**Independent Retailers Grant Scheme Guide for applicants**

**Introduction**

Chichester District Council has grant funding available to support independent retailers with a physical shop presence within one of the high streets of Chichester, East Wittering, Midhurst, Petworth or Selsey in Chichester District to make improvements to their premises and / or retail operations.

The scheme is complemented by a programme of training workshops to help retail owners maximise the potential of their business. The training is offered at no additional cost to all independent retailers across the district.

It is a requirement of the grant scheme that applicants have engaged with the online training and completed at least one of the training modules prior to application. Applicants will be asked to provide evidence that they have done so before any grant funding is paid.

**Aims and Benefits**

Chichester District Council recognises that independent retailers are facing challenges in the current retail environment.

The grant scheme can help you to:

* Maximise your shop’s impact on the high street
* Attract more customers, increasing footfall and spend by local shoppers
* Present a more compelling shopping experience to customers
* Differentiate your independent shop from the big multiples and online retailers

**Funding Criteria**

Funding is available to support independent retailers to make improvements to their premises and / or retail operations.

Funding assistance is available towards capital projects to improve:

* Visual appearance of shop units (external and internal)
* Enhance the interior environment and / or shopping experience
* Contribute to improved business operation, efficiency and competitiveness

Funding is available to independent retailers, not part of any regional, national or international chain or franchise.

The grant available will be up to 75% of eligible costs, to a maximum contribution of £4,000. The business must contribute the remaining 25%.

Possible work that the grant could cover includes:

* New replacement shop front or fascia
* Redecoration of existing shop fronts if part of re-branding or for a new business in the premises
* New or improved external lighting and / or canopies
* New internal fixtures and fittings (for example internal lighting relating to goods displays)
* Upgrade to till systems, ecommerce activity or omni-channel / digital offer

**Temporary Pop-Up Shops**

In addition, smaller grants of up to £500 are available for businesses taking up temporary pop-up shop opportunities towards their set up costs.

**Not eligible for funding**:

* Activity that represents business as usual such as routine maintenance, stock, staffing costs, etc.
* Retrospective costs for work already undertaken prior to application. A grant cannot be sought for retrospective projects or expenditure or for ongoing costs.
* Businesses that are registered separately at differing premises but share the same directors and are managed together will only be eligible to make one application i.e., a group of businesses, managed by the same Director(s), will be seen as one business.

**Qualification Requirements**

To be considered for this grant you will be required to:

* be registered with Companies House or HMRC
* be retailing from a physical shop presence within one of the high streets of Chichester, East Wittering, Midhurst, Petworth or Selsey and have fewer than 5 stores.
* Not be part of any regional, national or international chain or franchise
* Have 25% match funding in place
* have engaged in the Virtual Learning Hub Training Programme (evidence required)
* demonstrate that you have the permission of the property owner (where this is not you) to carry out any proposed works on the premises.

Applications which do not meet the qualification criteria will not be considered further.

**Statutory Consent**

It is your responsibility as the applicant to make enquiries as to whether any statutory consent is required for projects relating to the exterior of the store, and to ensure the relevant applications are made, for example for planning permission. Any owners of shops that are listed, located within a conservation area or have a traditional historic shop front will need to ensure that any alteration works do not harm the historic character and appearance of the building.

Consultation with the Council’s Planning Department at an early stage is encouraged regarding whether the proposed changes would be acceptable and if listed building consent or planning permission is required.

**Insurance**

The applicant, agent and / or contractor is responsible for all risks in connection with public or employer liability associated with the building works.

**Quotations**

Quotes for the improvement works that accompany the application must be on formal letter headed paper and where possible the contractor should be based in the Chichester district. If the applicant plans to undertake work themselves, only the cost of materials can be included.

**Application process**

The Independent Retailers Grant scheme is now open to expressions of interest.

If you would like to apply for the scheme, please contact business.support@chichester.gov.uk to request an expression of interest form.

You will be given a deadline by which to return the form and it will be reviewed to assess whether you will be invited to make a full application.

Applications will be assessed against the criteria below

**Assessment Criteria**

Applications will be scored and assessed using the following criteria

* Delivery of grant aims and benefits
* Value for Money
* Need for the project

A completed Grant Agreement will be issued to successful applicants and must be signed and returned prior to any work being undertaken or expenditure being incurred.

Applicants will need to provide invoices / receipts as evidence of expenditure before the grant is released. You will also be asked to complete an End of Grant Report and should expect a discussion or visit from the officer administering the grant.

This is a discretionary grant scheme there is no right to appeal by applicants.

Any queries please contact: Economic Development on business.support@chichester.gov.uk