



Spark Fund

**Support for Gwynedd businesses
to restore and develop**

**Information for applicants
and guide for the fund**



SECTION A – KEY INFORMATION

What is the Spark Fund?

Financial support of up to £25,000 to help Gwynedd businesses recover and develop, stabilise and prepare for the future. The aim is to enable businesses to increase profits either through savings or increasing income.

Who is eligible?

Any small or medium-sized business from Gwynedd can apply for funding from the Spark Fund. It can be a new business or one that has been established for a while.

The headquarters of the business must be in Gwynedd. Your headquarters is the property where a large part of your business activity takes place.

The following types of businesses are eligible:

- Sole trader
- A registered partnership
- A limited company (including companies that do not distribute profits)

To confirm the status of the business it will be necessary to provide a HMRC Unique Taxpayer Reference (UTR) or company number together with a copy of a recent bank statement when applying to the fund.

We can support businesses that meet at least two of the following criteria:

- employ 250 or less (including the owner/owners)
- with less than £18 million on its balance sheet
- annual turnover (total sales) under £36 million is a small / medium business

If the business is part of another business, or is legally linked to another business, Cyngor Gwynedd will consider the individual circumstances before deciding whether it is eligible to receive support.

Any business that receives support must be in Gwynedd. In the case of sole traders / partnerships the operating site of the business will be in Gwynedd (the owner's home is considered the location of the business if it does not have a specific site).

How much funding is available?

Support between £2,500 and £25,000 is available.

The fund offers support of up to 70% of the total eligible costs identified within the application. Therefore, any application will be required to be based on at least £3570 of eligible costs..

We expect you to contribute at least 20% of the project's costs from private money, namely savings, or a loan - you will need to show proof that this money is available to you before we can assess your application.

This grant is partly funded through the UK's Shared Prosperity Fund. Should you wish to use other grant money as part of the remaining 10% of your project costs, you will need to show evidence that the funder is willing for you to use the money as a match for the Shared Prosperity Fund funding.



How will successful applications be selected?

To succeed, an application must come from a qualified business and for suitable costs as described in this guide.

You will have to provide a detailed business plan, that may be assessed by an expert – you can provide a business plan in any format but see the attached leaflet for the minimum information we will need. We expect great demand for this grant and unfortunately, we will only be able to support a proportion of the applications that we receive.

When assessing the application Gwynedd Council will consider:

1. Will the grant help the business to:

- Protect an existing job(s) or creating a new job(s)?
- Increase income or save costs?
- Reduce its carbon footprint?
- To be more resilient or to grow?

2. Is the business willing to commit to:

Pay the Real Living Wage if employing staff (over the age of 18) by December 2024 at the latest (it is not required to secure the accreditation of the Living Wage Institute) [For the real cost of living | Living Wage Foundation](#)

Complete an assessment of their use of the Welsh language by the Welsh Language Commissioner [Businesses and charities \(welshlanguagecommissioner.wales\)](#) before receiving payment from the Fund and to increase their use of the language working towards receiving the Commissioner's 'Welsh Offer'.

Please note that Cyngor Gwynedd has complete discretion to support an application to the Fund and the Council's decisions are final. Gwynedd Council's decisions will be subject to the anticipated benefit and completely dependent on the availability of funding.

What costs are the Spark Fund willing to contribute to?

You can apply for a grant to buy any capital or revenue equipment or services that will help you run your business in a more efficient way (i.e., reduce running costs or make more profit)

The following do not apply:

- Purchase of land and/or domestic property
 - Residential / domestic property other than holiday accommodation that meets the Welsh Government's definition of commercial holiday property: Property available to let for at least 252 days and actually let for at least 182 days in any period of 12 months. It will be necessary to provide evidence that the property in question meets the definition.
 - Repairs, maintenance and/or general business running costs
 - Purchase equipment or services required in order to comply with statutory regulations
 - Staffing costs
 - Recoverable VAT
 - Buy stock
 - Purchase of assets under Hire Purchase (HP) agreements, Extended Credit Agreements or Leases
-



Vehicles

- We are happy to accept applications for the following:
- Electric or hybrid vans or cars – 70% grant
- ULEV vans or cars (producing no more than 75g CO2/km) – we will check this on [Select a search : Directgov - Car fuel data, CO2 and vehicle tax tools \(vehicle-certification-agency.gov.uk\)](#) – 70% grant.
- Diesel vans registered since September 2015 and meeting EURO 6 output requirements - 50% grant
- Vans must be 3-seater commercial vans and not recreational vehicles or capable of being used for recreational purposes.
- We are not willing to accept applications for vans that have been derived from a car.

