



South Cambridgeshire District Council

Rural England Prosperity Fund Programme 2025-2026

Delivery Plan, Policy & Guidance for Applicant

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Introduction

In December 2024, the UK Government announced a transitional year for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), serving as a bridge to new funding models anticipated for 2026/27.

As such a new [Rural England Prosperity Fund prospectus](#) has been updated for 2025 to 2026.

The fund aims to provide support and investment into rural areas to strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.

The [REPF allocation](#) for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is £964,359.00 which is in addition and complementary to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. It focuses solely on supporting **Capital** Interventions in rural areas which often face specific challenges including:

- Lower productivity rates
- Poorer connectivity
- Poorer access to key services

SCDC has received an allocation of £350,376 for 2025-2026

All funding must be spent by 31st March 2026

Rural England Prosperity Fund

The aim of the fund is to achieve change to improve our rural economy by improving productivity and creating jobs and boosting rural communities.

The funding will be delivered through a **capital grants** scheme. Applicants must meet one of the two Strategic Priorities listed below and at least one of the Strategic Objectives outlined within their respective Priority to ensure that the projects funded meet the overall aim of the programme.



Priority 1. Supporting new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will benefit the local economy.

- support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy — this includes farm businesses looking to diversify income streams

Priority 2. Supporting new and improved community infrastructure providing essential community services and assets for local people.

- support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy

Please ensure that you take the time and read the following interventions outlined in the following link;

[See the full list of interventions which can be funded](#)

Eligible Areas

Funding can only be invested in locations defined as rural with under 10,000 population and within Market Hub Towns with populations of under 30,000 that serve their surrounding rural areas as centres of employment.


Within the boundaries of South Cambridgeshire only locations defined as Rural will be considered. Eligible areas can be checked on the [Magic Map](#) using the link below.

How to use the Magic Map:

- Open the link [Magic Map](#)
- Click on 'Get Started'
- Click on 'Administrative Geographies' in the table of contents (on the left-hand side of the screen)



And then 'other administrative boundaries' and then select 'Rural England Prosperity Fund' as a layer.

- Type in the area or postcode (Please note that you will need to leave a space in the postcode, for example CB23 6EA) within the search function on the left-hand side of the screen, or navigate the map to your area, and then select the information button. 
- Click on your area and a screen will come up which tells you if the area is eligible for REPF or not.

It should be noted that some areas, in whole or part within South Cambridgeshire that are ineligible, these include, Girton, Milton, Orchard Park & Kings Hedges, Fulbourn, Stapleford & Great Shelford.

If further assistance is needed, please contact sharedprosperityfund@scambs.gov.uk

Eligible Applicants

Any organisation with legal status can apply for funding. The list below provides examples but is not exhaustive;

- Micro, small and medium sized businesses*, registered and/or operating in South Cambridgeshire
- Social enterprises,
- Sole Traders,
- Registered Charities,
- Farmers, landowners, tenants with landlord permission,
- Rural Community groups,
- Local Authorities,
- Higher and Further education institutions, Arms-length bodies of government.



***Linked Businesses**

The business will be treated as one legal entity if it is linked with one or more other businesses. The applicant therefore needs to take into consideration the FTE employees and financial information of any other businesses to which they are formally connected.

Two or more businesses are considered to be linked when they have the following relationships:

- One business holds a majority of the shareholders' or members voting rights in another:
- One business is entitled to appoint or remove a majority of the administrative, management or supervisory body of another.
- A contract between the business, or a provision in the memorandum or articles of association of one of the businesses, enable one to exercise a dominant influence over the other; and
- One business is able, by agreement, to exercise sole control over a majority of shareholders' or members' voting rights to another.

What can be funded- INTERVENTIONS:

Businesses

Funding for the development and promotion of the visitor economy, such as: Local attractions, Trails, Tourism products more generally

Funding for growing the local social economy and supporting innovation

Funding for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas

Funding for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities

Communities



Funding for active travel enhancements

Funding for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer.

Funding for the Creation and improvement of local rural green space

Funding for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups

Funding for investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities

Funding for the development and promotion of the visitor economy, such as: Local attractions, Trails, Tourism products more generally

Funding for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities

Funding for impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places

Funding for rural circular economy projects

Indicative Award Values:

Funding awards up to a maximum grant level of £50,000 will open for application. The minimum level of funding is £10,000.

