

Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub

& Grant service

Guidance Notes

Terms and conditions of Grant programme.

The KEY points:

- You MUST NOT purchase any products/services before the date of your Grant Offer letter.
- You MUST keep all documentation throughout this process safe and be able to provide it when requested until December 2033.
- If the project costs are less than what has been quoted and agreed in this offer letter, you must inform Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub immediately and a recalculated amount of grant funding will be confirmed on a pro rata basis.
- You CANNOT use any expenditure linked to this project which you wish to receive funding for via this programme for any other ERDF or other government/ public funded programme.

Full details – Please read:

Programme Administration

Blue Orchid Enterprise Solutions Ltd delivers the Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub and will subsequently be providing a match funded Grant programme which is funded under the European Regional Development Fund via the Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub brand.

Programme Aim

The aim of the overall programme is to support business growth by helping with the cost of specialist support to implement an agreed action plan. 40% of the total cost of a Project per business is available. The decision of the grant award will be considered heavily by how many full time jobs (*i.e. FTE's*) lasting at least 12 months, will be created.

Overview of Grant

Eligible SME businesses will be able to apply for a match funded Grant of circa 40% towards eligible project costs, the remaining 60% will be funded directly by the SME, which will enable them to achieve Growth. Grants between £1000 and £6000 are available. Average Grant awards are expected to be £4,000.

Criteria for Eligibility

- The funding must be used towards the costs of the overall project being funded.
- This scheme is not open to SMEs in the fishery and aquaculture sectors; retail; primary production, processing and marketing of agricultural products; the coal, steel and shipbuilding sectors; the synthetic fibres; establishments providing generalised (school age) education, banking and finance companies, nuclear sector.
- The business MUST be able to cover the full costs of the project upfront.
- The programme is open to any trading SME business in the Cheshire or Warrington LEP area that can demonstrate imminent Growth.
- An SME under this programme is defined as one that has less than 250 employees, a turnover equivalent to less than EUR50m or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR43 million, independently owned (*less than 25% owned by other independent business*).
- The business can demonstrate how job creation, increase in turnover or new products/services to market will be achieved following the Grant Award.
- The business will source 3 independent quotes for all services work carried out for all eligible project costs to ensure value for money is demonstrable.
- Any financial transactions must be completed through business bank accounts only.
- Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub reserves the right to reject quotations of expenditure following due diligence and monitoring/management of the public purse exercise.
- The business must give consent to be involved in publicity of the overall programme where required.
- The business must agree to take part in any monitoring and produce relevant information/documentation as requested throughout the process.
- You CANNOT use any expenditure linked to this project which you wish to receive funding for via this programme for any other ERDF or other government/ public funded programme.

Eligible Expenditure

Eligible expenditure can be defined as expenditure where the benefits last more than 12 months and can generally include website construction/ consultancy, software development, consultancy towards ISO standards, specialist business advice/ coaching.

However, the Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub will confirm exact eligible expenditure with you during the application process.

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The Grant may not be used for (*This is NOT an exhaustive list*):

- Any capital expenditure
- Recurring revenue costs (*including salaries, stock, rent utility charges, subscriptions*)
- Repaying existing loans or debt
- Building work
- Software licenses or replacing of existing systems – (*i.e. one for one replacements*)
- Replacement/standard update of website
- The reimbursement of goods/services purchased prior to the date of a Grant Offer letter
- Solicitor fees
- Consumables
- Road vehicles
- Activities that may bring Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub and its funding partners into disrepute
- Any costs associated with statutory requirements – *e.g., registering with statutory bodies such as the ICO*

Procurement Guidelines for expenditure

3 competitive quotations will be required for all items of expenditure. It is not permitted for businesses to receive quotes and consequently use the Grant against items supplied by companies that they own or companies that have the same majority shareholding as the applicant business.

The Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub team will provide you with Procurement guidelines which follow ERDF rules with regards to procurement. These guidelines will include a specification template and scoring matrix which must be fully completed, signed off and approved before any work can commence.

Availability of the Grant

All Grants are made at the discretion of Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub and are subject to the availability of funding. Applications will be assessed on both the economic impact of the Grant as well as a "First come, first served" basis. All grants are of a time limited nature and must be completed within an agreed time frame which will be confirmed with the grant offer letter.

Assessing the Application

Completed applications will be assessed for eligibility and the extent to which they meet the aims of the programme. One of 3 decisions at this stage will be made:

- Offer of a grant
- Request for further information from the applying SME
- Rejection of the application

Each application will be judged on its own merits with regard to how well it meets the programmes aims, eligibility criteria and its ability to be implemented within the set timescales. Preference will be given to those applicants that show a clear example of how the funded project will lead to job creation, new products and/or an increase in company turnover. This is a 2 stage process. If you are invited to the 2nd stage of the application process you will be offered support with the procurement of any goods or services you wish to purchase.