Remember, as with all applications to this grant fund, you will need to explain how the vehicle in question will save money for your business, or enable you to increase your profit, and what the value of the saving will be or the increase in profit.

Important factors to note:

Quotations

Each individual item must cost at least £300

Quotations must be provided as follows:

Items costing less than £4,999 - one quote

Items costing between £5,000 – three quotes

Buying with cash

You cannot buy equipment or goods with cash

Retrospective funding

Please wait until you have received an official offer of the grant, and then return it back to us before purchasing any equipment or services that are part of your application. We cannot refund any expenditure that has been made before we make an official offer of the grant and receive it back from you.

Statutory Authority Subsidy Management

This fund is registered as part of the Gwynedd Business Development Fund (registration number SC10867), in accordance with the Subsidy Management Act (2022). All grants over £100,000 will be individually registered with the Welsh Government as part of their Transparency Rules.

Buying Locally

To support the local supply chain, we ask that you consider using suppliers from Gwynedd. This element will not affect the assessment of your application, but you are expected to explain what steps you have taken to find a supplier from Gwynedd, and your reasons for not using them if you decide to use a supplier outside of Gwynedd.



SECTION B – GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

Submitting an Application

Step 1 – Full Application

It is important to ensure that you complete your application form in full and that you include all necessary documents. These include:

	New business or less than 12 months of operation	Business has been active for more than 12 months
Business Plan	✓	X
2 Year Financial Forecast	✓	X
Balance sheet and profit and loss statement for the last two years	X	✓
Bank statement for the business	✓	✓
Confirmation of any relevant consent including statutory legal requirements	✓	✓
All quotes	✓	✓
Evidence of match funding	✓	✓

We cannot begin processing your application until all relevant information has been received



We will ask you to confirm that you need the grant money i.e. without the grant, it would not be possible to do what is outlined in your application:

- at all
- to the same degree
- within a reasonable timeframe

The Council can withdraw a grant proposal, or reclaim money that has already been paid out:

- if you do not use the money, or equipment/services you will purchase, to do what you have outlined in your application form
- if we find that there is something in your application that is incorrect
- if there is an unreasonable delay as you proceed to purchase or implement the equipment/service

Processing your application

On receipt of your full application the Council will:

Check that all the details that have been provided are in order and if information is missing, we will contact you to request additional information

Carry out checks which may include:

Conducting a search with a credit reference agency in relation to your business. The agency will keep a record of that search and may share information with other agencies.

Make inquiries about company directors with credit reference agencies.

Notification of the Decision

We will inform you of the decision by email. If successful we will let you know how much funding we are offering you and any specific conditions associated with the grant. You will also receive a Terms and Conditions agreement that you must comply with. The agreement must be signed and returned within 14 days of receipt of the grant offer.

Timeline

The whole project must be completed, and the money claimed by Gwynedd Council by 30 September 2024. We are unable to refund any claims that are received after this date.

Making a Claim

When claiming a grant you will need to provide proof of expenditure. This includes all invoices and receipts (do not include any expenditures made before you returned the formal grant offer). The Council will also require copies of bank statements showing payments going out of company accounts. If you pay for anything by credit card or similar, you will need to show evidence that you have paid the credit company back in full.

Remember – do not pay for any equipment or service linked with the grant by cash.

The Council will need to ensure that the grant funds have been used to pay for the right equipment and services, and that they are used in a way that is in line with the terms and conditions of the grant, and any additional conditions if applicable. This can include inspecting the work, visiting your business, or any other appropriate way. Once the Council is satisfied that the grant has been properly spent, the Council will release the funds into your business bank account through a BACS payment.



Requests for changing approved eligible items will not be accepted – other than in the event of like for like changes such as a change of brand or supplier. We will not meet any additional costs associated with any like for like changes.

Monitoring

Until 2035, the Council, or anyone on behalf of the Council, may visit your property to carry out an inspection to monitor the business and equipment or services you purchased with the grant.

If the equipment purchased with the grant is coming to the end of its life within this period, please contact us to let us know. We may need to see evidence of this.

If you plan to upgrade the equipment within this period, please contact us – we may want to see evidence that you have purchased new equipment to replace it

If you have reported that you have created jobs, the Council will need evidence of the employment, this may include:

- Payroll records (before and after the award)
- Employment agreement
- First dated pay slip
- PAYE HMRC online service record
- P60 Certificate

There is no need to include individuals' names on employment records – you can hide or delete them.

In other cases, the applicant will either have to show evidence that the grant award has increased the turnover of the business or show how it has affected the business.