Match funding is a requirement, and it set out in the table below depending on level of funding being applied for;

Business	Less than £25,000	No match funding requirement
	£25,001- £50,000	25%*
Community	less than £25,000	No match funding requirement
	£25,001-£50,000	10%*

*These values serve as a guideline only and SCDC reserves the right to award, depending on the merit of the supporting detail provided within each application. The minimum award** available to any successful grant applicant is £10,000** and the maximum award £50,000. 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.

**For projects requiring less than £10,000 please consider applying to our [SCDC Community Chest Grant](#)

Exclusions:

The following are ineligible for the Rural England Prosperity Fund:

- Projects already in receipt of ;
The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme
The Fund, or the Farming Investment
Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund
- Businesses that have already received grant payments that equal the maximum permitted levels of subsidy. (See below for more information on Subsidy)
- Business intermediaries acting on behalf of other businesses.
- Partnerships or businesses with a registered address in South Cambridgeshire but no trading activities within the South Cambridgeshire area.
- 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.
- The scheme must not be used to fund farming equipment or infrastructure or to diversify within agriculture. Applicants looking for funding for this type of activity must use existing Defra grant schemes. The scheme can however provide funding (capital grants) for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas where this is intended for farm business diversification projects outside of agriculture (for example, creating rural leisure and tourism facilities)

The following are not eligible for the grants under any priority. This list is not exhaustive.



General costs:

- any costs incurred before the project start date shown in the grant funding agreement.
- contingency costs
- the cost of getting any permissions or consents, such as planning permission
- any items which you have already had EU or other public funding for (or intend to get EU or other public funding for)
- relocation costs – if the business needs to relocate in order to expand, it can only apply for funding for the cost of the expansion.
- costs associated with the provision of housing.
- projects that are carried out only to meet a domestic legal requirement. Buildings, land and equipment costs:
 - repairs and maintenance of existing buildings, equipment and machinery
 - like-for-like replacement of existing items (such as buildings, equipment and machinery)
 - machinery or equipment that will not be on the asset register of the business 5 years after payment of your last grant claim.
 - the cost of moveable fittings – like soft furnishings, beds, tables, chairs, cutlery and crockery, curtains, televisions and audio equipment, hand tools, small domestic kitchen equipment and utensils
 - purchase of land
 - purchase of buildings for commercial use - (Purchase of buildings for community use may be eligible. In these cases, the purchase of the land on which the building stands may also be eligible, but the cost of the land cannot be more than 10% of the total project costs. Please talk to the LA before applying if your project involves the purchase of a building for community use)
 - salaries and running costs for commercial projects. • long term salaries and running costs for community or not for profit projects.
 - in-kind contributions (this means the value of donated work or services) such as the cost of using your own labour, vehicle and office space.



- recurring licence fees, subscriptions and service charges
- computers, software and printers used in the general running of the business, like processing orders or accounts.
- mobile phones
- the delivery of training activities
- consumables
- standard, non-specialised domestic vehicles, such as cars, motorbikes

Agricultural business costs:

- standard buildings, machinery and equipment used for growing and harvesting agricultural and horticultural products.
- standard agricultural or horticultural inputs like animals and crops
- the cost of agricultural production rights and payment entitlements
- setting up agricultural businesses.

Financial costs:

- bad debts
- advance payments
- insurance policy costs
- working capital
- financial charges, such as bank charges, fines and interest
- costs connected with a leasing contract, such as a lessor's margin, interest refinancing costs, overheads and insurance charges.
- reclaimable VAT, please use net cost figures if your organisation is able to reclaim VAT or if the VAT is not payable for any reason, and gross cost figures if you are unable to reclaim VAT.



Permissions, consents and licences:

If a project needs specific permissions, consents and licenses for the proposals to go ahead, the applicant must send confirmation that they are in place to the Local Authority. This includes planning permission and environmental consents such as an abstraction licence from the Environment Agency and any other permission require for the project.

Note – If the applicant confirms that full planning permission for a building is not needed, written proof of this should be included with the application.

Proof of tenancy:

If the activity involves investments in immoveable assets and the applicant is a tenant, the landlord's written permission for the improvements must be obtained where this is a condition of the tenancy. In addition, the applicant must provide written evidence of the tenancy agreement, including the duration of the agreement remaining if it is a fixed term arrangement.

