

Wakefield District **Shop Front Grant Scheme** (Wakefield City Centre, Pontefract and Castleford Town Centres). **APPLICATION GUIDANCE NOTES & CRITERIA**

Before making an application:

Please read the following information carefully before making an application and check if funding is still available.

What is it?

The **Wakefield District Shop Front Grant** is provided by Wakefield Council to encourage landlords and tenants of properties in Wakefield City Centre, Pontefract and Castleford Town Centres in zones outlined on the attached plans to invest in improvements to the appearance and quality of their shop frontages.

How much funding can applicants receive?

The Wakefield Shop Front Grant is intended to provide the minimum level of assistance to ensure that the proposed improvements and resultant expenditure plans is brought forward.

Applications can be made for a grant contribution of up to 75% of eligible costs up to a maximum grant award of £8,000. Please note any VAT expenditure is not eligible for grant under this scheme.

To qualify to receive grant support applicants must in the first instance speak to a Wakefield Council Business Support Officer and discuss the potential applicant's business idea from Wakefield Council Economic Development Team.

Information on the scheme is available from:

Economic Growth & Strategic Housing, Wakefield Council,
Wakefield One, PO Box 700, Burton Street
Wakefield, WF1 2EB
Telephone: 01924 306008

Please ask to speak to Business Support Officer.

Duration of the grant:

The grant programme will start in September 2016 and end in September 2018. . Due to administration requirements no applications will be accepted after June 2018.

Can applications for funding be made for more than one property?

If an applicant owns or occupies more than one property they can make multiple applications. Applications will be reviewed on a 'case by case' basis; however not more than the maximum threshold of £8,000 per applicant will be made.

What types of businesses/properties are eligible?

The grant aim is to support new start-up businesses in the eligible areas and priority will be given to these including:

1. Shops
2. Restaurants pubs and cafes.
3. Service sector businesses occupying retail type property (solicitors, estate agents, accountants etc.)
4. Office premises

Landlords and owners of these types of properties are also eligible to apply.

Tenants or occupiers must have at least 3 years remaining on their tenancy/lease agreement to apply for a grant

The grant can also be used to improve the external attractiveness of an empty property in order to bring it back into use. Priority will be given to start up business occupying vacant properties.

Businesses employing fewer than 50 people will be given preference in the first instance. Employers with more than 50 people should speak to a Business Officer on 01924 306008 to discuss your individual requirements.

Business Support Grant Scheme

New start-up businesses are also entitled to seek grant assistance from the Councils **Business Support Grant Scheme**. Please contact a Business Support Advisor for details.

What the grant cannot be used for:

The grant cannot be used to fund projects that Wakefield Council considers to be fulfilling statutory obligations such as complying with the Disability Discrimination Act.

The grant will not support religious or political activities, or improvements to purely residential properties.

Wakefield Council reserves the right to refuse any application that does not meet the grant criteria.

Applicants should:-

1. Discuss their application with a Business Support Officer from Wakefield Council.
2. Provide a business plan that supports their business idea.
3. All successful applicants must ensure that they comply with relevant planning, building control and health and safety legislation and any other legal requirements to operate their business.

If the applicant requires assistance with additional funding options to support their project/business they can discuss this with a Business Officer to ascertain/explore other funding regimes that may be available.

What you can expect from Wakefield Council:

Wakefield Council will ensure that it balances the need to allocate public funding diligently with the need to ensure that the grant process is transparent and straightforward. The Council will endeavour to deal with all applications in a prompt and efficient manner. If the applicant feels that Wakefield Council falls short of reasonable standards they should raise this with us at the earliest opportunity.

Please be aware that Wakefield Council has the final say in how it chooses to manage and distribute the grant funds. We do not work on the basis of rigid criteria, but instead aim to support the best proposals which represent value for money for the Wakefield District.

Wakefield Council welcomes comments or feedback from applicants that will help us improve our grant application process. To make a comment, compliment or complaint please visit www.wakefield.gov.uk/complaints or alternatively contact Wakefield Council's Customer Relations Team on 01924 305757.

How to apply:

Stage One

- Applicants will need to speak to a member of the Business Support Team to have an initial discussion regarding their project and the process involved.
- A Business Support Officer will then be assigned to meet with the applicant and provide a Registration of Interest form to be completed by the applicant.

To speak to a member of the Business Support Team please ring 01924 306008.

All completed forms will be initially screened by Wakefield Council Officers. If the project meets the grant criteria, an officer will write to the applicant and invite them to complete the full application form which they will provide.

