

East Lothian Council
Economic Development – Supporting Local Business 2026/27

BUSINESS GROWTH AND INNOVATION REVENUE GRANT
GUIDANCE NOTES

East Lothian Council's Business Growth and Innovation Grant aims to further the goals of the Local Growth Fund in Scotland which supports the UK Government Growth Mission to improve living standards for working people by investing in economic growth. The Supporting Local Business 2026/27 programme provides strategic flexible investment to drive economic growth and build a fairer and more productive economy. This grant programme is delivered as part of the Innovation and Business Productivity priority.

Priority consideration for grant funding will be given to applicants whose proposals clearly demonstrate ability to evidence more than one of the key Local Growth Outcomes, whose proposals will encourage employment, grow an existing East Lothian business, support sustainability, safeguard existing or create jobs.

We recommend that all applicants read this Guidance Note in full before they start to complete an application and refer to the guidance notes while filling out the application.

Please complete all areas of the application in full and send all of the supporting documentation.

In the first instance queries should be directed to supportgrants@eastlothian.gov.uk.

Please read this guidance document in full **BEFORE** requesting an application form to be sure you are eligible.

THE AIM

To provide for and encourage employment growth, business growth, business sustainability, adoption of innovation and transition to [Net Zero Carbon](#) in East Lothian. The key elements of the funding are to support entrepreneurship, business development and local and social economies. East Lothian Council supports and encourages Fair Work Practices, including Effective Voice, Opportunities, Security, Fulfilment, and Respect, and expects businesses in receipt of public funds to take a positive approach to fair work practices, more information can be found here: <https://www.fairworkconvention.scot/the-fair-work-framework>

LOCAL GROWTH OUTCOMES

Your business or project must satisfy at least 2 of the below outcomes to be eligible for this fund.

Net Zero– To deliver meaningful progress towards Net Zero Carbon for the business and to assist in local and national ambitions on transitioning to Net Zero Carbon.

Innovation – To support businesses to embrace new ways of working and adopt new technologies and ideas.

Productivity & Growth – To enable the business to develop increased sustainability and overall growth contributing to the local economy.

Inclusive Pathways to Employment - to support individuals facing barriers to work into sustainable employment or self-employment opportunities (part of [Community Wealth Building](#)).

Use of Local Suppliers / Products – to support the local business ecosystem (part of [Community Wealth Building](#)).

Digital Adaptation – to improve productivity by adopting new digital processes.

LOCAL PRIORITIES

Priority consideration for grant funding will be given to applicants whose proposals support the below listed local priority support areas:

- Women
- Minority Ethnic Groups
- People with Disabilities
- Plural Ownership Models
- Rural or Deprived Location
- New Scots
- Care Experienced Individuals
- Key sectors – tourism, energy, innovation

THE GRANT AND ELIGIBILITY

All grants are discretionary and the decision on funding by East Lothian Council is final with no right of appeal.

Applicants can apply for up to £5,000 in revenue expenditure.

Successful applicants will receive 70% of the grant amount on receipt of a signed acceptance of offer by East Lothian Council from the applicant and 30% on satisfactory completion of the project and acceptance of the evidence by East Lothian Council. Successful applicants will be issued with a report and claim form which must be submitted with all necessary evidence before the deadline. Evidence includes invoices/receipts for all approved expenditure and a copy of the bank account clearly showing the payments.

APPLICANTS MUST:

- Have been trading for at least two years.
- Be in the East Lothian Council Local Authority Area.
- Meet all legal requirements and regulations which relate to the operation of the business.
- Not be in debt to East Lothian Council, e.g. for outstanding business rates or other charges.
- Not have received an East Lothian Council Economic Development Grant within the last 2 years (with the exception of the UKSPF New Business Support Grants and UKSPF Expert Help programmes).
- Clearly demonstrate the need for the funding, the benefit to the business and the local economy.
- Be able to clearly demonstrate the business' commitments to Fair Work Practices and achieving Net Zero Carbon.

Equipment / services cannot be double funded, i.e. you cannot receive funding, other than match funding, from another source for elements being funded by East Lothian Council. If you receive funding from another source for items or services identified in your application you must tell us. If we cannot agree other suitable expenses you may be asked to repay some or all of the grant. You must retain invoices / receipts for audit purposes.

WHAT WE CAN AND CAN'T FUND

Examples of eligible expenditure include:

- Recruitment costs
- Training and skills development
- Marketing and promotion (e.g. digital campaigns, branding, website development)
- Software subscriptions and digital tools (e.g. CRM, accounting software)
- Event admission fees (e.g. tradeshow, markets)
- Product or service development (non-capital)
- Customer research and market testing
- Outreach and engagement activities (e.g. targeting underrepresented groups)
- Costs related to improving accessibility or inclusive practices (e.g. adapting services, flexible delivery models)

The Grant cannot be used for:

- Purchase of capital equipment (e.g. machinery, vehicles, large IT hardware)
- Property purchase, construction, or refurbishment
- Buying company shares or buying out members of a partnership
- Repaying or replacing existing loan and overdraft facilities
- Repaying debts, including taxes owed
- Paying interest on existing loan(s) / borrowing facilities
- Illegal or political activities
- Some revenue costs e.g. staff/payroll costs, utilities, etc
- Consultancy

PROJECT COSTS AND QUOTES

Applicants must provide a detailed breakdown of all project costs within the application form. Each item must show the amount exclusive of VAT, as this grant cannot fund VAT.