It is the applicant's responsibility not to make any substantial changes to the assets or how they are used and continue to use them for the purpose described in the application, for at least 5 years after receiving the final payment. In the event that the tenancy agreement ends within the 5-year period and is not renewed on substantially the same terms as the previous agreement, the applicant must contact the Local Authority as it may be necessary to repay some or all of the grant monies received.

For evidence of the tenancy agreement, applicants must send a copy (not original documentation) of the tenancy agreement sections that show:

- The holding address,
- Tenant,
- Landlord,
- Signatures and
- For fixed term agreements, the tenancy term



Application process:

The scheme will be open for applications in July 2025 and will remain open until all funds are exhausted.

The applications will be scored and assessed by an Officer Panel who will review eligibility of every application using a scoring matrix against the range of selection criteria set out below. All applications will be notified if successful.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive correspondence explaining the reasons why their application was unsuccessful.

Strategic Fit: How the project fits with the priorities for REPF funding.

How well and to what extent the project will:

- Meet the eligibility criteria
- Deliver against one or more of the REPF priorities
- Benefit the rural economy

Need for the project: what problem the project is seeking to address

The application will need to show:

- There is a need for the project, and this has been clearly identified
- The project outcomes which best address the needs of those the project is seeking to be of benefit to
- The impact the project has on other businesses in South Cambridgeshire
- Financial performance; the viability of the underlying business and the proposed project
- How the business/community will benefit from the project
- How the project proposer has considered the environmental impact of the project and how the project contributes to net zero targets and how the project considers Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.



Value for money and the need for public funding: what extent does the project proposal offer good value for money The application will need to show:

- That competitive quotes have been sought, and costs represent value for money, a minimum of three quotes from reputable companies is required for projects from £5001-£25,000. For projects over £25,000, please contact the Council for further advice.
- That quotes received in advance of the grant, take into account inflation between grant application and grant approval.
- The amount of grant required to deliver the outcomes and outputs e.g. cost per job
- That other options have been considered.
- What difference grant aid will make when compared to what would happen without grant aid
- That supporting the project won't harm other similar businesses nearby.

Project Sustainability and Impacts: Economic, Social and Environmental Sustainability and impact of the project. The application will need to show:

- How the project will continue to benefit people after funding comes to an end. Project should be sustainable and not dependent on future public funding.
- How the project will affect the environment and/or community groups within the area
- That the project does not disadvantage anybody in terms of age, gender, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity.

Delivery approach and how the project can be successfully delivered on cost and on time.

The application will need to show;

- That the proposed project manager has the skills and resources to deliver the project successfully
- That the necessary permissions are in place, for example land ownership permission and planning permission.



- How the project can show how successful it has been with [identified interventions, objectives, outputs and outcomes](#) that are outlined with the REPF guidance

Risk: have risks to delivering the project been identified.

The application will need to show:

- That the risks that have been identified are relevant to the size, scale and scope of the project and to the business/organisation in carrying out the project and
- How these risks will be mitigated

Applicants may be contacted to discuss the application or to ask for more information. Where appropriate, external specialist representation may be consulted. They will have no decision-making authority.

Appeals:

If the applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they can request a review of the decision. The request should be submitted in email to sharedprosperityfund@scambs.gov.uk within 30 days 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 Head of Service with Lead Cabinet Member who will not have been involved in the previous decision.

Payment of grant funding:

A funding agreement will be prepared for all successful applicants. It will explain when work can start on the project and the terms and conditions. If the applicant can meet all the timings and the terms and conditions of the grant funding agreement, they must return a signed copy of the grant funding agreement within 30 working days of the date of issue. If they don't the funding offer will expire. Standard practice will be for grants to be paid in arrears once expenditure has been incurred, and payment made in full.



Expenditure must be made from the business/organisation bank account before claiming the money back from the Council. (Purchases through Personal Credit Cards will be deemed ineligible)

Large grants (over £25,000) may be paid against and agreed schedule but again only upon proof that the agreed expenditure has been incurred and that the asset or service has been delivered.

In exceptional circumstances an agreement may be reached whereby the whole grant, or an element of the grant, will be paid in advance of expenditure being incurred based on a Risk Assessment taking into account the amount being claimed and the financial health of the organisation.

Conditions of funding:

There will be no payments for any work carried out before the start date.

