

North Somerset High Street Innovation Fund

Guidelines for applicants

1. What is the North Somerset High Street Innovation Fund?

In 2011 Mary Portas undertook an independent review into the state of the country's high streets and town centres. The Portas Review set out a vision that high streets should become multi-functional and social places, 'where shopping is just one small part of a rich mix of activities' and 'high streets must 'be ready to experiment, try new things, take risks and become destinations again'¹.

Along with 100 other areas across the country North Somerset Council has been awarded £100,000 from central Government as part of a High Street Innovation Fund to revitalise high streets and tackle the challenge of empty retail properties.

This fund is available across North Somerset for 'start-up' businesses; existing businesses who need to try something new to remain competitive and those who are working together in partnership to improve the viability of their town. This fund will support **new and innovative ideas** that address the issue of empty retail properties and will revitalise the 'High Street'. We are looking for **exciting** projects that will: enable businesses to **try something new; test the water; experiment with a different way of doing business**; use a vacant retail premise for a new and alternative use which will be of benefit to the local community; or projects that will make units and the area look more attractive.

2. Who can apply?

- Local businesses - not part of a national or more local chain
- Individuals wishing to 'start up' on a North Somerset 'high street'
- Parish and Town Councils, Chambers of Commerce
- Social enterprises, registered charities and companies limited by guarantee
- Community groups - must be constituted with access to a bank account
- Statutory organisations / public bodies
- Local retail associations and groups

3. What type of projects are we looking to support?

We will welcome applications that meet the following objectives;

- Creative, innovative, and will have a lasting impact on our high streets.

¹ Portas (December 2011) The Portas Review, page 14.

- Reduce local shop vacancy rates by creatively using vacant retail premise
- Improve the streetscape and public realm
- Will improve local trading conditions for fellow businesses
- Increase footfall in the town
- Fulfil a defined need and known demand
- Improve the long term viability of existing businesses
- Improve the town centre offer – offer new and different shopping, leisure and social experience
- Encourage traders, community organisations, social enterprise, town and parish councils to work together
- Encourage local purchasing and sourcing
- Provides ongoing benefits and sustainable beyond receipt of the grant

Grants will not be available for:

- Shop front improvements unless an integral part of an innovative package
- Ongoing costs, such as stock, staffing, overheads, business rates
- Projects or activities that have already started or projects that will simply continue an activity or trading in the same way.
- Replacement equipment
- One off events that are unable to demonstrate that they will have a lasting impact and/or legacy
- Major physical alterations to the internal floor space
- Computers and software
- Vehicles
- Shops/units that do not form part of a 'high street' in a town or village or parade of shops. We cannot fund isolated businesses, village shops, pubs and farm shops etc that do not form part of a high street or hub of retail businesses.

4. What Grants and support are available?

(i) Small Grants Scheme

This grant scheme is available to individual businesses and organisations:

- A) 50% of the project costs up to a **maximum** of £3000 will be available for **individual businesses (existing and start ups)** to either cover initial start up costs or reduce the likelihood of business failure.
- B) 75% of the project costs up to a **maximum** of £3000 will be awarded to a community/voluntary organisation/social enterprise wishing to start up on the 'High Street' and take over an empty retail unit. Your group must be constituted and have a bank account.

It is the intention that a general business start-up support package will be offered and linked to any grants awarded to applicants looking to set up in business and will be delivered by NSEA as part of the existing Service Level Agreement with North Somerset Council. On receipt of your application you will be sent further details on the support available or please visit www.northsomersetenterpriseagency.co.uk

In addition to the start up support a further £7000 has been allocated to tailored advice/diagnostic sessions over and above that already delivered by NSEA and other support agencies. This service will be made available to existing businesses that can demonstrate they need support to ensure the long term viability of their business.

(ii) Partnership Grants Scheme – This funding has now been allocated in full and we will not be accepting any more applications for the larger grants up to £10,000.

- A. 50% of the project costs up to a **maximum** £10 000 will be made available to businesses and organisations that are working together to reduce empty properties and revitalise their High Street. For example, this scheme is open to groups of businesses working together and/or in partnership with community organisations, town and parish councils and social enterprise.
- B. Any proposal that is formed predominately of social enterprises and/or community organisations working in partnership may receive a maximum grant of 75% of the project costs up to a **maximum** of £10 000. The lead applicant should ideally be the community organisation or social enterprise, constituted and have a bank account.

Please note any proposal that requires planning permission will need to allow sufficient time for the planning application to be approved, and may incur a charge (see annex B). This planning fee may be included as part of the overall project costs.

5. Outcomes

The outcomes below will be used to assess the suitability of proposals to be supported by the High Street Innovation Fund. Applications will need to demonstrate one or more of the following outcomes:

- Innovation and creativity
- Increased vitality of the high street
- Increased footfall
- Improved visitor/shopper perception or experience
- Job creation
- New business formation
- Empty retail premises brought into use
- Improved local business confidence
- Support for existing traders

6. Ongoing work

£2000 has been set aside to actively work with landlords to ensure that there is far more active engagement with the Economic Development team to that we can better assist businesses and members of the community looking to use an empty building, meanwhile uses and more flexible tenancies.

7. Criteria

Applications will also be assessed against the following criteria to help decide which proposals will be supported by the High Street Innovation Fund.

Essential criteria

- Proposals must provide a new and/or improved enterprise or activity, offering something that is innovative, creative and cannot easily be matched by the internet
- Proposals should look to make use of 'high street'² premises in an area with a high proportion of empty retail units, or where there has been the recent loss of a popular business, which is affecting footfall and visitor numbers
- Existing businesses must be 'independent' and not part of a chain or larger franchise
- A designated project lead/manager is essential for applications from groups of businesses and organisations and will take responsibility for grant claims and reports
- Applicants must demonstrate that there is a 'need' for the grant and if successful how the impact of the grant will be monitored and evaluated
- Match funding should be identified before submitting the application to ensure projects can proceed asap if a grant is awarded.

