



PRIDE IN PLACE BUSINESS ACTIVATION GRANT PROGRAMME

Applicant Guidance Notes

Rawtenstall, Crawshawbooth and Waterfoot

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Pride in Place Business Activation Grant Programme has been established to support the occupation and activation of vacant commercial premises within Rawtenstall, Crawshawbooth and Waterfoot.
- 1.2. The programme forms part of the wider Pride in Place initiative, which seeks to strengthen town centres, reduce vacancy rates, increase footfall and support local businesses and entrepreneurs.
- 1.3. The grant programme is designed to encourage new and growing businesses to establish a presence within vacant premises and contribute positively to the economic vitality and character of the area.
- 1.4. Funding of up to £10,000 is available to support eligible projects.
- 1.5. Funding is discretionary and subject to the availability of programme funds.
- 1.6. The Business Activation Grant Programme is intended to operate over multiple years, subject to available funding and programme performance.
- 1.7. The first application round will assess all eligible applications submitted by the closing date against the available 2026/27 funding allocation.
- 1.8. All eligible applications submitted through the first funding round will be assessed at the same time.
- 1.9. Projects that demonstrate strong strategic fit and are ready to proceed immediately may be offered funding from the available 2026/27 allocation.
- 1.10. Where an application is considered to be of sufficient quality to merit funding but there is insufficient funding available within the 2026/27 allocation, the Panel may recommend that the application is deferred for consideration against the 2027/28 funding allocation, subject to the applicant confirming that they wish to proceed and any necessary updates to the application.
- 1.11. The timing of grant awards and project delivery may therefore vary depending on the availability of programme funding, project readiness and delivery timescales.
- 1.12. The Pride in Place Board currently anticipates that further annual funding rounds will be delivered during the 2028/29 and 2029/2030 financial years, subject to available funding and programme approval.

2. PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

- 2.1. The programme aims to:
 - Bring vacant commercial premises back into active use.

- Reduce vacancy rates within town centres.
- Support entrepreneurship and business growth.
- Encourage innovative and distinctive business concepts.
- Increase footfall and economic activity.
- Support local employment opportunities.
- Improve confidence in town centre investment.
- Deliver visible regeneration outcomes.
- Support businesses that contribute positively to the character and identity of the Pride in Place area.

3. AVAILABLE GRANT FUNDING

- 3.1. Applicants may apply for a grant of up to £10,000.
- 3.2. The minimum grant request is £500.
- 3.3. The maximum grant request is £10,000.
- 3.4. The grant is paid in arrears following completion of approved expenditure and submission of satisfactory evidence.
- 3.5. The Panel reserves the right to determine the timing of grant awards having regard to project readiness, deliverability, value for money and the availability of programme funds.

4. WHO CAN APPLY?

- 4.1. Applications are invited from:
 - New businesses.
 - Early-stage businesses.
 - Existing businesses seeking to expand into vacant premises.
 - Young entrepreneurs.
 - Social enterprises with a commercial trading model.
 - Community businesses operating from commercial premises.
- 4.2. Applicants must:
 - Intend to occupy a vacant commercial premises within Rawtenstall, Crawshawbooth or Waterfoot.
 - Have a viable business proposition.
 - Demonstrate the ability to deliver the proposed project.
 - Where the applicant is leasing the premises, the lease must have a minimum unexpired term of three years from the date of grant award.
 - Obtain the written consent of the landlord (where applicable) for the proposed works and any alterations to the premises before any grant funding is awarded or works commence.
 - Hold, or be in the process of securing, an appropriate lease, licence or ownership interest in the premises. Applicants who have entered into a lease, licence or completed the purchase of the premises prior to the

official opening date of the Business Activation Grant Programme will not be eligible for funding

- Have a UK business bank account prior to grant payment.
 - Be compliant with relevant legal and regulatory requirements.
- 4.3. Applicants must provide a copy of the signed lease (or heads of terms where appropriate) and written landlord consent as part of the application or prior to the issue of a Grant Funding Agreement.

5. WHO CANNOT APPLY?

5.1. The programme cannot support:

- Businesses operating primarily from residential premises. *businesses that are currently based at home that will expand and relocate can however be considered*
- Businesses relocating from another commercial premises within the Rossendale area.
- Businesses proposing to occupy premises that are not classified as commercial premises
- Businesses that have entered into a lease, licence or completed the purchase of a commercial premises before the official opening date of the Business Activation Grant Programme.
- Businesses involved in unlawful activities.
- Gambling or betting premises.
- Payday lending or high-cost credit businesses.
- Adult entertainment businesses.
- Businesses that may bring the programme into disrepute.
- Activities that conflict with the objectives of the Pride in Place Programme.

