****

**APPLICATION GUIDANCE NOTES**

**ROUND 4**

**Winter 2024 - 2025**

**Opening: 18 November 2024**

**Closing: 17 January 2025, 12 noon**

**Contents**

**1.0 Introduction**

* 1. Background to Programme
  2. Grant Tiers

1.2 Who Can Apply?

1.3 Who Cannot Apply?

1.4 What can be funded?

1.5 What cannot be funded?

1. **The Process**

2.1 Application

2.2 Supporting Documentation

2.3 Quotations required with Application

2.4 Assessment Process

2.5 Outcome from Assessment Process

1. **Conditions of Grant**
2. **Claiming the Grant**
3. **Guide on completing your application**
   1. The Facades Grant
   2. The Re-configuring Space Grant

**6.0 Additional Information**

6.1 Statutory Requirements

6.2 Fraud

6.3 State Aid

6.4 Contact Details

**Appendix 1** Eligible Small Settlements with a population of 1,000 - 4,999

1. **INTRODUCTION**

**1.0 Background to Programme**

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council has secured funding in collaboration with the Department for Communities (DFC) and the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to deliver a Shop Façade Improvement scheme and Meanwhile Use / Reconfiguring Space Grant scheme as part of the COVID-19 Recovery Small Settlement Regeneration Programme.

**1.1 Grant Tiers**

The grant scheme has two tiers aimed at supporting businesses located with Small Settlements with a population between 1,000 and 4,999 (Appendix 1).

**Tier 1 - Small Settlement Commercial Façade grant** aims to support businesses to improve their Façade, while creating a more welcoming environment to existing/new customers while also enhancing the wider benefits for the small settlement. **The maximum grant value to applicants under this scheme will be £3,000.** If your business is VAT registered, your grant is based on the net amount.

**Tier 2** **- Small Settlement Reconfiguring Space grant** aims to help businesses transform under-used space. The grant aims to improve and reconfigure the interior of the building to bring it back into use or make it better utilised. It intends that this will create more opportunities for start-ups, growth of existing businesses, and overall benefit the local economy. **The maximum grant value to applicants under this scheme will be £20,000.** If your business is VAT registered, your grant is based on the net amount.

Both Schemes can provide funding up to 80% towards eligible costs up to maximum of £20,000 per property for a Reconfiguring Space project and up to £3,000 for a Façade project. Applicants must provide a minimum of 20% match funding contribution towards the project.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Total Project Cost | Maximum Grant award\*\* | Applicant Match Funding |
| Example 1  Shop Façade | £3,750 | £3,000 | £750 |
| Example 2  Shop Façade | £5,000 | £3,000 | £2,000 |
| Example 3 Reconfiguring Space | £25,000 | £20,000 | £5,000 |
| Example 4 Reconfiguring Space\* | £60,000 + | £20,000 | £40,000 + |

\*There is no maximum total project cost, however the maximum grant award will be £20,000 for Tier 2 for a Reconfiguring Space grant and £3,000 for Tier 1 Commercial Façade grant.

\*\* If your business is VAT registered, your grant is based on the net amount.

There is a maximum of one grant offer per property.

**1.2 Who Can Apply?**

The grant schemes are open to owners or leaseholders of eligible properties in the settlement limits of a Small Settlements located of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough. The list of the small settlements is in Appendix 1.

* Commercial businesses.
* Social Enterprises.
* One application per business address; and
* Applicants who have not received funding since November 2019 or accepted offers of funding for projects about to commence for the same property from Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Grants.

