

Guidelines and Eligibility

1. OVERVIEW

The Business Start-Up Grant is funded through the Local Growth Fund (LGF) and administered by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council as part of a wider suite of Economic Stimulus Funds.

This grant forms one of three complementary programmes designed to support businesses at different stages of their lifecycle, providing a clear progression route from start-up through to business growth and scale.

The scheme provides targeted capital investment to support new and early-stage businesses across all sectors, enabling enterprise creation, early trading activity and long-term sustainability.

The scheme contributes to:

LGF Priority 1 – More Productive and Competitive Businesses

Supporting:

- Creation of new enterprises
- Entrepreneurship and self-employment
- Business resilience and sustainability
- Productivity and competitiveness
- Innovation and modernisation
- Job creation
- Private sector investment

The programme is designed to work alongside Enterprise Facilitation, Business Wales and other business support programmes to ensure businesses can access ongoing support as they develop and grow.

Programme Delivery Period

Funding is available during the 2026/27 financial year only. All approved projects must be fully completed, all expenditure incurred and paid, and grant claims submitted no later than **31 January 2027**.

Applicants must demonstrate at application stage that their project can be delivered within these timescales.

2. FUND OBJECTIVES

The Business Start-Up Grant aims to:

- Encourage entrepreneurship and business creation.
- Support first-time entrepreneurs and under-represented groups.
- Enable viable businesses to commence trading.
- Remove barriers to business creation through targeted capital investment.
- Support sustainable business growth from the earliest stage.
- Encourage innovation, digital adoption and productivity improvements.
- Promote environmentally sustainable business practices where appropriate.
- Create economic activity within Blaenau Gwent.

3. WHO CAN APPLY

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must:

- Be located within Blaenau Gwent or intending to relocate to Blaenau Gwent.
- Be pre-start or trading for less than 6 months at the date of application.
- Employ fewer than 249 employees.
- Be established as one of the following:
 - Sole Trader
 - Partnership
 - Limited Company
 - Cooperative
 - Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)
 - Community Interest Company (CIC)
 - Registered Social Enterprise
 - Charitable Trading Subsidiary

Applicants must:

- Operate or intend to operate on a full-time basis (minimum 35 hours per week).
- Demonstrate that the business will be the primary source of income.
- Have engaged with a recognised business support provider.

- Submit a viable business plan.
- Demonstrate a clear route to trading and income generation.
- Demonstrate economic benefit to Blaenau Gwent.

Priority May Be Given To

- First-time entrepreneurs.
- Young entrepreneurs.
- Women-led enterprises.
- Social enterprises.
- Businesses supporting net-zero objectives.
- Businesses introducing innovative products or services.
- Businesses creating employment opportunities.

4. INELIGIBLE APPLICATIONS

Applications will not be supported where:

- The business model is not viable.
- The business is intended as a hobby or supplementary income.
- The project is primarily revenue based.
- The activity duplicates existing publicly funded provision.
- There is insufficient evidence of market demand.

The applicant, business, owner, director, partner, trustee or controlling individual has failed to comply with the terms and conditions of a previous grant awarded by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

Non-compliance may include (but is not limited to):

- Failure to provide monitoring information.
- Failure to provide evidence of agreed outputs or outcomes.
- Failure to provide evidence of jobs created or safeguarded.
- Failure to respond to requests for monitoring information.
- Failure to comply with grant conditions.
- Outstanding grant recovery, clawback or compliance matters.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council reserves the right to take previous grant performance and compliance history into account when determining eligibility and awarding funding.

Market Saturation Restrictions

Due to market saturation, the following business activities will not normally be supported:

- Mobile hairdressing services.
- Mobile beauty therapy services.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council reserves the right to refuse applications where there is insufficient evidence of market demand, additionality, sustainability or economic benefit.

5. EXPECTED ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Applicants must demonstrate how the project will contribute towards one or more of the following:

- Creation of a new business.
- Creation of new employment opportunities, including self-employment.
- Increased private sector investment.
- Improved productivity and efficiency.
- Introduction of innovative products or services.
- Adoption of digital technologies.
- Business sustainability and resilience.
- Increased competitiveness and growth potential.
- Long-term economic activity within Blaenau Gwent.

Applicants will be required to forecast anticipated outcomes as part of the application process.

6. ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE

Eligible Capital Costs

The grant supports capital expenditure only.

Examples include:

- Machinery and equipment.
- Specialist tools.
- Digital hardware.
- Laptops, tablets and business IT equipment.

- Point of Sale systems.
- Business-critical software.
- Internal fixtures and fittings.
- Equipment required to commence trading.
- Low-carbon or energy-efficient equipment.
- Equipment supporting accessibility improvements.

