

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme

Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2025/2026

GUIDANCE NOTES

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

The Scheme is being administered by local Councils



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Section 1 – Introduction, Eligibility and Submitting Your Application

1.1 Background to Grant Program

The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme's Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 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 Programme is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, and this grant aid Programme is administered by local Councils.

The Scheme is open for applications from 9am Thursday 25 September 2025 until 12pm (midday) on Thursday 30 October 2025.

Before applying for the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2025/2026, 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 midnight on 23 March 2025.

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.
- Farm diversification projects where the diversified activity has not started trading.

All other existing registered 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.
- Storage containers (Storage containers may only be used for storage purposes directly related to business operations only. This excludes office accommodation).
- 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.
- 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
- 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.
- 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 that 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 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
- Regional Offices: DAERA Direct Regional offices | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk) – for opening hours and e-mail addresses

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

A detailed specification must be prepared for each item, clearly outlining aspects such as size, design, and materials used. Where applicable, include information on delivery and installation costs. **It is essential that all suppliers invited to quote are provided with the same specification.**

A copy of the email issued to suppliers should be retained and uploaded with your supporting documents.

Where quotes have been requested via the telephone or in person, the covering email and quotes returned by the suppliers should be 'like-for-like' and detail the specification of the item(s).

The online system only permits **six** budget lines so where it is possible to purchase items from the same supplier, you should group these items into the same specification.

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.

Table 1. Procurement limits

| 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 |
| £10,001 - £30,000 | At least 3 Written Quotes per item from <u>different</u> suppliers (internet quotations cannot be used) |

Quotes must be 'like-for-like', especially for specific items (e.g., laptops, IT equipment, machinery). Both quotes should meet the stated specifications to enable a true comparison and verify value for money.

- 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. Email quotes are acceptable; however, the covering email from suppliers must also be provided.
- For purchases under £10,000 using internet quotes, include printed or screenshot copies with supplier, website, and price visible. Do not submit web links; 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. Do not use cloud storage links (e.g., iCloud, Dropbox).

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 increases between procurement and purchase 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 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 DAERA Fraud Department for further investigation.

| | |
|---|---|
| Summary of procurement documents you need to upload with your online application before submitting | √ |
| A specification for each item you're applying for | |
| 2 or 3 like for like quotations as required for each item (refer to table 1 above) | |
| For each item - if you emailed your specification to suppliers, upload the cover email(s) you sent the spec out in. | |
| For each item - if you received quotes back from suppliers by email, upload the cover email(s) received from each supplier. | |

3.5 Application Submission

Your application and supporting documents must be submitted via the online application system and uploaded by **12:00pm midday on 30 October 2025**. 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**.

The application form link will be available online and through your local Council at 9 am on Thursday 25 September 2025.

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're 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 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 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 – eg 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 specification 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 like for like. **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 23 March 2026 with all project items onsite and operational, and all associated payments paid and cleared out of your nominated bank account by 23 March 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* (2021/2022 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 (such as GoForIt and local Council mentoring 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 Programme, 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 5 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 TRPSI funding in previous iterations of the Rural Business Development Grant Schemes? If yes, score is 0 points If no, 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 Programme, 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).

Signed Letters of Offer **must** be accepted electronically within **10 working days of attending the Letter of Offer workshop**. You cannot accept your Letter of Offer until you attend the workshop.

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 **23 March 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 **23 March 2026**.

Projects must be complete, goods onsite and operational, paid in full and cleared the bank account by 23 March 2026 and claim submitted by 23 March 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 2027.

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 Programme will be open for applications as follows:

Opening date: 25 September 2025 at 9.00am

Closing date: 30 October 2025 at 12.00pm (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 Programme 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 applicant attends 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 and Post Project Evaluation survey 12 months after submission of claim (March 2027) |

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**.

It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that their full application is submitted prior to the advertised time and date of closing, **12:00pm (midday) on 30 October 2025**. 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 Programme 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.

Annex 1 – Council Contact Details

| Council Area | Contact Details |
|--|--|
| All Council Areas | Website Link to access the application form is available at https://digitalapps2.daera-ni.gov.uk/RBDGS/StartPage |
| Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council | Tel: Text Business Rural to 80039 and a member of the team will call you back Email: ruralbusiness@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk Website: https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/ruralbusinessgrants/ |
| Ards & North Down Borough Council | Tel: Tel: 03000133333 ext 40918 / 40663 Email: rbdgs@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk Website: www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/rural-grants |
| Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council | Tel: 028 38 312 571 Email: ruralbusinessgrant@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk Web: https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/business/rural-business-development-grant-scheme/ |
| Belfast City Council Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council | Tel: 028 9244 7234 Email: grant.programmes@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk Website: https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/business/rural-development-and-regeneration/rural-development |
| Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council | Tel: 07925 036162 Email: grants@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk Website: www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/grantsandfunding |

