Funded by UK Government

Clackmannanshire Council

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Stirling Council

Forth Valley Growth Grant (FVGG) Guidance

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Overview

The FVGG is available to help businesses meet plans for growth and is funded by the Local Growth Fund via the Local Authorities (Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling) via UK Government.

This fund aims to provide a financial contribution towards business growth projects which will bring economic benefit to the area by way of increased employment and turnover. There will also be a requirement to be working towards Fair Work First principles and implement a Community Benefit within the local authority. The grant can only be used towards capital expenditure. Applicants must demonstrate how the investment will support business growth through increased turnover and job creation.

The fund offers grants from £1,000 to £25,000. For projects of £5,000 or less, the fund can contribute up to 75% of eligible project costs. For projects over £5,000, the contribution is up to 50%. Projects must have a minimum eligible expenditure of £1,333.

Example:

- £2,000 project = up to £1,500 grant (75%)
- £5,000 project = up to £3,750 grant (75%)
- £10,000 project = up to £5,000 grant (50%)
- £50,000 project = up to £25,000 grant (50%)

Please note the number of eligible items that can be awarded per grant is limited to a maximum of 10 items.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible Capital Items

This could include but not limited to:

- Plant and Machinery – production machinery, processing equipment, specialist machines
- Tools and Specialist Equipment – Power tools, fabrication equipment, professional workshop equipment
- Production Equipment – Manufacturing/Production lines, cutting, printing, packaging equipment
- Commercial kitchen equipment – Ovens, commercial refrigeration, extraction, food-processing equipment – large scale equipment.
- Warehouse equipment – Racking, handling equipment, pallet equipment, storage systems

- Furniture and fixtures – Commercial counters, fitted storage, specialist workstations
- Premises improvements – Renovation, refurbishment or adaptation of commercial premises
- Heating/ventilation systems – Commercial extraction or energy efficient installations
- Accessibility improvements – Ramps, accessible facilities and adaptations
- Energy efficiency equipment – Energy-saving machinery, efficient equipment or technology
- Renewable energy equipment – Solar PV, battery storage, heat pumps

Ineligible Capital Items

- Specialist vehicles/equipment – Business-specific equipment or vehicle-mounted equipment
- Computers and IT hardware – Desktop PCs, workstations, networking equipment
- Computer software – Bespoke software, licenced system, software subscriptions
- CCTV/security systems – Cameras, recording systems, access-control systems
- Website redevelopment – New website or redevelopment
- EV Charging equipment – Business charging infrastructure
- Temporary Structures
- Speculative property development with a view to sub-let property
- Stock/Inventory
- Raw materials
- Rent
- Utilities
- Insurance
- Salaries/Consultancy Fees
- Routine maintenance
- Existing debts/finance repayments
- Replacing equipment simply because the old equipment is worn out, unless there is a demonstratable growth benefit
- Purchases made **before grant approval**

Location

Applicant organisations must be operating, located and trading from within the Forth Valley area comprising the local authority areas of Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling.

Bank account

The business must have a dedicated business bank account (you will be required to evidence the account details as part of the application process). Any successful grant will be paid to the business bank account.

Size

Business must be classified as a Micro, Small Medium Enterprise (MSME) or a social enterprise with less than 250 employees and with a turnover of less than £45 million. The business must employ at least one full-time equivalent employee, in addition to the owner/director/partners.

Debt

Business must not be in any debt to the Local Authority. Business rate arrears.

Operating Status

The business must be operated on a full-time basis and provide full-time employment for at least one person.

Operating Premises

The business must operate from commercial premises within the Forth Vally area, for which they either own or there is a signed lease/rental /licence agreement in place (the premises must be registered for Non-Domestic Rates).

Trading Status

At the time of submitting the application, the business cannot be in bankruptcy, liquidation or similar.

Must be trading a minimum of 12 months (Applicant business must have been receiving sales income for at least 12 months).

Ineligible Sectors

The following sectors are not eligible to apply:

- Professional services such as lawyers, dentists, vets, doctors, accountants etc.
- Personal services for example beauticians, hairdressers etc.
- Business that are required by statute to be regulated by the FCA such as credit unions, money lenders etc.
- Business involved in the gambling, religion or sex industry
- Third sector businesses – community groups, not for profit organisations, voluntary or charitable organisations (except trading social enterprises with employees and a growth plan can apply)
- Any business that may be deemed to bring the council into disrepute

- Retail - applications from the retail sector can only be considered if the business can demonstrate that they are servicing more than a local market. This means they are attracting customers from out with the Forth Vally Area and are providing something that is unique and not available from any other local retailers. For example – a specialist skateboarding shop or servicing an online customer market. Where a retailer's sales only serve the local market, providing grant support can cause displacement i.e. if one local business receives support but this leads to another local business in the area losing customers then this has no added value to the Forth Valley economy.
- licensed premises that only operate as a public house and do not serve hot food.