**To be eligible, applications must meet the following criteria:**

* The property must be located within the settlement limits of the small settlements Appendix 1.
* In applying for thee grant, Leaseholders must have written permission from the property owner or landlord. Owners, landlords and tenants must have written support from other tenants within a building if the building houses multiple occupants.
* For the Reconfiguring Space scheme, all applicants must demonstrate they have a robust plan in place to revitalise and repurpose the commercial property for retail, residential, office, leisure, or other economic use to generate return on investment and increase footfall to the small settlement. This will include commitment to make the property available for tenancy or occupancy within 3 months of the project completion.
* Have a bank account in the name of the grant holder or business, property owner or leaseholder. The grant holder is responsible for ensuring all payments made for the project works come from the nominated bank account and that this will be the same bank account that the grant goes into.
* Council may ask applicants to demonstrate that they have the financial resource to complete the project in full (i.e. 100% of project costs).
* Demonstrate a suitable level of viability and solvency.
* Demonstrate that all statutory requirements e.g. planning, licencing etc. are adhered to.
* Provide proof of building and contents insurance.

Both schemes aim to support regeneration that will have economic benefit to the small settlements such as creating employment, business expansion and retention of commercial properties.

**1.3 Who Cannot Apply?**

Ineligible applicants / businesses / organisations are as follows:

* Applicants whose property is not located with the settlements limits of the small settlements listed (Appendix 1).
* Applicants whose subject property owner or leaseholder is political party or organisation, membership organisation, religious organisations/churches, sporting groups, community and voluntary groups which are not social economy enterprises.
* Where the owner or leaseholder is a bank or financial institution
* Where the property owner or leaseholder is a public sector organisation or public service provider e.g. libraries, statutory organisations, funded by another funded body.
* Applicants whose subject property has received or is holding an offer for a Small Settlements Grant under a previous round of this funding programme for the same property.

**1.4 What can be funded?**

Both schemes are to support property capital schemes either to bring back into use or enhance/replace shopfront façade. If the applicant is VAT registered, the grant is based on the net amount.

**Examples of eligible expenditure for Tier 1 & 2**

* Capital building works e.g. signage, shutter and wire removal and replacement of toughened glass, lighting, painting, rainwater goods.
* Building repairs (non routine e.g. cleaning of gutting).

**Additional eligible expenditure for Tier 2**

* Building extensions or conversions to improve the use of the building.
* Fixed building fit outs for commercial use. (This can include decorating if it is an integral part of a wider capital works or repurposing).
* Service and utility upgrades to bring the property back into use.
* Internal shop fit out.
* Splitting units so they are better utilised and
* Re-purpose space to enhanced capacity.

**Please note that the list above is not exhaustive.**

**Please note for any project involving building works or external modification all relevant planning permission and building control permissions must be in place prior to the project starting or expenditure incurred. Statutory fees are ineligible costs.**

**1.5 What cannot be funded?**

**Examples of ineligible work items that will not be funded.**

* Works for a property which has received or is holding an offer for a Small Settlements Grant under a previous round of this funding programme for the same property.
* Land and property purchase.
* Demolition.
* Legal Costs.
* General maintenance /repair works.
* Technical, design, professional fees (including architect fees, quantity surveyor fees or fees to develop specification and tendering documentation).
* Statutory planning permissions costs, building control fees or any other statutory fees.
* Improvements or refurbishments of any existing residential property including attics, garages etc.
* Labour costs not directly associated with the capital works/items.
* Project works that have already commenced, or expenditure incurred prior to a letter of offer.
* Revenue items such as marketing, websites, training, studies, personal protective equipment etc.
* Motorised vehicles including vans, lorries, forklifts etc.
* Cost of advertising for quotations/tender.
* Business running costs.
* Bank interest charges or fees.
* New build accommodation and provision of additional bed space for existing living accommodation.
* Existing residential properties are not eligible for building works or modifications in any circumstance however re-purposing of vacant commercial or retail properties for residential commercial use is an eligible project cost e.g. rental, self-catering etc.
* Gap site developments and new build developments.
* Any cost which is another statutory agency’s responsibility.
* VAT, if registered for VAT.
* Costs incurred prior to a Letter of offer.
* Loan repayments and bank charges.
* Costs not clearly linked to the scheme.
* Running costs.
* Projects/equipment etc. that has received or holding offers for façade and meanwhile use funding since November 2019 or from a previous round of this programme and other Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council grants and programmes.
* Late applications.
* Insurances.
* Interest payments.
* Retrospective works conducted prior to the letter of offer date.
* Hire of goods.
* Costs deemed excessive by the Council following advice from its professional advisors.
* Projects that in the Council’s opinion are poor value for money or purchased outside of Council procurement guidelines.
* Cash expenditure will not be eligible for refund from Council.
* Multinationals or chains which have corporate frontage.
* Rent or rates.
* Salaries and wages.