| | |
|--|--|
| Derry City & Strabane District Council | <p>Tel: 028 71253 253 ext. 4265</p> <p>Mobile: 07525708399 or 07738733571</p> <p>Email: rural.business@derrystrabane.com</p> <p>Website: https://www.derrystrabane.com/businesssupport</p> |
| Fermanagh & Omagh District Council | <p>Tel: 0300 303 1777</p> <p>Email: rural.development@fermanaghomagh.com</p> <p>Website: https://www.fermanaghomagh.com/services/business/invest/rural-business-grant-programme-trpsi/</p> |
| Mid & East Antrim Borough Council | <p>Tel: 028 2563 3266</p> <p>Email: rdp@midandeastantrim.gov.uk</p> <p>Website: www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk/rbg</p> |
| Mid Ulster District Council | <p>Contact: Julie-Ann Spence</p> <p>Tel: 03000 132 132 – Ext 24403 or 22013</p> <p>Email: rdp@midulstercouncil.org</p> <p>Website: www.midulstercouncil.org/businessgrowth</p> |
| Newry, Mourne & Down District Council | <p>Tel: 0330 137 4050</p> <p>Email: rdp.admin@nmandd.org</p> <p>Website: Residents - Grants and Funding - NMDDC</p> |

Annex 2 - Additional Information for Applicants

1. Publication of Data

If your application is successful and your project is awarded funding, please note that DAERA may publicise details of all financial support awarded/paid out to beneficiaries. This will include the name of the beneficiary, their postal town, their post code and the total amount of financial support received by the beneficiary from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Details of all applications (successful and unsuccessful) will be submitted to your local Council and applicant details will be published as part of the Council report, which are accessible to the public.

2. Data Protection Act

- We will use the information you give us on the application form during assessment and for the life of any grant we award you to administer and analyse grants and for our own research.
- All information submitted in your application form, supporting documentation and any future claim will be made available to the funding organisation, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, and the administrative organisation – your local Council.
- We may give copies of this information to individuals and organisations we consult when assessing applications, when monitoring grants and evaluating the way our funding programmes work and the effect they have. These organisations may include accountants, external evaluators, external auditors and other organisations or groups involved in delivering the project.
- We may also share information with other government departments, including Invest Northern Ireland, organisations providing match funding and other organisations and individuals with a legitimate interest in applications and grants, or for the prevention or detection of fraud.
- We might use the data you provide for our own research. We recognise the need to maintain the confidentiality of vulnerable groups and their details will not be made public in any way, except as required by law.

3 Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives members of the public the right to request any information that we hold, subject to certain exemption that may apply. This includes information received from third parties, such as, although not limited to, grant applicants, grant holders and contractors. If information is requested under the Freedom of Information Act, we will release it, subject to exemptions, although we may consult with you first. If you think that information you are providing may be exempt from release if requested, you should let us know when you apply. For further information please visit the Information Commissioner's Office at www.ico.gov.uk

4 Equality Considerations

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) and Equality Monitoring

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) DAERA has a statutory obligation to promote equality of opportunity between: persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependents and persons without.

The Act also requires DAERA to take into account the promotion of good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

To meet its statutory obligations, DAERA has to continuously monitor and assess the equality uptake and outcomes of its policies and programmes, to determine if there are any adverse effects or consequences. And if there are, to look at ways to lessen these.

This equality monitoring is done through the completion of an equality monitoring on-line questionnaire by project beneficiaries once the funding has been awarded. DAERA is legally required to conduct this monitoring, but it is voluntary for beneficiaries to complete the questionnaire, which will be anonymous and confidential.

The information collected will only be used for Equality Monitoring purposes and in compliance with The Data Protection Act. The details on this form will not be used in the decision to award funding to any person/group who applies to the Scheme, nor will this form be linked in any way to details of individual participants.

All beneficiaries are encouraged to complete the form as it will greatly help DAERA comply with its statutory duty and in its assessment of the equality uptake and outcomes of the Scheme across different groups of people.

- 5 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)** - When you apply for Rural Business Development Capital Grant Scheme, we will ask for some personal information because, for example, your personal email address or telephone number is used on the applicant organisation's behalf. When you provide this information, it is processed in adherence with the GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 as well as the scheme's Terms and Conditions to enable us to communicate with you about the application.

DAERA and our delivery agents take data protection and freedom of information issues seriously. We take care to ensure that any personal information supplied is dealt with in a way which complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation. This means that any personal information you supply will be processed principally for the purpose for which it has been provided. However, DAERA may also use it for other legitimate purposes in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information legislation. These include:

- Occupational health and welfare;
- Compilation of statistics;
- Disclosure to other organisations when required by law to do so;

- Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 where such disclosure is in the public interest;
- The prevention and detection of fraud or maladministration (e.g. The Comptroller & Auditor General and HM Revenue & Customs).

For further details on your privacy see the DAERA Privacy Statement www.daera-ni.gov.uk/daera-privacy-statement