Application Requirements

Evidence required to apply

You will need information of the following:

- Trading name of the business
- Number of employees / turnovers
- Proposed expenditure
- Business bank details – including last 3 months of bank statements
- Copy of your lease if you are paying towards Non-Domestic Rates for the premises
- Latest set of annual accounts and management accounts. Where the business has not yet produced audited accounts then the management accounts will need to be certified by an accountant.
- Two quotes for each item being purchased
- Any statutory consents – planning, listed building or building control
- Any net zero reports to support your application
- Any policy information related to net zero, community wealth building and, or fair work first.
- Project timeline to meet requirements of fund delivery
- Overview of business and plans for growth
    - Executive summary:
        - a brief overview of company proposals including how you plan to grow the business
        - describe the investment for which you are seeking funding support and fully explain the impact it will have on the business
    - Management and organisation:
        - company structure
        - the management team
            - skills
            - experience
            - qualifications
            - job titles
    - History, business, and products:
        - a brief description and history of the business
        - a description of the principal products or services

        - proposed future developments
    - Market and competition:
        - size and location of market - local/ regional/ UK / Overseas
        - who are major customers
        - who are major competitors

Fair Work First and Net Zero

All applicants applying for this grant are expected to be working towards compliance with both the Scottish Government's Fair Work First approach and contribute towards Scotland's journey to Net Zero by 2045. We accept that this will not be achievable for all grantees within the project period, but efforts to work towards these measures will further evidence Forth Valley's commitment to tackling poverty, promoting fair work, and contributing to a just transition to Net Zero.

Demonstration of the Fair Work First commitments include:

- Payment of at least the Real Living Wage to all directly employed staff aged 16 and over.
- Appropriate channels for effective workers' voice, such as trade union recognition or other formal mechanisms appropriate to the organisation's nature, size and scope.
- Investment in workforce development.
- No inappropriate use of zero-hours contracts.
- Action to tackle the gender pay gap and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace.
- Offering flexible and family-friendly working practices.
- Commitment to not using fire-and-rehire practices.

Demonstration of the Net Zero commitments for Energy Related projects include:

- Applicant must be able to show how their activities contribute to reducing carbon emissions, and/or
- Demonstrate steps their organisation is taking towards a credible plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with Scotland's 2045 Net Zero target.
- Business Energy Scotland can provide advice and support for businesses to assess and measure their carbon emissions and highlight possible technologies to achieve net zero ambitions.

Subsidy Control

Applicants must ensure that all proposed projects comply with UK subsidy control law.

Clackmannanshire. Falkirk and Stirling Councils, as a public authority, are required to comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022, which took effect on 4 January 2023, when awarding any funding or support. Where a provisional decision is made to fund your organisation and the Council considers that the support may constitute a subsidy, you may be asked to provide further information to allow assessment of the subsidy position.

To complete this assessment, additional clarification or documentation may be requested prior to any grant award.

No funding decision will be finalised until a subsidy-compliant route has been identified. Any provisional award will remain conditional on the subsidy control position being satisfactorily resolved before funding is committed.

Local authorities cannot provide legal advice on subsidy control. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure their project is compliant. The Local authorities will, however, be happy to discuss potential subsidy exemptions or streamlined routes where appropriate following any approval in principle.

Subsidy control: guidance - gov.scot

Community Benefit

Applicants are expected to offer up a small community benefit in return for the grant.

Examples of which include:

- Visit schools/colleges to give talks
- Volunteer with local schools, foodbanks, shelters or community centres
- Provide free professional services to charities or community groups
- Offer work experience placements for local residents or employability clients
- Donate products or services to local groups or charities
- Sponsor local sports or youth teams

Further information on community benefit and employability links:

- Community Benefits | Stirling Council
- Gordon Wright (Senior Learning and Employability Officer) - wrightg@stirling.gov.uk
- Clackmannanshire - clacksworks@clacks.gov.uk
- Falkirk – communitybenefits@falkirk.gov.uk

Application Process

To establish eligibility for the grant the applicant must make an initial enquiry outlining the project to the following email address (depending on your local authority).

Clackmannanshire businesses should email:
employerengagement@clacks.gov.uk

Falkirk businesses should email:
bsgrant@falkirk.gov.uk

Stirling businesses should email:
supportfund@stirling.gov.uk

The outlined project details will be assessed and if suitable for the fund, the applicant will be given access to the application portal. A full application along with supporting documentation can then completed by the applicant. Funding assessment panels will then decide on grant application outcomes and will be held on an as needs basis.

We anticipate a high number of applications which are processed in a chronological order. We will deal with your application as soon as we can but please be patient. It may take up to 4 weeks before you hear from us.

Successful applicants will have 3 months to complete their project and submit the required evidence and completion paperwork. Once the submitted documentation is verified then any grant will be paid. The grant payment will be based on final invoices/receipts submitted.

There will be additional funding available for the FVGG in Financial years 2027-2028 and 2028-2029. If your project cannot be completed by March 2027, then applications can be submitted for April 2027 to March 2028. This may be more relevant to projects which require a longer completion timescale, including those that require statutory requirements such as planning, building or listed building consent. Projects in the new financial years will also be required to be completed within three months, if this cannot be achieved then approval will be required to extend the project. This will be assessed and granted from the lead local authority.

Grant closure date

This grant is funded by the UK Local Growth Fund.

The budget is allocated on a first come first served basis.

There is a limited budget, and the fund will close when the budget is fully allocated.

Contact us

Falkirk Council are the lead Local Authority for this grant. Grants will be paid by Falkirk Council for all Local Authority areas.

For any general queries in relation to this fund, please email your Local Authority grants team:

Clackmannanshire council: employerengagement@clacks.gov.uk

Falkirk Council: BSGrant@falkirk.gov.uk

Stirling Council: supportfund@stirling.gov.uk