**Please note this list is not exhaustive, please email** [**smallsettlements@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk**](mailto:smallsettlements@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk) **if you have any further queries.**

**2.0 THE PROCESS**

**2.1 Application**

Applicants must use the council’s grant hub to make an application at **https://funding.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk**

Applicants first register an account and then select the grant application.

The grant panel will not consider late or incomplete applications, or applications not made using the grant portal.

**2.2 Supporting Documentation**

The applicant must upload additional supporting documentation including quotations. The letter of offer and value of funds are based on the documentation provided with the submission of application.

Other supporting documentation to be upload:

* Consent from property owner to complete the proposed work.
* If required, statutory consents.
* Images of the building which is applying for grant assistance.
* Specification of work.

**2.3 Quotations required with application.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Estimated Value*** | ***Procurement Process*** |
| Where estimated cost does not exceed £1,500 | A minimum of two written competitive quotations required |
| Where estimated cost is £1,501 - £7,500 | A minimum of three written competitive quotations required. |
| Where estimated cost is £7,501 - £20,000 | A minimum of four written competitive quotations required. |
| Where estimated cost over £20,000 | Publicly advertised tender process. |

If you want to accept a tender other than the lowest tender, you must provide a written justification when submitting your application. If the assessment panel does not agree with your rational, any grant awarded will be based on the lowest quotation or tender.

Please note the application should ensure that no conflict of interest shall arise in the appointment of any person to provide goods, works or services, and shall upon request provide the Council with written confirmation that no such conflict arises.

**2.4 Assessment Process**

Once the application period has closed, a panel from Council will convene to assessed and score the applications against set criteria; eligibility, forward planning, need, impact and cost/value.

Stage one in the process is to assess the application for eligibility. See section 1.2 and 1.3 above.

If the application meets the eligibility criteria, the panel scores the applications according to the assessment criteria below.

For the Commercial Facades scheme, the scoring is as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | WEIGHTING | SCORE |
| Project Need | 7 | 35 |
| Impact on key Indicators  Tier 1 How the project contributes to improving the façade of the property and creating a more pleasing environment resulting in wider benefits for the public realm and civic pride. | 7 | 35 |
| Forward planning | 2 | 10 |
| Value for money, the cost v benefit | 4 | 20 |

For the Reconfiguring Space scheme, the scoring is as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | WEIGHTING | SCORE |
| Project Need | 6 | 30 |
| Impact on key Indicators  Tier 2 How the project contributes to help businesses transform underused space - to improve and reconfigure the interior of the building to use, or better utilised, thus creating more opportunities for start-ups/growth of existing businesses and benefit the local economy. | 6 | 30 |
| Forward Planning – generate a return on the investment and occupied in 3 months after completion. | 4 | 20 |
| Value for money, the cost v benefit | 4 | 20 |

Council’s professional advisor will conduct visits to premises. This may be prior to the works, at various stages during the works and always on completion to verify the works.

Following assessment and scoring, the panel ranks projects in order from highest to lowest score. The panel awards funding to the highest scoring eligible project based on each scheme until all budget has been allocated.

If there are more successful applications than money available, Council will award grants based on a percentage relative to the score of the application.

Council may use a reserve or call off list if programme funding remains after this call.

**2.5 Outcome from Assessment Process**

Council will notify applicants of decisions within 3 weeks of the closing date.

