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UK Shared Prosperity Fund in West Yorkshire

Rural England Prosperity Fund (“The Rural Fund”)

Guidance notes for applicants

April 2024



Supported by

**West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority**

**Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire**

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The Rural Fund

The West Yorkshire Rural England Prosperity Fund ('the Rural Fund'), part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, supports small businesses, social enterprises and charities (with a trading arm) with up to 50 employees, based in eligible rural areas of West Yorkshire to make investments that will facilitate growth, create and/or safeguard employment or positively impact the tourism/visitor economy.

(Please see the link on page 5 to check whether your business is in an eligible rural area).

The West Yorkshire Rural Fund will provide **capital funding (note no revenue costs)** to:

- support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will support growth and be of wider benefit to the local rural economy. This includes farm businesses looking to diversify income streams.

Grants of **between £10,000 and £100,000** are available, based on a percentage contribution of total capital investment costs. The percentage will vary by the nature of project that is being undertaken, as described in detail on **page 10**.

To apply, please follow the Guidance set out in this document to check your eligibility and to help you to complete the application form. The Guidance will also explain what happens after you have submitted your application, and what to do if you are successful.

The grant is offered through West Yorkshire Combined Authority. A glossary of frequently used terms is included towards the end of this document.

If you have any questions about the Rural Fund, the application process, or anything mentioned in this Guidance, please contact a member of the team on:

0113 348 1818

business@westyorks-ca.gov.uk or via the main UKSPF West Yorkshire mailbox UKSPFwestyorkshire@westyorks-ca.gov.uk

The place - West Yorkshire

The work of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority covers the West Yorkshire local authority areas of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, and Wakefield.



The West Yorkshire Combined Authority was established in 2014 to bring together local councils and businesses to champion the region's interests nationally and internationally. This involved securing investment from Government and other sources to drive the economy forward, by carrying out economic regeneration and development functions, as well as acting as the local transport authority for West Yorkshire.

In March 2020, the West Yorkshire councils and the Combined Authority agreed a “minded to” devolution deal with Government. The deal detailed £1.8 billion of Government investment (including £1.14 billion over 30 years), to be subject to local influence and decision-making, enabling spend on local priorities, together with a range of new devolved functions. The election of the first West Yorkshire Mayor, Tracy Brabin, followed in May 2021.

Before Applying – Please check whether you are eligible

Only projects taking place in locations defined as rural will be considered.

The quickest way to confirm whether your project is in a rural location is to check whether the postcode falls within an eligible rural area on this map.

[Magic Map Application \(defra.gov.uk\)](https://defra.gov.uk/magic-map).

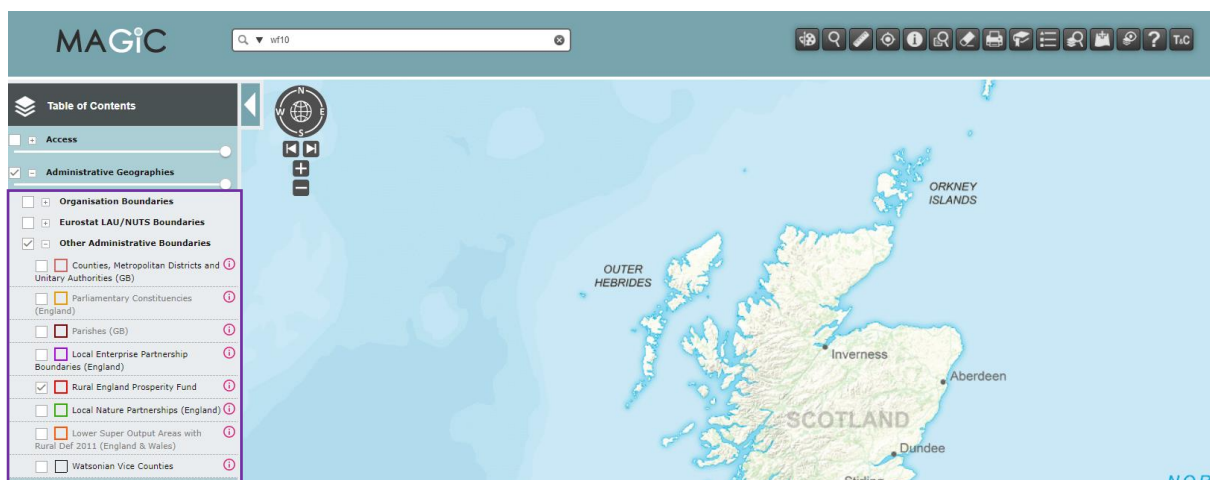
If it does not, you will not be eligible to apply for the Rural Fund grant.

