


# Rural businesses encouraged to apply for a new round of funding

 [somerset.gov.uk/news/rural-businesses-encouraged-to-apply-for-a-new-round-of-funding](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/rural-businesses-encouraged-to-apply-for-a-new-round-of-funding)

Following a successful first round of funding last year Somerset Council is encouraging businesses and organisations to find out if they are eligible for a grant from the UK Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).

The first round saw a wide range of small rural businesses in Somerset apply for a grant. To date funding is being used on projects including bottling equipment for a cider manufacturer to increase efficiency; extending premises to provide additional capacity to maintain electric vehicles; ice-cream manufacturing equipment to increase capacity and specialist animal health equipment for a new vet's practice.

The second round is now open and Somerset Council have allocated £2.5m which must be spent by the end of March 2025. Projects can apply for grants between £5,000 and £100,000 as long as they are able to meet the outputs and objectives of the programme and can provide match funding.

Cllr Ros Wyke, Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning and Assets at Somerset Council said:

“This is a really positive announcement for rural businesses and communities across Somerset. It's important to note that this is funding secured by Somerset Council from the UK Government and cannot be allocated anywhere else.

“Rural areas often face specific challenges and this fund enables important investment to support rural development and prosperity. Capital grants are available to support investment in business start-up, innovation and growth as well as community infrastructure. Following the breadth of projects already funded I would urge businesses to find out if they are eligible as soon as possible.”

One of the small businesses to benefit from the first round of funding was Brickell's Ice Cream. Owner and founder, Robert Gore, said:

“The Rural England Prosperity Fund has been a huge boost in enabling us to increase our production and supporting infrastructure, allowing us to continue to grow and expand. The match funding meant we were able to sign up with a national distributor, confident that we could meet the demand. We have already seen a significant uplift as a result and we have a lot more coming as our season starts.”

Alongside funding for small businesses, the REPF has also provided grants to community projects including a new skateboard facility in Stoke sub Hamdon.

John Allan from Stoke sub Hamdon Sports and Recreation Trust, said:

“We are very grateful for the invaluable support our project got from the Rural England Prosperity Fund. What this support means is that a long-standing project to provide a comprehensive sports and recreation facility in the village can now be completed.

“The benefits bring improvements in well-being for the community but also people using those facilities can make use of the community shop. Without the funding support and advice of REPF, this project would be struggling to move forwards. Somerset Council were very supportive to the Trust in getting forms completed and the work was worth it as we received very generous grant support from the REPF. A big thank you to all concerned at Somerset Council.”

For businesses interested in applying, the REPF has specific criteria set by Government. Therefore, Somerset Council’s Economic Development team is urging businesses and organisations to carefully check eligibility on their [website](#)

To discuss a potential project applicants should email [REPF@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:REPF@somerset.gov.uk) in the first instance.