- Grants will not be given for political or religious activities.

- Organisations working with children, young people and vulnerable adults must have safeguarding policies in place including the necessary CRB checks.
- Organisations/groups must have the appropriate public liability and employer's liability insurance for the activities they provide.
- Any spend prior to formal notification by the Council to the organisation will be ineligible for grant funding.
- All grant recipients will be asked to report on how they have used their grant within three months of the award.

² This can include retail premises within a town or village centre, or along a small parade of shops outside of a main town/village centre.

Desirable criteria

- Suitable premises have already been identified if planning to take over a vacant unit
- A letter of support from another town centre stakeholder/ business support organisation to indicate that your idea has local support, is viable etc
- Ongoing sources of funding have been identified if vital to secure the continuation of the project, activity
- The proposal demonstrates good value for money
- Using the council's pre application advice service the applicant has already established if planning permission is required and is likely to be granted.
- The proposal could be replicable in other locations across North Somerset
- The proposal will provide a new and unique experience that compliments and adds value to existing traders and services
- There will be the sale of local products and/or increased local purchasing

8. Who will assess applications?

Applications will be assessed by a panel made up of representatives from North Somerset Council, North Somerset Enterprise Agency, Federation of Small Business, and Voluntary Action North Somerset. The decision of the panel is final. Successful applicants will be notified within a month of the application deadline whether or not their application has been successful.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to meet the above essential criteria your application will need to explain how you will monitor and evaluate the impact of your proposal. Arrangements for reporting this to North Somerset Council will be agreed as part of the grant offer.

10. How can you apply?

Applications are made by completing and submitting an application form, which can be downloaded from www.innorthsomerset.co.uk/getinvolved.

The Deadline for applications is 5pm Monday 21 October 2013. Late applications will NOT be considered.

If you require a paper version of the application form please contact North Somerset Council's Economic Development Service. Contact details are below.

11. Application advice

Address: High Street Innovation Fund, Economic Development Service, North Somerset Council, 1st floor, Town Hall, Walliscote Grove Road, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1UJ

Email: business@n-somerset.gov.uk

Tel: 01934 426341/6193

How do I complete the Application Form?

Section 1

Please provide the name of your business, or if a group working together the names of those businesses/groups organisations that will help to deliver the project

Section 2

It is important that we are able to contact you quickly, once decisions have been made. If you are applying as a group please provide the main/lead contact. This person will also need to take responsibility for claiming any grant awarded and reports.

Section 3

Project name, if different to organisation name in Section 1

Section 5

A) Individual Small Grants scheme

For an individual businesses existing or start up

50% of the project costs up to a **maximum** of £3000 will be available in grant support, i.e. if your total project cost is £7000, the maximum we will award is £3,000, or if for example the total project cost is £2500, the maximum award would be £1250

For an individual social enterprise/charity, community organisation

75% of the project costs up to a **maximum** of £3000 or will be awarded to community organisations/social enterprise wishing to start up on the 'High Street' and take over an empty retail unit. Your group must be constituted and have a bank account.

B) Partnership Grants Scheme – **these grants are now closed as all funding has been allocated.**

For groups of businesses and traders

50% of the project costs up to a **maximum** £10 000 will be made available to businesses and organisations that are working together to reduce empty properties and revitalise their High Street. For example, this scheme is open to groups of businesses working together and/or in partnership with community organisations, town and parish councils and social enterprise.

Groups that consist predominantly of social enterprise/charity/ community organisations

Any proposal that is formed predominately of social enterprises and/or community organisations working together may receive a maximum grant of 75% of the project costs up to a **maximum** of £10 000. The lead group must be constituted and have a bank account.

We would like to see and will favour match funding in the form of a monetary contribution to show commitment and a financial investment into the project but in very exceptional cases we will consider some match funding as 'in-kind' (e.g. resources, staff time, volunteers' time).

Please attach to your application any evidence of match funding. This can be copies of letter and/or email confirmation.

If you are a 'Start Up' Business we will need to see a copy of your Business Plan

Section 6

Please supply a breakdown of project costs in as much detail as you can, (use a separate sheet if necessary).

Section 8

What do you plan to do? Please tell us exactly what you want to do, sell, produce, market etc and when and how you are planning to do it. We expect neighbouring businesses to have been consulted on your project before the submission of your proposal and market research undertaken if applicable. Please ensure that you have provided enough detail for the panel to be able to make a decision, you may be asked to provide further detail if we do not feel that your application gives sufficient information

Section 9

Who will benefit? If possible, estimate the number of businesses/traders your project will benefit. Proposals from groups of traders will be favourably considered.

Section 10

What do you hope to achieve? If your project is successful, what 'outputs' will it deliver? Does it achieve any of these listed below? Are there others?

- Number of jobs created/safeguarded
- Number of new business start-ups
- Area of new improved business/commercial floor space
- Number of businesses/organisations supported
- Uptake of empty shops
- Match funding secured
- Jobs created/safeguarded FTE and PTE
- Number of landlords engaged

Section 11

The project's starting date must be more than four weeks after the application deadline to allow time for the panel to meet and notify you if your application has been successful or not.

Section 13

If your project requires on going revenue funding to keep it operating you will need to have identified this before you submit your bid.

Section 14

Does your project require planning permission? Appropriate permissions will need to have been sought before submission of your project.

Section 15

This must be signed by the individual applicant, a representative of the organisation or, ideally, both.

Publicity

If your application is approved, you will be asked to help publicise your success.