) Please provide the details of your project, showing evidence of the project need, and an outline of what the anticipated outcomes of implementing your project will be over the next 12 months. You should complete all text boxes and provide specific and relevant details on the impact as a result of your proposed project – e.g., state number of jobs sustained / created what roles these are, percentage or value of any increase in sales. **Maximum 2500 characters.**
- 4) Please outline how your project will help to sustain and/or create new employment opportunities. **Maximum 2500 characters**
- 5) Please outline how your project will sustain existing income levels or generate additional income. **Maximum 2500 characters**
- 6) Please outline the impact that rising costs has had on your business, and detail how your project will support your business to recover from this. **Maximum 2500 characters.**
- 7) *Please demonstrate how your project promotes environmental sustainability, supports net zero targets, or fosters innovation by reducing waste, saving energy, or creating new or more environmentally efficient products or services.* **Maximum 2500 characters**
- 8) Please provide details of the skills and experience which you or your organisation has that will assist you to carry out the proposed project. In particular, you should comment on general management, marketing and financial experience and any relevant training/mentoring undertaken or qualifications held. You should provide as much information as possible. **Maximum 2500 characters.**

Project Costs

- 1) Tick as appropriate, enter your business VAT registration number if applicable. Ensure it is in the correct format e.g., XI 123456789
- 2) Please show the evidence of value and provide details of the quotes that you have obtained in respect of the individual items you wish to purchase. **You must follow the procurement process detailed in the guidance notes** (see section 1.7) and upload the specifications and quotes with your application. Please click on the blue hyperlink 'Add evidence of value' to add new budget lines. The online system only permits six budget lines so you may wish to group similar items together in one specification, ensuring items are comparable. **Please provide NET and GROSS costs for each item.**
- 3) Please provide details of the items/activities you require funding for.
 - a. **Note – maximum total cost is £30,000 and maximum grant request is £7,500.**

- b. **The maximum total cost of £30,000 is net if you are VAT registered and gross if you are not VAT registered.**
 - c. If your business or enterprise is not VAT registered, you may apply for 50% up to £7,500 of the GROSS cost (i.e., the cost including VAT).
 - d. If your business or enterprise is VAT registered, you may apply for 50% up to £7,500 of the NET cost (cost excluding VAT).
- 4) Please detail the source of your match funding for the project. Please note that if issued a Letter of Offer, the total project costs will be incurred by the business prior to submitting a claim for up to 50% of the eligible expenditure retrospectively.

Project Timescales

Please confirm you can complete your project by 21 December 2026 with all project items onsite and operational, and all associated payments paid and cleared out of your nominated bank account by 3pm on 21 December 2026.

Please confirm that you have attended a pre-funding workshop and specify the date that you attended.

Note – projects which have already commenced are ineligible for funding.

De Minimis Aid declaration

Please read the State / De-Minimis Aid declaration carefully. Complete details of all De-Minimis aid received in the last 4 fiscal years* (2022/2023 to date). Please note that this may include grant funding (for example COVID-19 government support grants*, Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme, Intertrade Ireland or Invest NI) and also business support programmes including Go-succeed and the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF). Complete the declaration in full.

** COVID-19 government support grants for the Retail, Hospitality & Leisure sector (£25,000), self-employment grant scheme, and micro business hardship scheme must be declared on your declaration. Payments through the furlough scheme, and the Small Business Grant Scheme (£10,000) do not need to be declared as these are not considered De-Minimis aid.*

Supporting Documents

Please tick to confirm what you are submitting with your application.

Declarations

Please read the declaration carefully and complete it in full.

An acknowledgement receipt will be issued to you automatically once your submission has been received. The Council will assess your application for eligibility. If your application is eligible to apply for grant aid, it will be forwarded for full assessment and scored against the stated criteria.

Section 5 – How your application is assessed.

Every application received will be assessed to ensure the following:

- The business/ social economy enterprise is eligible to apply to this particular Scheme.
- The business/ social economy has the capability to deliver the proposal, and
- To assess how effectively the proposal addresses business needs and supports recovery, sustainability, and growth.

5.1 Eligibility Assessment

If the information provided in your application meets the Council's eligibility requirements, your application will proceed to the next stage of the process.

5.2 What if an application is not eligible?

If your application is not eligible, you will be notified immediately, and the reasons will be outlined to you. Your application will not proceed to assessment and scoring.

If your application is not eligible for funding through the Scheme, you may wish to contact the Council, who will help signpost to other sources of support.

5.3 Assessment and Scoring

If your application, based on the information supplied, is able to satisfy the eligibility criteria, you will be scored according to established assessment criteria shown in the table below.

Score	Comment
5 Excellent	Response is completely relevant and excellent overall. The response is comprehensive, unambiguous and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the requirement and provides details of how the requirement will be met in full.
4 Good	Response is relevant and good. The response is sufficiently detailed to demonstrate a good understanding and provides details on how the requirements will be fulfilled. Good supporting evidence supplied.
3 Acceptable	Response is relevant. The response addresses a broad understanding of the requirement but may lack details on how the requirement will be fulfilled in certain areas.

2 Poor	Response is partially relevant but generally poor. The response addresses some elements of the requirement but contains insufficient/limited detail or explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be fulfilled. A response with reservations.
1 Very Poor	Response is partially relevant but generally very poor. The response addresses some elements of the requirement but contains insufficient/limited detail or explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be fulfilled. An unacceptable response with serious reservations.
0 Unacceptable	Nil or inadequate response. Fails to address the question or demonstrate an ability to meet the requirement.