At least two quotes must be provided for each item. Where possible, at least one quote should be from a local supplier. If this is not possible, an explanation must be provided. Using local suppliers contributes to [Community Wealth Building](#).

If it is not possible to source a local supplier, applicants must provide an explanation outlining the efforts made to obtain local provision.

GENERAL TERMS

Companies must:

1. Apply in writing using the relevant East Lothian Council grant application.
2. Provide two years' accounts with their last three month's bank statements.
3. Provide an up to date business plan.
4. Have at least one meeting with a nominated representative of the Economic Development Department to discuss their application in full.
5. Agree to and sign the grant award and retain and submit invoices and bank statements as proof of purchase for items or services.
6. Meet with a nominated representative of the Economic Development Department and provide a copy of their accounts one year after the project completion to evaluate the success of the funding and review any further required support.
7. Effect and maintain such insurance over the funded assets and business as is reasonable and customary for a business engaged in the same or a similar activity.
8. Agree to a physical inspection of the funded asset(s) once purchased, and at agreed intervals thereafter.
9. Notify East Lothian Council of the sale of any funded assets within 14 days of the sale and return any proceeds of the sale to East Lothian Council within 14 days.
10. Agree to take part in any publicity related to the grant, if requested.
11. Agree to acknowledge funding from UK Government and support from East Lothian Council in any publicity of the project carried out by the business including, but not limited to, press releases, social media and webpage activity.

HOW WE ASSESS APPLICATIONS

When we have received a completed application form and full supporting documentation we will start our assessment. We will only consider one application from your organisation. We will check that you / your organisation can apply and that your project / proposal is something we can support. We will then consider the following as appropriate:

- The business need for your project
- If we have funded your organisation before
- Your organisation's financial standing
- The total project cost, and other funding required
- The potential economic impact
- The potential longer term impact of your project
- Your company's commitment to fair work practices
- Your company's commitment to environmental sustainability

Our funding decision will be final, there is no appeal process.

MONITORING YOUR GRANT

Any grant awarded will be subject to monitoring through a business health check, and / or premises visit undertaken by a nominated representative of the Economic Development Department, during which all relevant documentation and management accounts should be made available. The purpose of which is to support you to evaluate the impact of your project and consider future support needs. You must retain records of expenditure and other relevant documents and maintain your management accounts.

If successful in your application a full evaluation form will be sent to you.

SUBSIDY CONTROL

Any assistance provided under this scheme will be offered by East Lothian Council as a Minimum Financial Assistance (MFA) subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act (2022). Before making any award, we will require written confirmation that receipt of the award will not exceed your MFA threshold of £315,000 cumulated over this and the previous two financial years, as specified in section 36(1) of the Subsidy Control Act (2022). Confirmation must be sent by someone who is authorised to do so on behalf of your organisation*.

You are required to keep a written record of the amount of MFA you have received and the date/s when it was received. The written record must be kept for at least three years beginning with the date on which the MFA was given. This will enable you to respond to future requests from public authorities on how much MFA you have received and whether you have reached the cumulative threshold. Relief from East Lothian Council's Business Rates qualifies as an MFA subsidy and should be included in your consideration.

* The MFA financial threshold applies at company group level.

In the event that in East Lothian Council's reasonable opinion and/or in the reasonable opinion of the Scottish Ministers, your grant or any part of it is deemed to be or held to be in excess of any subsidy control levels, and that each or either of them consider that they are required to recover such sum in order to ensure compliance with obligations under the Law, East Lothian Council or the Scottish Ministers may require immediate repayment of the grant or any part of it together with such interest at a rate and on such a basis as may be determined from time to time by the relevant government body.

In the event that you become bound to repay any sum you shall pay East Lothian Council or the Scottish Ministers the appropriate sum within 14 days of a written demand. In the event that you fail to pay the sum within the 14 day period, the Scottish Ministers or East Lothian Council shall be entitled to interest on the sum at the rate of 2% per annum above the Bank of England base lending rate prevailing at the time of the written demand, from the date of the written demand until payment in full of both the sum and the interest.

DATA PROTECTION

East Lothian Council takes your privacy seriously. As we collect and process personal information about you we are registered as a 'data controller' under the Data Protection Act (ICO registration Z5759571). Under the Data Protection Act, you have a right to know how we collect, use and share your personal data. You can find information on the kinds of personal data we collect, and how we might use it here <https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk>

KEY DATES

17th June 2026	Fund and applications open
13th July 2026	Application round closes at 12 noon
27th July 2026	(week beginning) Offer of Grant letters issued.

30th January 2027 **ALL PROJECTS MUST BE FULLY COMPLETED**

12th February 2027 Final date for submission of Evidence of Spend Claim and Report

26th February 2027 Final funding payment made

Funding is limited and so we advise to submit your applications as soon as possible. For any queries before submitting your application please use the email address below.

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

If you have read the above criteria and believe your business is eligible for this grant, you can request an application form via email from supportgrants@eastlothian.gov.uk. Completed application forms together with supporting documentation should be emailed to: supportgrants@eastlothian.gov.uk