

Guidance Notes for Applicants

Welcome to Mid Ulster Covid-19 Business Grant Scheme Guidance Notes for applicants. Before you complete your online application form, you must take time to read this document carefully.

These guidance notes are provided to help you understand the aims of the Mid Ulster Covid-19 Business Grants Scheme and how you can make an **online grant application**. Applications to Mid Ulster Covid-19 Business Grant Scheme will only be accepted through an **online application process** - No hard copy or email applications will be accepted.

Background

Mid Ulster District Council wishes to support the immediate needs of Mid Ulster businesses to ensure that their business premises and employees are safeguarded and adhere to social distancing regulations as a result of Covid 19 pandemic.

The Mid Ulster Covid-19 Business Grant Scheme is available to eligible commercial businesses located within Mid Ulster District Council area.

The Mid Ulster Covid-19 Business Grant is a discretionary grant of up to 100% eligible costs, min £500 up to max £3,000 grant per property, to assist businesses to adapt and implement social distancing measures to protect staff and customers in line with government guidance.

Council have secured funding from the Department for Communities and Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to deliver this programme. The budget is split equally with £281,000 for urban areas and £281,000 for rural areas. The total budget for this grants programme is £562,000. On receipt of completed online applications, an eligibility check will be completed and successful applications will be allocated funding on a first come first served basis.

Please note this is a rolling programme and limited funds are available.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of Mid Ulster Covid-19 Business Grant Scheme is to assist businesses to adapt to and implement social distancing measures to protect staff and customers in line with government guidance.

The objectives of the scheme are:

1. To modify the internal structure of business/commercial properties to assist with social distancing measures.
2. To modify the external structure of business/commercial properties to assist with social distancing measures.

3. To provide assistance towards equipment which would assist businesses to adhere to Covid 19 government guidelines.

Who Can Apply?

- Must be an eligible commercial business actively trading currently located within Mid Ulster District Council area.
- Must be able to provide HMRC self-assessment number or company number.

Please note that the inclusion of an eligible business/commercial property within Mid Ulster District Council area does not give any automatic entitlement to a grant. There are limited funds available.

Only completed **online application forms** will be accepted from the property owner/s or tenants.

Properties that are ineligible to apply for grant aid include government organisations, political organisations, churches, community and voluntary groups, banks, building societies, credit unions and mainstream agricultural activity.

Eligible Expenditure - what we can fund...

The property owners/tenants of eligible business/commercial properties within Mid Ulster District Council area, may apply for grant-aid to carry out the following (please note the following list is not exhaustive):

- Infrastructure to meet social distancing requirements.
- Awnings/canopies to protect customers who may have to queue to enter business premises.
- Outdoor furniture such as covered seating (tables, chairs), external heaters.
- Planters.
- PA/Tannoy and digital screens, and other signage.
- Equipment to allow widening of footpaths to support social distancing and the safe movement of people through our town centres such as pedestrian safety barriers.
- Any adaptations necessary to the internal layout of the business premises to ensure compliance with Covid-19 social distancing protocols (e.g., flexi-panels/screens at counters, one way systems, building / remodelling works, etc.).
- Equipment to allow the business to operate safely and provide reassurance to customers, e.g. freestanding hand sanitiser stations, etc.
- Internal/external shopper collection points to avoid customers having to fully enter the business premises.

Please note:

- Should your application be successful and if items include structural change to the property, the property owner must give consent at Letter of Offer stage, prior to commencement of works.
- Should your application be successful and items require planning permission and/or building control approval, these approvals must be in place prior to commencement of works.

The grant **will not** include:

- Retrospective items i.e. work or items which already completed or underway
- Works which require planning permission which is not in place prior to works commencing
- Works/Renovations which do NOT assist the business to meet Covid 19 Government Regulations
- Hire Purchase of goods
- Statutory and Licencing fees (e.g. Building Control Approval, Planning Permission etc), etc.
- Insurances
- Interest (on loans taken out to fund your building project)
- VAT (except if the applicant is not VAT registered)
- Salaries/Wages cost
- Professional Fees
- Works to vacant properties and/or residential properties

Procurement Guidelines

Completed applications must be accompanied with the required competitive quotations/tenders from bona-fide reputable contractors/companies. If a contractor is not employed to complete all works, the appropriate number of quotations/tenders must be submitted for **each element** of the scheme: **Please cost each element of work separately in Section 3 of the Application Form on Page 3 and ENCLOSE the appropriate number of quotes for each element of work with your application. Quotes must be for comparable elements. (Failure to do so will result in your application being deemed incomplete).**

Please note Appendix 1 of the application form provides a specification template should you wish to use it to ensure quotes submitted are comparable for completion of eligibility check following submission of completed online application form.