Applicants must not start work, make any deposits, order, or buy anything for a project until they have received a grant funding agreement from South Cambridgeshire District Council with an official start date. If they do not wait for the start date, this will be at the organisations own risk.

Applicants must meet the terms set out in their funding agreement. If they don't the Council may withdraw the grant, apply a penalty by deduction payment from a grant or recover some or all of any grant monies already paid.

All projects must be completed by 31st March 2026. Final invoices to be made by 1st March 2026 to allow for BACS payments before month end.

Any publicity must acknowledge the award provided and must adhere to the [SPF Branding and Publicity](#) section 6

Project reporting:

All successful applicants will be required to report on their progress at quarterly intervals from the date of receipt of funds. Projects must set out how they will measure and report how they have met the objectives.



Larger, more complex projects will be monitored closely to ensure that key milestones are achieved, and risks mitigated. Contracts will set out reporting obligations to ensure we track and capture outputs and expenditure. A variety of bodies are entitled to inspect projects and project documentation at any time with a minimum of advance notice. Notice will normally be at least 48 hours in advance although in some circumstance it may be less. As well as South Cambridgeshire District Council officers, these bodies include the National Audit Office and Govt. Departments. In an inspection, they will check that project meets all terms, conditions, and timings from the grant funding agreement. Applicants must co-operate fully at any inspection. This is a condition of any funding agreement.

An end of project evaluation must be submitted to South Cambridgeshire District Council within 6 months of project completion.

Changes during the grant period.

The applicant is expected to use the grant money to buy items as specified in the application and grant funding agreement. During the grant period, exceptional circumstance may arise where applicants need to change elements of a project, or senior personnel might change. The Council must be informed in writing immediately and where appropriate seek a contract variation. For example:

- Changes to use of buildings, equipment or any other assets bought with the grant.
- Disposing of or selling any of the assets.
- Closing, selling or transferring the business that's associated with the grant.
- Change of project manager

This applies during the project and for five years after the payment of the final claim. Agreement to an amendment is not automatic and if the applicant goes ahead with a change that the Council has not agreed to, there may be an obligation to repay part or whole of the grant.



Procurement rules or regulations:

Recipients of funding will be expected to comply with central Government regulations:

- If the value of individual items being purchased is less than £4,999 (net VAT) then you may place a direct award. (i.e., no need to secure multiple quotes)
- If the value of individual items being purchased is between £5,000 and £24,999 (net VAT) then you must request and supply 3 written quotes from relevant suppliers of goods, works and/or services.
- If the value of individual items being purchased is greater than £25,000 (net of VAT) then you must run a formal tender process. Please notify sharedprosperityfund@scambs.gov.uk for advice

UK Subsidy Control Regime:

You will need to declare all grant funding received in the last 3 years. The Subsidy Control Act 2022 (the 'Act') came into force on 4th January 2023. The Act sets out the UK's prevailing subsidy control rules.

Payments received by the applicant from any business grant schemes administered by local authorities or anything similar from the government, for all business properties they are responsible for, counts as Subsidy Allowance.

Full details can be read [here](#)

To qualify for this grant your business must not have received more than £315,000 of subsidy allowance in the last three years. You will need to include any Covid19 grants you may have received.



Other Key Information:

Grant income received by a business is taxable. The Rural England Prosperity Fund 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. Deliberate manipulation and fraud will not be accepted. 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.

By applying for the fund, you are confirming that you are eligible for the fund scheme. We are required by law to protect the public funds we administer, and South Cambridgeshire District Council will review the funds claimed. In the event that a claim is later deemed to be incorrect or fraudulent, action will be taken to recover the grant in full. We may share information provided to us with other bodies responsible for auditing, administering public funds, or where undertaking a public function, in order to prevent and detect fraud. Further information is [available on our website](#)

Use of organisational & personal information:

Information submitted by organisations applying for grant funding may be shared with partner organisations to support marketing activity, to assess impact and to undertake independent programme evaluations.

Information provided to the Council will be disclosable to Government offices such as MHCLG and the Cabinet Office.

The Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and as such may be compelled to release details of applicant's application form, personal details will be redacted. Business financial



details will also be redacted for up to 2 years after the application period but then potentially become disclosable.

Where there is a specific “commercial sensitivity” to expressions of interest or applications this must be advised at the time of application. South Cambridgeshire District Council Privacy Notice can be found [here](#)

Any further enquires can be made at SharedProsperityFund@scamb.gov.uk