The application will be assessed against five criteria, with each criterion attracting a score between 0-5. 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:

Criteria	(a) Score out of a possible 5	(b) Weighting	Overall Score (a x b)
Project Need: Clear and concise evidence of the need for the project within the scope of the fund		X 6	/30
Cost of Living: Clear assessment of impact of cost of living on business and project identified supports business growth		X2	/10
Economic Impact: Clear and realistic outcomes set for the project e.g., sustaining existing and creating employment opportunities, income generation, new markets entered, new products or services introduced		X4	/20
Project Experience / Management Strength: Ability, skills and experience of the business which enables them to deliver the project		X 4	/20
Sustainability/Innovation Project demonstrates Promoting environmental sustainability, supporting net zero targets, or fostering innovation by reducing waste, saving energy, or creating new or more environmentally efficient products or services		X 2	/10

SUB- TOTAL			/90
Previous Funding: Has the applicant received funding in the 2024/25 or 2025/26 iterations of the Rural Business Development Grant Schemes? If yes, score is 0 points. If not, score is 10 points.			
TOTAL			/100

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

Your application will be ranked according to score obtained and available funding allocated to 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.

5.4 How decisions are made.

When the scores are finalised, the applications may be presented to your local Council. Successful/unsuccessful applicants will be notified at this stage.

5.5 What happens if an application is successful?

If your application is successful, Council will issue you with an electronic 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 on processes and procedures related to financial claims submission, change requests, the promotion of DAERA's support for the Scheme, as well as monitoring, evaluation requirements, and verification procedures.

This workshop may be delivered in person or remotely (e.g., via Zoom or another online meeting platform). It is intended for Letters of Offers to issue on 15 October 2026.

Signed Letters of Offer **must** be accepted electronically within **10 working days from the date of the Letter of Offer**. You cannot accept your Letter of Offer until you attend the workshop. You are advised to order your grant items within one calendar month of accepting your Letter of Offer to allow sufficient time for delivery and to ensure the item (s) is operational.

This grant funding scheme is retrospective and therefore costs will only be reimbursed once items are purchased, goods onsite and operational, paid in full and a grant claim

submitted and processed. You will have to provide invoices and show evidence of payment of invoices through your bank account as part of the claim process. Items should be paid through the bank account which is registered to receive grant funding.

Hire purchase arrangements and cash payments cannot be accepted. Online payments made by **credit card must** have the full project item cost (not only the grant element) cleared in full through the nominated bank account by the project end date of no later than **3pm on 21 December 2026**. A copy of the credit card statement and bank statement showing the full amount clearing must be provided. The next credit card statement showing the amount cleared may also be requested.

The grant claim form must be completed online and supporting documents, including invoices, bank statements and photographs of the items purchased uploaded by **3pm on 21 December 2026**.

Projects must be complete, goods must be onsite and operational, paid in full and cleared through the bank account by 3pm on 21 December 2026.

Claims must be submitted by 3pm on 21 December 2026 or the project will be deemed ineligible, and no grant payment will be made.

Please note: Council officers, DAERA officers and Programme auditors may contact suppliers of quotations and/or invoices to verify that the quotation / invoice has been provided to you and payment received by the supplier, as part of the audit checks at application and grant claim stage. Any quotation / invoice that cannot be verified by the supplier will be passed to DAERA Fraud Department for further investigation.

You are required to provide information on the impact of your project-on-project completion. You are required to submit photographic evidence with your claim and officers from your local Council, DAERA or audit officials may arrange post project visits to verify spend and discuss the monitoring information with the businesses that were funded.

Successful applicants must complete a post project survey in March 2028.

5.6 What happens if an application is unsuccessful?

If your application is not successful, officers from the Council will discuss the application with you and may provide practical developmental support to address areas of concern.

An Appeals Process/Review Procedure is also available if your application is unsuccessful. The purpose of this is to ensure that the decisions taken and procedures followed for individual applications are applied fairly and consistently.

The Review will provide an independent process through which you will have the opportunity to submit information to the Review Panel indicating that either:

- The outcome was unreasonable or.
- The proper procedures were not followed.

Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered.

5.7 Grant Application Assessment Schedule

The Scheme will be open for applications as follows:

Opening date: 29 June 2026 at 9.00am

Closing date: 30 July 2026 at 12.00 (midday)

Late applications cannot be accepted under any circumstances. The application form must be fully completed online, and all required supporting documentation uploaded or the application will not be considered.

You are encouraged to submit your application well in advance of the closing date / time to avoid technical difficulties which could result in deeming your application ineligible.

The Scheme will follow this ten-step administrative process:

Step 1	Open call for applications is made
Step 2	Potential applicants attend mandatory pre-application workshop
Step 3	Applications are submitted online and supporting documentation uploaded
Step 4	Applications are assessed
Step 5	Letters of Offer are issued, and applicants attend Letter of Offer workshop
Step 6	Letters of Offer are returned within 10 working days from date of the Letter of Offer
Step 7	Projects are completed and paid in full by applicant
Step 8	Grant claim is submitted online and supporting documentation uploaded for Council checking.
Step 9	Grant payment is made directly to applicant
Step 10	Applicants complete a Post Project Evaluation survey 12 months after submission of claim (March 2028)

5.8 Application Process

All applications for financial assistance should be submitted online and supporting documentation uploaded. If you require any help, please contact your relevant Council detailed at **Appendix 1 on the DAERA website**.

It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that their full application is submitted prior to the advertised time and date of closing, **12:00 (midday) on 30 July 2026**. The online system cannot accept applications after this date and time. No exceptions will be made and there is no recourse to appeal.

The application will be assessed against Scheme objectives and the project selection criteria set out by the Councils.

Projects that meet the criteria will be considered for financial assistance on a competitive basis, and if approved, a Letter of Offer setting out the terms and conditions will be issued.