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Maldon District Council – Rural England Prosperity Fund

Guidance for Applicants

1. Introduction

1.1 Rural England Prosperity Fund

The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) has been established by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to provide up to £110 million in capital funding for rural areas up to March 2025.

The fund is a 'ring fenced' part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and has been designed to address high-level challenges such as lower productivity, poor connectivity and restricted access to services that are particularly prevalent in rural areas.

The fund will provide capital grants to support:

- New and existing rural businesses
- New and improved community infrastructure providing essential services and assets for local people.

1.2 Maldon District

Maldon is one of the most sparsely populated districts in Essex and is one of only two in the county to be categorised as more than 80% rural by Defra. The district has 75 miles of coastline, much of it of international importance to nature conservation, which helps to attract 3 million visitors each year. It has 3,745 businesses including a growing range of local food producers, but its rural nature also ensures it has the highest travel time to key services, including GPs, hospitals, schools, and food stores, of any district in Essex, lower than average skill levels and a shortage of affordable housing. 25% of the population are aged 65 or over.



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REPF has the capability to help address the key priorities set out in Maldon District Council's Corporate Plan 2023-2027. In particular:

- Supporting our communities
- Enhancing and connecting our places
- Helping the economy to thrive

1.3 Delivering the Fund

Maldon District Council has received an allocation of £430,328 from REPF. It is working in partnership with Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) to deliver this funding as the core of a new initiative to 'Strengthen and Improve Productivity in Rural Economies and Communities' (SIP-REC), funded by the Nuclear Restoration Services.

RCCE is an independent charity established in 1929 that works to help rural communities achieve a thriving and sustainable future. It does this by providing support and facilitation for local community organisations and by working to improve the life chances of disadvantaged people. It also provides a voice for rural communities and manages the Essex Rural Partnership, which brings together organisations concerned with the future of rural Essex.

Between 2015 and 2021, RCCE managed the LEADER rural development programme across much of mid Essex, including Maldon district. This provided £1.6 million in funding to support local projects.

2. REPF - Our Objectives

2.1 Supporting Rural Businesses

Priorities for funding:

- investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas, including farm diversification initiatives, local producers, sustainable tourism, and social enterprises.



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Funding Available:

Grant Value	Match Funding Required
£5,000-£50,000	20%

Eligibility Criteria/Exclusions:

Applicants must have a legal status, such as below, which can be evidenced.

- Community Interest Company
- Limited Company
- Limited Liability Partnership
- Partnership
- Sole trader and registered as such via VAT or Unique Tax Reference
- Social Enterprise
- Not be part of a larger national chain or franchise, except for those registered as sole traders.

All applicants must be either a micro or small enterprise, which is defined as below

Turnover or balance sheet total	Headcount	Business size
less than or equal to €10 million or €10 million	less than 50	Small
less than or equal to €2 million or €2 million	less than 10	Micro

Applicants must have been trading on 1st April 2023 (not subject to strike off or liquidation).

Applicants must be able to report outcomes and outputs in relation to the number of jobs created and/or safeguarded by the project.

Applicants must have all the necessary licences and permissions in place to operate the business. Where legal permissions have already been granted, the project must not have commenced prior to the award of funding.

Only one grant will be awarded to any business. This will also apply if more than one legal entity has the same director(s) or where more than one business has the same proprietor (either sole trader or partnerships).



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2.2 Supporting Rural Communities

Priorities for funding:

- impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places, including initiatives to enhance community facilities, improve access to services and reduce social isolation.
- rural circular economy¹ projects, including community energy projects and repair workshops.

Funding Available:

Grant Value	Match Funding Required
£2,500-£20,000	None
£20,001-£50,000	20%

Eligibility Criteria/Exclusions:

Applicants must have a legal status such as below which can be evidenced.

- Registered Charity
- Charitable Incorporated Organisation
- Company Limited by Guarantee
- Co-operative or Community Benefit Society
- Community/voluntary group with constitution

Applicants must have been legally operational on 1st April 2023 (not subject to strike off or liquidation).

Applicants must be able to report outcomes and outputs in relation to improved community engagement, services and/or volunteering numbers achieved by the project.

¹ circular economy is about sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products for as long as possible.



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Applicants must have all the necessary licences and permissions in place to operate the business. Where legal permissions have already been granted, the project must not have commenced prior to the award of funding.

Only one grant will be awarded to any business. This will also apply if more than one legal entity has the same director(s)/responsible person.