Ineligible Costs

The following are not eligible:

- Salaries or wages.
- Marketing and advertising.
- Consultancy fees.
- Legal fees.
- Training.
- Memberships and subscriptions.
- Rent and utilities.
- Stock and consumables.
- Working capital.
- Structural building works.
- Routine repairs.
- Maintenance.
- Like-for-like replacements.
- VAT (where reclaimable).
- Retrospective expenditure.

7. LEVEL OF SUPPORT

Item	Amount
Minimum Grant	£1,000
Maximum Grant	£5,000
Intervention Rate	Up to 80%

Applicants must provide a minimum contribution of 20% towards the total project costs.

Applications should focus on essential capital expenditure required to establish the business and would normally be limited to a **maximum of five key capital items**.

Higher-value awards will be expected to demonstrate:

- Strong business viability.
- Clear market demand.
- Economic impact.
- Growth potential.
- Employment opportunities.

8. APPLICATION PROCESS

Stage 1 – Expression of Interest

Applicants will provide:

- Business overview.
- Proposed expenditure.
- Estimated costs.
- Expected outputs and outcomes.
- Project timescale.

Stage 2 – Full Application

Applicants will provide:

- Completed application form.
- Business Plan.
- 12-month cashflow forecast.
- 12-month profit and loss forecast.
- Three comparable quotations for each item.
- Match funding evidence.
- Proof of identity.
- Proof of address.
- Premises information where applicable.

9. ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Applications will be scored against:

Strategic Fit – 25%

- Alignment with LGF objectives.
- Contribution to local economic priorities.

Economic Impact – 25%

- Business creation.
- Additionality.
- Employment potential.

Business Viability & Deliverability – 25%

- Business planning.
- Market demand.
- Financial sustainability.
- Ability to complete and claim the project within programme timescales.

Innovation & Productivity – 10%

- New approaches.
- Digital adoption.
- Productivity improvements.

Value for Money – 15%

- Appropriate use of funding.
- Outcomes relative to grant requested.

10. SUBSIDY CONTROL

All awards will be provided in accordance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

Applicants will be required to:

- Declare previous public funding received.
- Complete all subsidy control declarations.
- Provide information relating to Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) where required.
- Retain subsidy records for the period specified by legislation.

Failure to provide accurate information may result in grant withdrawal or recovery.

11. DECISION PROCESS

Applicants will normally be notified of a funding decision within four weeks of submitting a complete Full Application.

Funding is discretionary, subject to available budget, programme priorities and the applicant's ability to complete the project within the required programme timescales.

There is no automatic entitlement to grant support and no statutory right of appeal.

12. PAYMENT OF GRANT

Grant funding will be paid in arrears upon submission of:

- Signed Grant Agreement.
- Invoices.
- Proof of payment.
- Photographic evidence where applicable.
- Evidence that the business has commenced trading where applicable.

Projects must not commence until written approval has been received from the Council.

Projects should normally be completed within six weeks unless otherwise agreed.

Regardless of individual project timescales, all projects must be fully completed and final grant claims submitted no later than **31 January 2027**.

The Council reserves the right to withdraw a grant offer where there is insufficient confidence that a project can be completed and claimed within the required programme deadlines.

13. MONITORING & REPORTING

Successful applicants will be required to participate in programme monitoring.

Monitoring information may include:

- Confirmation of trading activity.
- Business survival.
- Employment information.
- Business growth.
- Additional investment secured.
- Productivity improvements achieved.

Monitoring may take place for up to 24 months following project completion.

14. PROCUREMENT REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must obtain three comparable quotations for all items wherever possible.

The Council reserves the right to seek additional evidence to demonstrate value for money.

The lowest quotation will not automatically be accepted if there are other reasons to go with higher quote e.g. quality and availability.

15. FRAUD, MISREPRESENTATION AND RECOVERY

The Council takes fraud and misrepresentation seriously.

Any applicant found to have supplied false, misleading or inaccurate information may be subject to:

- Withdrawal of grant offer.
- Recovery of grant funding.
- Referral to relevant authorities.

16. RECORD RETENTION

Grant recipients must retain all project records, invoices, quotations, financial evidence and supporting documentation for a minimum period of seven years following final payment.

17. PUBLICITY AND BRANDING

Successful applicants may be required to acknowledge support received through the Local Growth Fund and comply with any publicity and branding requirements issued by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

18. PROGRAMME ALIGNMENT

The Business Start-Up Grant forms part of the Blaenau Gwent Economic Stimulus Funds, which also includes:

- Business Development Grant.
- Retail, Service, Hospitality and Tourism Growth Grant.

Together these programmes provide a structured pathway supporting business creation, growth, productivity and long-term economic development.

19. KEY PRINCIPLES

All projects supported through this scheme must:

- Support sustainable business creation.
- Deliver measurable economic benefit.
- Demonstrate additionality.
- Improve productivity, competitiveness or sustainability.
- Represent value for money.
- Be capable of completion and claim submission by 31 January 2027.
- Contribute towards a stronger, more resilient Blaenau Gwent economy.