SECTION C – GRANT CONDITIONS

1. All businesses should be financially viable.
 2. The business should comply with all appropriate regulations, all enforcement policies and service standards that apply to their business sector, including being registered with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) for tax payment purposes.
 3. All professional work (e.g., electrical) must be carried out by qualified contractors.
 4. The Council reserves the right to contact any of the businesses submitting quotations in connection with your application if further clarification is required.
 5. You will not receive funding for any part of the work you or your business has carried out yourself (whether the business is wholly or partly owned).
 6. The Council must be informed of any personal, family or business contact between you/your agent and any supplier or contractor.
 7. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have obtained or complied with all planning permission and any other relevant statutory permission before you submit your application. You must provide documentary evidence of this. Your business or the work you carry out must also comply with any other relevant licences/permits/requirements e.g., Health and Safety, and the equipment must not be used, or the use of the equipment permitted, contrary to the law or any regulations/byelaws in force at the time.
 8. When giving you a grant, the Council is not approving anything beyond the purchase of the equipment or service(s) in the application.
 9. No work should begin on any building until you have obtained all necessary approvals or consents.
 10. Money cannot be paid for work that has already started or for any equipment that has already been purchased
 11. The Council will not give grants to applicants who have significant debts to any department of the Council.
 12. The Council can check if there is a County Court Judgment against you.
 13. When a project involves renovating or modifying a leased building, the remaining life of the lease must be at least 5 years on the day the application is received by the Council. We will also need evidence of the landlord's consent.
 14. Any materials or services that will be seen by others who have received grant money must be bilingual (Welsh/English).
 15. You are responsible for ensuring that any taxes, assessments, charges or any other expenditure that is payable in relation to the use of the equipment or services that are purchased with the grant.
 16. You must on all reasonable occasions give permission to an authorized Council agent to enter the property to inspect the estate and condition of the equipment and any books of financial transactions, records or documents relevant to the use of the equipment or the service that has been purchased with the grant.
 17. You must not assign, rescind, sublet, or dispose of ownership of the equipment in whole or in part.
 18. You must insure the equipment that has been bought with the grant, continue to insure it against loss or damage up to its full replacement value. If damage occurs during the period of the grant agreement and in the opinion of the insurer it is not economical to make good for such damage, all the insurance money will be used to make good for the loss or damage. All premiums will have to be paid and you should provide the receipts to the Council if requested. You should do everything necessary to keep the insurance cover fully operational and not to do anything that would invalidate the insurance.
-



19. The grant will be paid when:

- A project which includes construction work has been fully completed and there is certification from the Council's Construction Management Faculty (or similar) that the work is acceptable.
- Relevant supporting documents have been submitted to the Council.

20. If creating or protecting jobs, the definition of 'job' is any full-time job in the business in whatever capacity, a new self-employed job or jobs created by businesses moving into the county. 'Full time' means at least 30 hours per week. It is acceptable to count two part-time jobs that together offer a total of 30 hours per week as one full-time job.

21. Businesses must trade for a minimum of 30 hours per week to be eligible.

22. You must agree not to do, refuse to do, or suffer to do, anything that may mean that the equipment is forfeited or repossessed or that could pose a risk of that happening.

23. It is acceptable to buy second-hand machinery, machinery or equipment provided the price is fair and it has not originally been purchased under a scheme funded by another grant.

24. The Council reserves the right to publicize the awarding of the grant.

25. Any publicity organized by you relating to receiving the grant should indicate the Council's scheme's financial support. This also applies to any marketing materials/websites. Publicity Guidelines will be provided as a part of any official funding offer.

26. Once the grant has been approved you cannot include any additional items in the claim unless this has been agreed by the Council.

27. If the total expenditure is less than what was predicted, the grant award will be reduced pro rata.

28. VAT can be claimed as part of the total grant if the applicant is not registered for VAT purposes.

29. The Council must be notified in writing if there is any change to the way you use the equipment or service that has been purchased with the grant.

30. Until 2035, the Council can visit your property in order to carry out a monitoring inspection of the business asset(s) funded by the grant.

31. Cyngor Gwynedd holds absolute discretion in terms of the terms, eligibility and decisions of grant awards and reserves the right to amend the criteria at any time.

32. All successful applicants must complete the Welsh Language Commissioner's Language assessment and commit to working towards the Welsh Offer [Cynnig Cymraeg \(welshlanguagecommissioner.wales\)](http://welshlanguagecommissioner.wales)

33. All successful applicants must commit to paying the Real Living Wage to staff over 18, by December 2024. If employing staff (over the age of 18) by December 2024 at the latest – the Living Wage Institute accreditation is not required [For the real cost of living | Living Wage Foundation](http://www.livingwage.org.uk)

34. All applicants must adhere to the principles of the following [Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy 2035 | Visit Snowdonia \(ymweldageryri.info\)](http://www.gwyneddanderyri.gov.uk)



Busnes@
gwynedd.llyw.cymru