If successful - Council will issue a Letter of Offer along with an invitation to attend a mandatory workshop. Your Letter of Offer will form a legal agreement to deliver the proposal outlines in the application form. The letter of offer may contain pre-commencement conditions which form part of the contract. The successful applicant wishing to accept the grant and its terms must return the Letter of Acceptance to Council within twenty days from the date of the Letter of Offer. The Council will not reimburse applicants for any expenditure incurred before the successful applicant returns the letter of Acceptance.

Projects must be complete, paid in full and cleared the bank account by the date set on the Letter of Offer.

Officers and Quantity Surveyor will arrange visits to verify spend and progress.

If unsuccessful, a letter will issue stating he reason for the decision.

Appeals

The applicant must request an appeal against a decision within 7 days of notification of the decision. The applicant must make the request by emailing smallsettlements@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk with the word ‘Appeal’ in the subject bar and stating the ground for the appeal. The ground for appeal is either that the outcome was unreasonable, or that the decision makers did not correctly follow the procedure. The Review Panel will consider if either the outcome was unreasonable, or if Council did not follow procedure correctly. The decision of the Review Panel will be final.

1. **CONDITIONS OF GRANT**

The conditions below apply, with additional project specific details contained within the Letter of Offer.

* A full specification of works and full works programme with timetable should be available and provided on request.
* Where required, planning permission, and building control consents must be in place. For all works which will require statutory permissions, it is the applicant’s responsibility to cover these costs.
* The grant holder must use the grant for the eligible works detailed in the letter of offer and to the specified property.
* This grant will not be transferable to another property or project.
* For the Reconfiguring Space grant, works should not commence until the applicant has receive written permission to start.
* The applicant who receives a Letter of Offer and wishes to accept the offer, must return the Letter of Acceptance to Council to ensure Council receives it within 20 days of the date of the Letter of Offer. This person is now the grant holder.
* The grant holder must commission the lowest quoting contractor or supplier to undertake the work unless by prior written agreement with Council. All quotations must be for the address of the business and property proposed.
* All works will complete and claimed for by the dates in the letter of offer.
* After grant, the grant holder must continue to maintain the works area and keep in a reasonable state of repair.
* The Council appointed Quantity Surveyor will produce a report on the works. This report forms part of the grant claim documents. The grant payment may reduce or held back if the grant eligible work price is less than the assessment made by the Council’s Quantity Surveyor, or if the work is not of a satisfactory standard.
* You, your agent, and/or your contractor are responsible for all risks in connection with the public and employers’ liability associated with works.
* Council or the Department for Communicates and Department for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs may record the grant award in any publicity, reports, and other relevant publication/online forums.
* Upon completion, at its discretion Council may contact suppliers and contractors to verify expenditure has taken place. Council and its funders may report cases of suspected double funding or fraud to Police.
* The applicant is responsible for supplying the correct contact details and for checking correspondence from Council. The Council will not be liable for non-responses or missed communications.
* Council may withdraw grant offers at the discretion of the Council if terms are not complied with.

**4.0 CLAIMING THE GRANT**

Council will pay the Grants in arrears. The Council’s Quantity Surveyor completes a report which forms part of the grant claim. The grant holder submits to Council a signed claim form with supporting invoices and bank proofs of payment attached and completes a post project evaluation. On the successful completion of the above, Council pays the grant to the applicant via direct BACS payment. Applicants may arrange for staged payments with Council.

**NB: CASH EXPENDITURE WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR GRANT PAYMENT**

**Grant**

**Tier 1** successful applicants will receive grant aid of up to 80%, capped at £3,000.

**Example**

Project cost £2,000 grant aid 80% £1,600. Applicant contribution £400

Project cost £3750 grant aid 80% £3000. Applicant contribution £750

Project cost £5,000, grant aid 80% £3,000 (maximum grant aid). Applicant contribution £2,000

**Tier 2** successful applicants will receive grant aid of up to 80%, capped at £20,000.

**Example**

Project cost £15,000, grant aid 80% £12.000. Applicant contribution £3,000

Project cost £25,000, grant aid 80% £20,000. Applicant contribution £5,000

Project cost £30,000, grant aid 80% £20,000 (maximum grant aid). Applicant contribution £10,000.