2.3 Eligibility Criteria/exclusions for all applicants:

In addition to the specific eligibility criteria/exclusions listed above for businesses (2.1) and communities (2.2), the following apply to all applicants:

- Must be based and the project delivered within Maldon District.
- Must not be fulfilling a statutory duty.
- Retrospective funding cannot be provided. The project cannot have been undertaken already.
- Any costs incurred before the project start date shown in the grant funding agreement will not be eligible.
- Contingency costs cannot be funded.
- The cost of getting any permissions or consents, such as planning permission, cannot be funded. Where permissions have already been granted, the project must not have commenced prior to the award of funding.
- Applicants must have all the necessary licences and permissions in place to operate the business/organisation/project.
- The project must be completed, in full, by 15th March 2025.
- The applicant organisation must have a robust plan in place for delivering the project and be able to evidence this.
- In line with the Subsidy Control Act 2022, information regarding grant recipients and the amounts of grants awarded will be made available for public scrutiny.
- All grants are discretionary and subject to the availability of funds.
- Any deviations to the original plan submitted for approval must be sent to the Council for further consideration. Grant award will not be increased but may be reduced if costs change.
- Organisations delivering statutory duties (ie. Grant Maintained Schools and Parish Councils etc), are eligible for funding provided it is not used for what the organisation is required to provide through its public grant.



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- Grant funded activities must not involve or in any way be connected with:
 - Nude/semi-nude modelling
 - Gambling
 - Offering sexual services of any kind
 - Pornography
 - The promotion of particular religious or political views
 - Any illegal activity
 - Any other activity that the Council has indicated that it does not regard as suitable for support from public funds

Demonstrating value for money

You **must** provide the required number of quotes or references to catalogue listings for every item included in your application to demonstrate how you will get best value for it.

This table explains how many quotes or catalogue references are required, depending on the value of an item.

Value of item or service	How to show value for money
£1,500 or less	2 quotes or references to 2 catalogue listings (including online suppliers)
>£1,501 to £10,000	3 quotes or references to 3 catalogue listings (including online suppliers)
>£10,001 - £50,000	3 quotes or 2 quotes and a reference to a catalogue listing (including online suppliers)
>£50,001 or more	3 quotes

All quotes must:

- come from different, independent suppliers who are not linked to each other or to your business/organisation through shared ownership or control.
- be sourced independently by you or your agent. A supplier cannot source quotes from other suppliers on your behalf; and
- meet the detailed requirements set out below.
- include a detailed and itemised breakdown of costs.



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- include the supplier's business name, address (including postcode) and telephone number.
- be comparable with each other in terms of quality, size, quantity, units and specification for every item.
- have been obtained within the last 9 months and still be valid; and
- be addressed to the applicant business/organisation or agent (containing the business name, business or project address, if different, and postcode). If the quote is addressed to your agent, it must clearly reference the project and its location.

If the quotes or tenders don't meet the requirements shown above, you may need to submit revised quotes or tenders that do. Ultimately, we may remove the item from consideration if it is not supported by valid quotes or tenders.

Cheapest quote

We expect applicants to use the best value quote – that means getting the best value on the market and so you are expected to use the cheapest supplier for each project item. Where a more expensive quote has been selected, we will base any grant on the value of the cheapest quote only. You can still use a more expensive supplier but will be expected to fund the difference in cost yourself and explain your rationale.

3 How to Apply

For both business and community projects, we will operate a one-stage process for grants of up to £20,000. These will be reviewed on a 28 day cycle.

For larger grants of £20,000 to £50,000 a two-stage process will apply with an Expression of Interest required before a full application can be submitted.

Application forms and guidance are available on the RCCE and Maldon District Council websites.

This grant scheme has a limited funding availability and therefore eligible applications will be assessed in order of receipt on a first come first served basis. Once approved, all projects must be completed and invoices received by the Council not later than the 15th March 2025 and so final payments can be processed by the end of the grant funding window of the 31st March 2025. The fund is open for applications through to January 2025. Periodic grant assessment panels will be held.



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In line with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities requirements, completed projects need to acknowledge the source of the funding in any publicity and will also need to display a plaque.

4 Payment

Grants up to £20,000 will be paid up front in full once your application has been approved and the grant agreement signed and returned.

Grants over £20,000 will be paid in two stages, 50% upon the grant agreement being signed and returned, and 50% once the final three months of the project, subject to adequate reporting having been completed.

Should you require assistance with your application. Please contact Philip Wilson please contact Philip Wilson philip.wilson@essexrcc.org.uk or 07305 707102.