Decision of the Application

Notification of the decision on the application will be in writing to the business. An offer of a grant will be made via a grant offer letter. This letter will specify:

- The eligible expenditure
- The maximum amount of Grant awarded
- The date by which the expenditure should be completed (*receipted invoices should be collected and provided to Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub on request*)

The decision of Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub Grant panel is final. It reserves the right to vary the level of grant or reject an application.

The Offer of Grant

An offer of grant must be accepted within 14 days of the date of the grant offer letter by the business returning a signed copy. After this



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date the offer will be automatically withdrawn. The business will then have to re-apply if they still wish to proceed.

The Grant Aided Expenditure

1. The grant is not retrospective and therefore cannot be used for the reimbursement of goods/services already purchased before the date of the Grant Offer.
2. The grant cannot be used for any other expenditure other than the project outlined in the application and as agreed in the grant offer letter.
3. Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub must be notified immediately of any requested variations to the agreed offer and before any variation to the application takes place.
4. Variations to the agreement must be approved in writing prior to the amended project commencing. Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub reserves the right to refuse any requested variations.
5. Approved projects must be completed by the date specified in the Grant Offer letter unless agreed otherwise with Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub. The business must inform Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub if the deadline cannot be met. Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub will then consider the most appropriate action but is under no obligation to alter the conditions in the original agreement and therefore has no obligation to offer assistance for works undertaken after the original deadline date.

Payment of the Grant

1. Grants are discretionary and Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub reserves the right to withhold payment of the grant in whole or part if any condition of the grant offer has been breached.
2. The business must inform Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub upon completion of the expenditure to which the grant relates.
3. The business must submit a claim for the grant assistance within one month of the completion date as stated in the grant offer which includes a copy of copies of receipted invoices for the work conducted and a copy of the company's bank statement showing the full payment of the costs of the project to the supplier.
4. Payment of the Grant will be subject to the business having satisfactorily completed and provided all relevant documentation which has complied with all the terms and conditions of the programme.
5. If the actual costs are less than those outlined in the Grant Offer letter, payment will be restricted to the actual amount in accordance with the receipted invoices and subject to the 60% cash matched contribution.
6. If the actual costs exceed the maximum Grant awarded as agreed in the Grant Offer letter, Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub is not obliged to increase the grant amount.
7. Payment of the grant will be made into the businesses bank account (or "trading as" account) via BAC's.
8. The business is responsible for full payment of the VAT.

VAT

Businesses VAT registered, will have their grant assessed on the net cost of eligible projects i.e. excluding VAT. If the business is unsure whether they are or not VAT registered then they must seek advice from HM Revenue & Customs.

Liability of Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub

Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub and its officers/staff shall not at any time be held liable to any person or business in relation to any loss or damage arising, either directly or indirectly, as a result of compliance by the business with these terms and conditions of grant. Award of the grant does not imply that Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub is expressing a view regarding the business or its products/services nor that it accepts responsibility for any debts, or liabilities incurred by the business.

State-Aid

Under EC Regulation 1998/2006 (de Minimis Aid Regulation) as published in the Official Journal of the European Union 28 December 2006, the grant provided is a de minimis aid. Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub will provide you with a formal notification of the Value of De Minimis aid provided. You must retain this statement for 3 years and notify the provider of any future support that you access, of the full value of support you have received from this programme.

Businesses audit requirements

If awarded a grant towards eligible project costs, the benefiting business must retain documents relating to their grant until the 31st of December 2033 which includes:



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- Grant Offer letter
- Copies of the 3 quotes for the services you have purchased
- Copies of the appraisal process of the 3 quotes to select your winning quote which demonstrates value for money
- The agreement between your business and the supplier of services you have purchased which details the type of support given, timescales and total cost including VAT
- The invoices from the supplier of services to the business
- A copy of your business bank statement showing receipt of the ERDF grant

Repayment of the Grant

Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub reserves the right to recover all or part of the grant it has provided if:

- The business is found to have improperly tried to influence the decision of any officer/staff member with regards to the award of the grant.
- The business is sold or ceases to trade for whatever reason within a 6 month period from receipt of the grant.
- The business relocates outside of the Cheshire or Warrington LEP area within a 6 month period from receipt of the grant.
- Any information provided in the application form or other correspondence is found to be substantially incorrect, misleading, incomplete or altered.
- The business fails to comply with any of the terms and conditions of this programme.