Completed application forms will be assessed by the Business Support Team. If the applicant's proposal does not meet the criteria Wakefield Council will inform them of the decision in writing.

If the initial assessment is successful then the application will progress to Stage 2.

Where necessary, planning permission, listed building consent, advert consent or building regulations consent should be sought before Stage 2.

Stage Two:

If the application progresses to Stage 2 the following supporting information will be required:

1. Proof of ownership and/or occupation of the property (e.g. under a lease). If applicable, this should include evidence of the length of lease remaining on the property.
2. If the proposed works require any statutory consents (such as planning permission, listed building consent or building regulation consent), copies of the relevant notifications must be attached. Fees associated with these are all eligible for grant and should be secured prior to applying for funding.
3. Proof that the applicant's contribution towards the cost of the improvement works is secured (i.e. copy of bank statement, loan offer letter etc.).
4. **A minimum of 3 separate quotes** for the proposed improvement works. In some circumstances, where the project requires a specialist supplier, one quote may be accepted. Applicants wishing to submit one quote may be asked to provide additional information to demonstrate that there are no alternative suppliers.

Quotes must provide a clear breakdown of the work to be undertaken along with details of materials and a method statement and demonstrate value for money.

5. Wakefield Council may at its discretion request additional supporting information not listed above and refuse any application not meeting the terms and conditions.

What happens next?

The application form will be assessed by a grants panel that will assess the project and will either:-

- Approve the application
- Reject the application (client will be informed within 2 working days of the decision)
- Defer the application if further information or clarification is required

If the application is successful a formal grant offer will be made and the applicant will be required to enter in to a formal contract with Wakefield Council. Below is a summary of the main conditions in the grant offer (typical but not exhaustive):

1. Project Records

Applicants must keep all records of the project, including financial records for a period of **7** years and make these available to Wakefield Council upon reasonable request.

2. Non-transferable

The grant is not transferable to another property or person.

3. On-going support

A nominated Wakefield Council Business Support Officer will meet applicants on a quarterly basis after they receive the grant to review progress up to the project end date.

4. Publicity

Wakefield Council will have the right to use the applicant's improvement project as an example for publicity and promotional purposes.

5. Payment of Grant

Grant payments will be made in arrears upon receipt of a completed claim form and a receipted copy of the invoices(s) showing the amounts paid on the proposed improvements along with evidence of defrayment through the applicant's bank account, i.e. a bank statement.

A copy of the claim form will be supplied to the applicant with their grant offer letter.

The applicant will normally be required to submit a completed grant claim within 6 weeks of the being awarded a grant. This date will be specified in the applicant's grant offer letter.

6. Repayment

Wakefield Council is entitled to withdraw the offer or require all or part of the grant to be repaid if:-

- a. There is unsatisfactory progress towards the completion of the project (for larger projects), or;
- b. There is a substantial change in the project which has not been approved in writing by Wakefield Council, or;

- c. Any information provided in the application for grant or in a claim for payment or in subsequent or supporting correspondence is found to be incorrect or incomplete to an extent which Wakefield Council considers to be material, or;
- d. Any assistance given under the terms of this contract taken together with any other assistance which has been or is likely to be received towards the project is within the limits laid down within the European Community State Aid rules, or;
- e. The applicant's other funding (e.g. bank loan) is withdrawn for reasons of the applicant's insolvency, winding-up resolution or order, or if the applicant becomes subject to the appointment of an administrator or receiver, or is otherwise dissolved, or, being an individual, has an interim order or a bankruptcy order made against him or her or;
- f. Circumstances or events occur which is likely to affect the applicant's ability to carry out the project to the satisfaction of Wakefield Council.

7. Maintaining the Property

Following completion of the improvement works, the applicant must maintain the shop front in a good state of repair for at least 3 years after the grant is paid.

Finally, please note the following key points:

1. Due to expected high demand for grants, provision of the funding is subject to availability. Please check before applying.
2. Application for the grant does not guarantee that a grant offer will be made.
3. Projects cannot be supported retrospectively and grants will not be paid to support projects that have already commenced or costs that have already incurred.
4. Expenditure on the project must only commence following the written confirmation of grant award from Wakefield Council.
5. Wakefield Council reserves the right to reject any applications that do not meet the aims and criteria of the grant initiative.
6. Applicants must complete the project expenditure by the date stated in the grant offer letter otherwise the grant offer will be withdrawn.