**5.0 GUIDE ON COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION**

Applicants must complete all sections of the application form.

5.1 For the **Facades grant**, there are four pages to complete:

**Page 1**: **About You.** This is basic contact information. Additionally, it asks if you are VAT registered. You do not need to be VAT registered to apply for the grant.

**Page 2**: **About the property.** These are the questions asked and guidance for your response:

**Which of the small settlements town centre boundaries is the property located in?**

**Property Address**

**Name of business currently trading in property if any**

**Please give your project a one-line descriptive title** (*There is no score for this question; it is for ease of recognition of the project).*

**Please provide details of your planned works, including completion date.** *(This question is worth 10% of the overall marks available. This question is about the forward planning of your project. Use this space to say about work phases, timelines, completion risks and mediation measures.)*

**Why is your project needed?** *(This question is worth 35% of the overall marks available. Describe the evidence of need for the proposed activity and why the existing status does not address this. You may wish to say about the need for building improvement, research work, third party reports, or potential users etc.)*

**Please provide details of how your project creates a more pleasing environment resulting in wider benefits for the town and community.** *(This question is worth 35% of the overall marks available. This question is about the* ***impact*** *of your project. Use this space to say how the project will enhance capacity, will increase footfall, will contribute to the sustainability of the business or the town etc. Mention any evidence you have of the impact the project will have.)*

**Has this property received funding from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council since November 2019?**

**Please provide a recent photograph of the façade of the property.**

**Please provide a second recent photograph of the façade of the property.**

**Page 3**: **Costs.** In this section you upload your quotations and set out details of your project costs. *(This question checks value for money. It is worth 20% of the overall marks available. Use the 'add row' button to enter cost information for each cost item on a separate line. The maximum you can request from Council is £3,000. The amount requested from Council cannot exceed 80% of the costs of the project.)*

Applicants must upload quotations and if used, tender specifications.

Projects with a value of up to £1,500 must have two quotes submitted with the application, £1,501-£7,500 3 quotes, £7,501- £20,000 four quotes. You must use an open tender process if the project value is over £20,000.

If you do not wish to use the cheapest supplier, you must say why and provide a justification when submitting your application. If the assessment panel does not agree with your rational, any grant awarded will be based on the lowest quotation or tender.

The applicant should ensure that no conflict of interest shall arise in the appointment of any person to provide goods, works or services. Please detail all conflicts of interest e.g. if a relative is providing a quotation.

Please provide details of the total project costs both net of VAT and inclusive of VAT.

**Page 4**: **Declarations.** Applicants must read the conditions and agree the information included in the application is true and accurate.

5.2 For the **Reconfiguring Space**, there are four pages to complete:

**Page 1: About you.** This is basic contact information. Additionally, it asks if you are VAT registered. You do not need to be VAT registered to apply for the grant.

**Page 2: About the property.** The following questions are asked:

**Has this property received funding from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council since November 2019?**

**Town / Small Settlement**

**Property Address**

**Property Postcode**

**Name of business currently trading in property**

**Do you have planning permission in place if required?**

**Please upload proof of planning permission or engagement with Council planning department.** *(You must upload a document here. If you have engaged with Council Planning Department, upload the evidence of this. An email from Council Planning Department advising you do not need planning permission for this project may be acceptable.)*

**Please provide a brief description of your** **project**. (This question has no marks*; it is for ease of recognition of the project).*

**Please provide details of your planned works, including completion date.** *(This question will be scored. Along with Q12 it asks about forward planning of your project. Forward planning is worth 20% of the overall marks available. Use this space to say about work phases, timelines, risks and mediation measures, and plans for use after completion.)*

**Why is your project needed?** *(This question is worth 30% of the overall marks available. It asks about the need for this project. Describe the evidence of need for the proposed activity and why the existing status does not address this. You may wish to say about the need for building improvement, research work, third party reports, or potential users etc.)*