- 2 Written Quotations for project elements costing up to £4,999.99 (please note if one quotation is over £5,000, four quotations will be required.)
- 4 Written Quotations for project elements costing from £5,000 - £9,999.99 capped at overall project costs.

Please ensure:-

- ❖ Appropriate number of comparable quotes are provided in line with the procurement guidelines for each element of work.

All quotations should be dated and on headed paper. All quotations/tenders will be assessed to check the validity and the costings of each quotation/tender. The funding will be allocated accordingly. Failure to provide adequate numbers of quotations/tenders will result in the application being deemed incomplete and subsequently rejected.

PLEASE NOTE THAT A QUOTATION/TENDER WILL BE DEEMED INVALID IF THE APPLICANT IS DEEMED TO HAVE A CONFLICT OF INTEREST (A PERSONAL, PRIVATE OR FAMILY INTEREST) IN RESPECT OF THE COMPANY(S) QUOTING FOR WORK AND/OR DEEMED TO BE A 'LINKED COMPANY' (EU RECOMMENDATIONS 2330/361/EC). COMPANIES ARE LINKED IF ONE OF THEM DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY CONTROLS, OR HAS THE CAPACITY TO CONTROL THE AFFAIRS OF

THE OTHER.

Successful Applications - your 'Letter of Offer'

If your application is successful, you will be issued with a 'Letter of Offer'. This is a form of contract that states:

- The amount of grant awarded
- The terms and conditions associated with the grant

IMPORTANT – NO WORKS CAN COMMENCE AND NO PRODUCTS CAN BE PURCHASED UNTIL A SIGNED 'LETTER OF OFFER' ARE RETURNED TO MID ULSTER DISTRICT COUNCIL WITHIN THE TIMEFRAME NOTED ON THE LETTER OF OFFER AND APPROPRIATE STATUTORY APPROVALS IN PLACE, IF APPLICABLE.

Please note all successful applicants issued Letters of Offer must have works completed and claimed by 20th March 2021.

Payment of Grant & financial considerations

Payment of grant will only be made once Mid Ulster District Council is satisfied that all of the terms and conditions in the 'Letter of Offer' have been fulfilled.

A site visit may be carried out to verify the works have been completed and/or products purchased.

Payment of grant will be made on receipt of a single claim. This claim will include the submission of original invoices and proof of payment. Proof of payment should be in the form of copy cheques/copy of BACS payment and original bank statements/online bank printouts from a reputable financial institution (clearly showing the name of account and account number).

Insurance, Liability and Indemnity

The applicant, agent and/or contractor is responsible for all risks in connection with public or employer liability associated any works under the scheme and will fully indemnify the Council. The applicant, agent and/or contractor shall maintain such insurance policies as are necessary to cover all possible liabilities to the Council arising under the Scheme.

How do I apply?

The link to the Mid Ulster Covid-19 Business Grant Scheme online application form is **HERE**. All applications forms need to be completed and submitted online, along with the required documents. **Please ensure all relevant documentation is uploaded prior to submitting your application.**

It is anticipated that there will be a high demand for this grant and calls for applications will close as soon as all the funding is allocated. This grant is on a first come first served basis. You will receive an acknowledgement to state that your application has been received.

Following completion of eligibility check on your application a Council Officer will be in touch to advise of the outcome and next steps.

Further Queries

All queries regarding the scheme should be emailed to covidbusinessgrant@midulstercouncil.org.

If you need any assistance on any aspect of the Mid Ulster Covid 19 Business Support Grant, please contact Council's Economic Development Department on **03000 132 132**