

Brentwood Business Growth Grant Fund (ARG)

Brentwood Borough Council

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Brentwood Business Growth Grant Fund Policy

Brentwood Business Growth Grant Fund (Additional Restrictions Support Grant)

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Ownership: Laurie Edmonds

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Introduction

Since November 2020, central government has provided £2.2m to Brentwood Borough Council as part of our Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) fund allocation. This was a fund for local businesses facing financial difficulties due to regional and national lockdowns, particularly those who had been ineligible for the main Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSB) and Restart grants. These were businesses who had not been mandated to close, but who remained impacted by Covid restrictions (for example, supply chain or ancillary businesses to those mandated to close).

In late January 2021, the Secretary for Business, pledged a top-up to the ARG fund to each local authority, subject to their existing ARG fund being fully utilised by 30 June 2021. Brentwood met this condition, which resulted in a top up amount of £771k becoming available. We have used this ARG funding to champion and support growth within the Borough.

This policy sets out how Brentwood will deliver remaining funds from ARG since Window 5 closes on 22 August 2021.

The grant will be delivered as the Brentwood Business Growth Grant Fund that aims to support local businesses who are looking to scale and grow within the Borough post-pandemic.

About the Brentwood Business Growth Grant Fund

The Brentwood Business Growth Grant Fund offers a share of £250k to support businesses operating in and from the district who have ambitious plans to scale or grow and create new jobs within our region. The scheme is open to applications from micro, small and medium businesses (SMEs) from any industry and sector, including start-ups (launched during the pandemic) through to the more established local companies looking to expand in the area.

This is a one-off grant between £1,000 to a maximum of £10,000 that will be awarded to eligible applicants.

Applicants must:

- Be located and have a trading address in the Brentwood Borough;
- Have at least one year of submitted accounts, and have been trading for no less than 12 months;
- Have fixed, ongoing and unavoidable business-related outgoings;
- Have an innovative and ambitious business plan for growth;
- Give evidence of how funds would be used;
- Show how the grant funding will create new jobs or safeguard existing jobs;
- Bring new skills into the business.

How the grant funding can be used

The fund supports businesses that have growth plans in place but need some help to get them off the ground. The grants can be used to help your business:

- Purchase new equipment, such as new IT equipment or machinery to produce a new product;
- Create new services, such as a new digital marketing strategy and the means of putting it in place to sell a new product or business service;
- Adopt new processes or new ways of working, such as adaptations to your premises to accommodate a new production process or operation.

All projects should be new and help to increase your outputs or turnover, support new operations or processes to create new employment opportunities or maintain employment.

The minimum award available to any successful grant applicant is £1,000 and the maximum award £10,000. As the funds draw to a close, awards will be apportioned based on the remaining funds available. The Council reserves the right to close the scheme at any time and will do so immediately upon 100% fund allocation.

Exclusions

- Businesses that have already received grant payments that equal the maximum permitted levels of subsidy
- Business intermediaries acting on behalf of other businesses
- Partnerships or businesses with a registered address outside of the Brentwood Borough
- Partnerships that only exist to operate investment funding and other types of finance
- Businesses that are in administration, insolvent or where a striking-off notice has been made
- Those intending to use funding to support or sustain existing business operations, such as overheads, outgoings or salaries, or standalone consultancy costs such as business mentoring

Application process

All grants will require an online application form to be completed, which will be published on our website when the scheme is launched.

Grant applicants will be asked to provide the following about their project:

- Summary of the project (maximum 255 words)
- Details about how the project will support the business's aims and objectives, including need for the product/service that the grant is intended to fund (maximum of 1,000 words)
- Full cost breakdown of the project
- Information about job creation or job protection

- Estimated increase in turnover as a result of the grant
- Details about investment in training and new skills
- Last full year's accounts

The application process will allow the Council to undertake proportionate pre-payment checks to confirm eligibility relative to the Brentwood Business Growth Grant Fund scheme and to allow the appropriate level of grant to be identified.

Applicants will be informed within approximately 4 weeks of application receipt as to whether they have been successful, and the value of award granted.

Appeals

The decision for each application will be decided by the Council's Economic Development team. If the applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they can request a review of the decision but there are no rights of appeal.

The request should be submitted in writing to business@brentwood.gov.uk within one week of the initial decision and should detail the reasons why a review is considered necessary, providing any additional supporting information required. The review will be undertaken by the Director of Planning & Economy who will not have been involved in the previous decision.

Other key information

Brentwood Business Growth Grant Fund income received by a business is taxable. The Brentwood Business Growth Grant Fund, part of the Council's Additional Restrictions Grant fund allocation, will need to be included as income within a business tax return. However, only businesses which make an overall profit once grant income is included will be subject to tax.

Anti-fraud measures

As part of the appraisal of each application, credit checks may be carried out which will include overdue creditors, bankruptcy, county court judgements and director disqualification. The Government will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud. Any business caught falsifying their records to gain grant money will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to claw back, as may any grants paid in error.

In addition to pre-payment eligibility checks our Internal Audit team will use government schemes such as the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) to ensure the Council takes reasonable steps in prevention of fraud and error. Data will be shared with the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and NFI. Central government will support local authorities to carry out post-event assurance work.

Scoring matrix

Scoring				Total weighting
Quality of application	High level of project details, cost breakdown and evidence of impact (50 points)	Basic details of project, little or no evidence (25 points)	Does not meet requirement as no clear information given (0 points)	40%
Number of FTEs created or jobs safeguarded	3+ FTE jobs being generated or safeguarded within 12 months (30 points)	1-3 FTE jobs being generated or safeguarded within 12 months (15 points)	No information provided or no FTEs created (0 points)	30%
Increase in turnover	Over £20k (20 points)	Up to £20k (up to 10 points)	No information provided if turnover will/won't increase (0 points)	20%
Investment in training and new skills	High level of details about training and new skills provided (10 points)	Basic details about training and new skills provided (5 points)	No information provided (0 points)	10%