**Please provide details of how your project impacts the town and benefits the town and community. (***This question is worth 30% of the overall marks available.**This question is about the impact of your project. Use this space to say how the project will enhance capacity, will increase footfall, will contribute to the sustainability of the business or the town etc. Mention any evidence you have of the impact the project will have. Factors to consider; new business opportunities, growth of existing business, potential to increase footfall etc.)*

**Please detail your plan to revitalise and re-purpose the property.** *(This question, along with Q8, forms part of the score for 'forward planning', which is worth 20% of the overall marks available. Factors to consider: What you plan to do and why, future use, how the project will generate a return on investment, and increase footfall for the small settlement. If you have a timetabled plan to ensure occupancy, tell us about it here.)*

**Please provide images to show the existing appearance of the property and where the works will be.** *(You must upload a maximum of five photographs to show the existing appearance of the property and where the works will be.)*

**Please provide elevation drawings of the proposed works.** (You must upload the elevation drawings. If elevation drawings are not available or not applicable, you will need to upload a document stating the position.)

**Please provide site map of the proposed works.** (You must upload the site map. If a site map is not available or not applicable, you will need to upload a document stating the position.)

**Page 3: Costs**

**You must upload quotations and to provide details of the costs and amount of funding requested.** *(This question is scored for value for money. It is worth 20% of the overall marks available. Use the 'add row' button to enter cost information for each cost item onto a separate line. The maximum you can request from Council is £20,000. The amount requested from Council cannot exceed 80% of the costs of the project.)*

Projects with a value of up to £1,500 must have two quotes submitted with the application, £1,501-£7,500 3 quotes, £7,501- £20,000 four quotes. You must use a Tender process for projects with value over £20,000.

If you do not wish to use the cheapest supplier, you must state why and provide a justification when submitting your application. If the assessment panel does not agree with your rational, any grant awarded will be based on the lowest quotation or tender.

The applicant should ensure that no conflict of interest shall arise in the appointment of any person to provide goods, works or services. Please detail all conflicts of interest e.g. if a relative is providing a quotation.

Please provide details of the total project costs both net of VAT and inclusive of VAT.

**Page 4: Declarations.** Applicants must read the conditions and agree the information included in the application is true and accurate.

**6.0 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**6.1 Statutory Consents**

It is the applicant’s responsibility to ascertain if the project requires any statutory consents. It is the applicant’s responsibility to make any relevant license and consent applications e.g. planning, advertising consent, building control, listed building consent or pavement café license. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all approvals are legally complied with. Council may request the applicant acquires and produces a ‘Certificate of Lawful use or Development.’

**Local Planning Office**

**Phone: 03002007830**

**Email:** [**planning@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk**](mailto:planning@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk)

**Web:** [**www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk**](http://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk)

**Building Control Department**

**Armagh – 028 3752 9616; Banbridge 028 4066 0603; Craigavon 028 3831 2500**

**Environmental Health**

**Phone: 0300 0300 900**

**Email:** [**ehealth@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk**](mailto:ehealth@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk)

**6.2 Fraud**

You must repay to us any Grant that we have paid you if:

* You have given us fraudulent, incorrect, or misleading information.
* You have acted negligently in any significant matter or fraudulently in connection with the project.
* Any competent authority directs the repayment of the Grant.
* You knowingly withhold information that is relevant to the content of your application.

**6.3 State Aid**

Please note the State may consider this grant financial assistance as State Aid. Funders or Council may require successful applicants to complete a State Aid declaration form.

**6.4 All Other Queries**

**For this programme, if you have any queries and wish to speak with a member of the team please email** [**smallsettlements@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk**](mailto:smallsettlements@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk)**, or phone 0300 0300 900 ext 61563.**

**Appendix 1**

Eligible Small Settlements with a population of 1,000 and under 4,999

Aghagallon

Bleary

Donaghcloney

Dollingstown

Drumnacanvy

Gilford

Hamiltonsbawn

Keady

Kinallen

Laurelvale / Mullavilly

Magheralin

Markethill

Rathfriland

Richhill

Tandragee

Waringstown