



SWEF Enterprise Fund

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Community Foundation NI is working in partnership with South West Enterprise Fund (SWEF) which helps young people from Northern Ireland develop their business idea and gain support with business investment that they would otherwise not be able to afford.

Grants of up to £2000 are available to help young people in Northern Ireland who are running an early-stage business or, if it has been trading for no more than 2 years, help a business expand or become more sustainable.

The grant can be used for equipment, materials for a new product line, prototypes, machinery, training or one-off costs such as website build. You cannot apply for your salary or living costs.

We welcome applications from underrepresented groups in business: people on a low income, women, migrants, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, people with low educational attainment.

Eligibility

You can apply if you:

- are aged 18 to 30
- currently live in Northern Ireland
- are from a low-income household or facing other financial challenges preventing you from developing your business

- are running a sole trader/limited company business that has been trading for under two years

You must be able to demonstrate that you have already taken steps to get your business off the ground, even if this is at a very early stage. Examples may include, but are not limited to, evidence of making your first sales, free/pro bono work delivered in order to develop examples of your work, market research to identify market potential, business plans.

Application Process

If you meet the above criteria you can apply for a grant of up to £2,000, regardless of your background or how well you did in your education. If you ask for £500 or less and are successful, you will be able to re-apply for a second grant at a later stage. Very early-stage businesses should consider if an initial smaller grant is helpful, before applying for a larger amount.

We need you to tell us about your business in your application form, and how a grant would help you to make it more successful or enable you to take your business to the next stage.

We also need you to send us a copy of a recent bank statement (no more than three months old) to confirm your account details, should you be successful. We can only pay grants into a business bank account that matches the business name in your application – if you don't have a business bank account yet, you will require one, if you are successful, as we will not pay grants into personal accounts.

We may also invite you to a meeting (either online or in person) to tell us more details about your business. If this is the case, we will email you to arrange a date and time.

What can I apply for

The grant can be used for equipment, materials, product development, stock, one-off costs such as a website build, or other services. You cannot apply for your salary or living costs.

The grant cannot be used for brand new computers, tablets and phones. However, applications for refurbished technology will be considered in the following circumstances

- you are able to make a contribution towards the cost of the item/s
- you are able to explain why the refurbished laptop, tablet or phone will transform your business
- you are able to provide a weblink to the item/s and describe why this has been chosen

Whatever you would like to use the grant for, you will need to provide a breakdown of how you would use the grant, with specific costs and including weblinks or quotes where possible. Avoid general terms like 'marketing' that do not provide enough detail about how you will spend the grant. Applications for 'match funding' are particularly welcome – (this means that you already have some funding but need an additional contribution).

How to apply

Please make sure you have read the above guidance before you apply.

Please read the following text, before beginning your application.

- You can provide a recent bank statement from your business bank account, which we will need to confirm your bank details, if you are successful
- If you choose to you can include any additional documents such as your business plan

What happens next

- We will confirm that we have received your application
- We aim to contact you within the following 4 weeks after discussing your application with colleagues at South West Enterprise Fund. You may be invited to meet with us (usually online) to discuss your business in more detail.
- We aim to make a final decision within 6 weeks.

- If you are awarded a grant, it will be paid directly to you by bank transfer – we can only pay grants into a business bank account that matches the business name in your application, so if you don't have a business bank account yet you will be asked to set one up
- You need to spend your grant within one year and provide feedback six months and 12 months after you receive the grant.

All those awarded a grant will have an opportunity to take part in a business forum with other grant recipients to exchange ideas, experiences and questions. One to one business mentoring may also be possible, provided by a relevant local agency able to provide this.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with us by emailing applications@communityfoundationni.org