5.2. The Panel reserves the right to reject applications that are inconsistent with the aims and values of the programme.

6. PROPERTIES OUTSIDE OF THE BOUNDARY AREA

- 6.1. The primary purpose of the Business Activation Grant Programme is to support the occupation and activation of vacant commercial premises located within the defined Pride in Place town centre boundary areas of Rawtenstall, Crawshawbooth and Waterfoot.
- 6.2. Premises located outside of the approved Pride in Place boundary areas are not eligible for funding under this Programme.
- 6.3. Applicants proposing to occupy premises outside of the approved boundary areas may submit an Expression of Interest; however, such applications will not be considered for funding through the current Programme.
- 6.4. Expressions of Interest relating to premises outside of the approved boundary areas may be retained by Rossendale Borough Council and included within a database of potential projects for consideration under future funding opportunities, should appropriate funding become available.
- 6.5. Submission of an Expression of Interest for a premises outside of the approved boundary areas does not create any entitlement to funding and does not guarantee that the proposal will be considered under any future programme.
- 6.6. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss potential premises with the Economic Development Team prior to submitting an application if they are uncertain whether a property falls within the approved Pride in Place boundary area. The contact email address is economicdevelopment@rossendalebc.gov.uk

7. ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE

- 7.1. Eligible expenditure may include:
 - Internal fit-out works.
 - Shopfront improvements.
 - Fixtures and fittings.
 - Equipment purchases.
 - Capital start-up costs.
 - Signage.
 - Accessibility improvements.
 - Property improvements required to bring premises into active commercial use.
 - Digital equipment necessary for business operation.
- 7.2. All expenditure must be directly related to the occupation and activation of the vacant commercial premises.

8. INELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE

- 8.1. The programme will not fund:
 - Revenue costs and ongoing operating expenses.
 - Salaries and wages.

- Rent deposits or rental payments.
- Utility bills.
- Stock purchases.
- Debt repayment.
- VAT that can be reclaimed.
- Professional fees associated with preparing the application.
- Costs incurred before formal grant approval.
- Costs not directly linked to activating the premises.
- General business running costs.

9. APPLICATION PROCESS

- 9.1. The programme operates a two-stage application process.
- 9.2. Stage 1 – Expression of Interest: Applicants will initially complete a short Expression of Interest form outlining:
 - The business concept.
 - Proposed premises.
 - Estimated grant requirement.
 - Regeneration benefits.
 - Expected outcomes.
- 9.3. The Expression of Interest will be reviewed to determine whether the proposal meets the objectives of the programme.
- 9.4. Applicants may be invited to discuss their proposal with Council officers before progressing to the next stage.
- 9.5. Stage 2 – Full Application: Successful applicants will be invited to submit a full application.
- 9.6. This will include:
 - Detailed business proposal.
 - Project costs.
 - Supporting quotations.
 - Financial information.
 - Evidence of property occupation arrangements.
 - Business plan and cashflow forecasts.
- 9.7. Applications will be assessed by the Pride in Place Business Activation Grant Panel.
- 9.8. Expressions of Interest will be accepted throughout the application window and applicants are encouraged to submit as soon as they are ready rather than waiting until the closing date.
- 9.9. Expressions of Interest will be reviewed on a rolling basis during the application period.

- 9.10. Applicants whose Expressions of Interest demonstrate a strong fit with the programme objectives may be invited to proceed directly to the Full Application stage without waiting for the Expression of Interest deadline.
- 9.11. The final deadline for submission of Expressions of Interest is 11 September 2026. Late submissions may not be considered.
- 9.12. Assessment of Expressions of Interest and Full Applications may take place on a rolling basis; however, final funding decisions will be made following consideration of all eligible applications received by the published deadlines.
- 9.13. The Council and Business Activation Grant Panel reserve the right to provide advice, guidance and mentoring support to applicants during the application process to help strengthen proposals and maximise project outcomes.

10. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- 10.1. Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

Ref	Assessment Area	Weighting
1	Business Viability & Sustainability	35%
2	Premises, Regeneration & Town Centre Impact	30%
3	Social Value & Community Benefits	15%
4	Project Delivery & Value for Money	10%
5	Eligibility & Compliance	10%
	TOTAL	100%

- 10.2. Funding is competitive and meeting the eligibility criteria does not guarantee funding.
- 10.3. Each application will be assessed against the published criteria by members of the Business Activation Grant Panel.
- 10.4. Each assessment criterion will be scored on a scale of 0 to 5, where:

Score	Description
0	No evidence provided or criterion not addressed.
1	Very weak response.
2	Weak response.
3	Satisfactory response.
4	Good response.
5	Excellent response.

- 10.5. The score awarded for each criterion will be multiplied by the relevant weighting to produce a weighted score.
- 10.6. The weighted scores for all assessment criteria will be combined to generate an overall application score out of 100.

- 10.7. Applications will normally be ranked according to their overall score. The Panel may also take account of deliverability, strategic fit, available funding and programme priorities when making final funding decisions.
- 10.8. Where multiple panel members assess an application, the final score shall normally be the average of all scores awarded.

11. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 11.1. Applicants may be required to provide:
- Business Plan.
 - Cashflow Forecast.
 - Lease Agreement, Heads of Terms or Landlord Consent.
 - Quotations for expenditure.
 - Business Bank Account Details.
 - Companies House Registration (where applicable).
 - Photographs of the premises.
 - Evidence of Match Funding.
 - Additional information may be requested during assessment.

12. GRANT APPROVAL AND GRANT AGREEMENT

- 12.1. Successful applicants will receive a formal Grant Offer Letter and Grant Funding Agreement.
- 12.2. The agreement will set out:
- Approved expenditure.
 - Grant value.
 - Project timescales.
 - Monitoring requirements.
 - Payment arrangements.
 - Conditions of grant.
- 11.3 No expenditure should be incurred before a formal grant offer has been issued.
- 11.4 Costs incurred before approval will not be eligible.
- 11.5 Grant repayment provisions, including the potential for the Council to recover all or part of the grant on a sliding scale if the business ceases trading, vacates the funded premises, or otherwise fails to comply with the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement during the monitoring period.

13. GRANT CLAIMS AND PAYMENT

- 13.1. The grant is paid in arrears.
- 13.2. Applicants must first incur and pay the approved expenditure before submitting a grant claim.
- 13.3. Claims must include:
- Completed Grant Claim Form.

- Supplier invoices.
 - Evidence of payment.
 - Photographic evidence where applicable.
- 13.4. Payments made in cash will not be accepted.
- 13.5. The Council reserves the right to request further evidence before payment is made.

14. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- 14.1. Successful applicants will be required to participate in programme monitoring and evaluation.
- 14.2. This may include providing information on:
- Business occupancy.
 - Employment created or safeguarded.
 - Footfall and customer numbers.
 - Business performance.
 - Wider regeneration outcomes.
- 14.3. Monitoring information helps demonstrate the impact of the programme and supports future investment in the area.

15. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information regarding the Pride in Place Business Activation Grant Programme please contact:

Economic Development Team

Rossendale Borough Council

Email: economicdevelopment@rossendalebc.gov.uk

Website: <https://investinrossendale.com/pride-in-place/business-activation-grant-programme/>

16. KEY DATES

- 16.1. The Programme is expected to operate broadly in accordance with the timetable below.
- 16.2. Dates are indicative and may be amended by Rossendale Borough Council or the Pride in Place Business Activation Grant Panel where necessary.

Stage	Indicative Date
Stakeholder & Partner Briefings	Early August 2026
Commercial Property Engagement	August 2026
Programme Launch, Webpage & Expression of Interest Opening	August 2026
Communications Campaign & Business Network Promotion	August – September 2026
Expression of Interest Assessment	Ongoing throughout the application period
Issue of Full Application Forms to Successful EOI Applicants	Rolling basis from August 2026 onwards following EOI review
Expression of Interest Deadline	28 September 2026
Applicant Support & Business Mentoring Period	Late September – Mid October 2026
Full Application Deadline	16 November 2026
Officer Assessment & Moderation	17–27 November 2026
Business Activation Grant Panel Meeting	2 December 2026
Funding Awards Approved & Announced	Early December 2026
Project Delivery Period (2026/27 Funding Allocation)	December 2026 – March 2027
Project Delivery Period (2027/28 Funding Allocation)	From April 2027 onwards
Monitoring Review	February 2027
Programme Review & Future Funding Round Planning	March 2027

- 16.3. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit Expressions of Interest as early as possible.
- 16.4. Expressions of Interest will be reviewed throughout the application window and applicants who successfully pass Stage 1 may be invited to submit a Full Application immediately, rather than waiting until the Expression of Interest deadline.