If you are unsure of whether your project location is eligible, if it falls within multiple postcodes, or if the postcode is not yet known, contact a member of the Rural Fund team for further details who will be able to check for you.

How to use Magic Maps

Once the [website](#) loads:

- select the administrative geographies option on the left-hand side and choose **‘Other Administrative Boundaries.’**
- from the list that appears, select the **‘Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)’** option. Red boundary lines will appear on the map, marking eligible rural areas.



- then, put your project postcode in the search bar at the top, and press enter (return).

Rural England Prosperity Fund in West Yorkshire

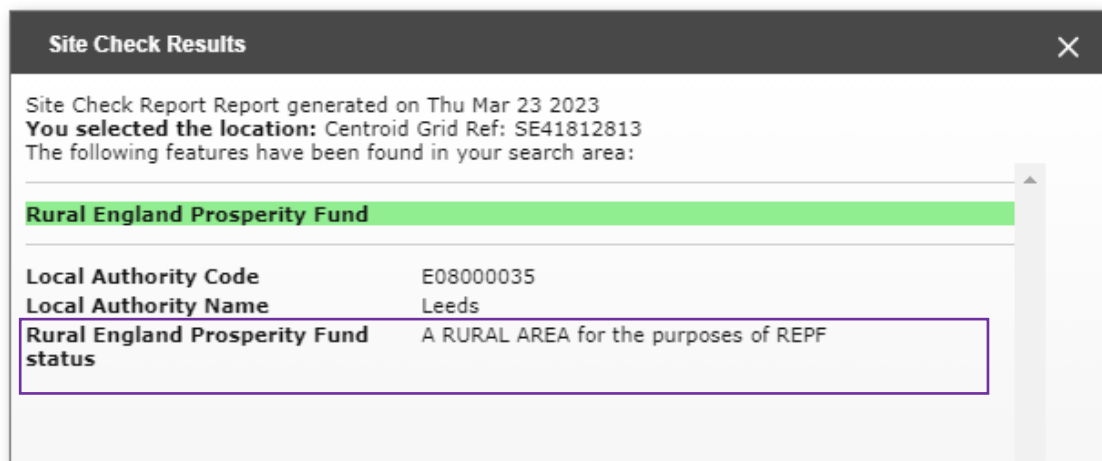
- Magic map will automatically zoom to the postcode area and will load fully in seconds.
- Once the map has loaded, select the information tool from the icons on the search bar - this will turn the cursor into a cross bar.



- Click in the highlighted postcode area to be given an overview of the area including the Rural Fund eligibility.



- If your project location is eligible, you will see the phrase '**A RURAL AREA for the purposes of REPF.**'



- If you have any questions at all about the Magic Map function and how to use it, please speak to a member of the team.

The Themes of the Rural England Prosperity Fund

The Rural Fund has been made available to support projects that will directly and positively contribute to addressing the unique obstacles to productivity and economic growth that face rural communities.

Three priority ‘themes’ have been identified that have the potential to address these issues, and are explained below. Your project **must** fall within one of these three themes and directly contribute to the associated outputs and outcomes.

THEME 1 – Business Development

Research shows that rural businesses, particularly in agriculture and tourism, fall behind the rest of the country in key measures such as productivity, innovation, or the adoption of new technologies.

To be eligible for grant support, a project that falls within the **Business Development** theme must lead to one or more of the following outputs and outcomes:

- Create new jobs.
- Safeguard existing roles.
- The creation of a new business.
- The adoption of new-to-firm technologies or processes.
- Commercial growth, through development of new products, or access to new markets.
- Measurable improvements to the productivity of your business / organisation.

The definitions and evidence requirements for outputs and outcomes can be found [here](#).

Example of project supported by the Combined Authority, via Rural Fund – theme 1 (Business Development):

A small family-owned business in West Yorkshire engaged in plant training, was looking to expand / increase its available training space. The rural company, who is an accredited training provider, and serves the construction sector, offers practical and theoretical based training.

The business approached the Rural Fund for financial support towards the complete fit-out of an empty building, both internally and externally, including the creation of several new learning rooms and breakout spaces. The availability of support through the Fund, allowed the business to complete a substantial project in a single phase, as opposed to staggering it over a longer period.

Overall benefits of the investment, include:

- the creation of two new jobs.
- the fit-out works for the building being undertaken by local, rurally based tradespeople and businesses.
- and the ability to offer more learning spaces, including to businesses in rural areas.

To find out more visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPnE1uwrlQM>

THEME 2 – Food Processing

The food and drink sector is a priority industry for West Yorkshire, employing 20,000 people, and accounting for 2% of all employment in the region.

Through specific funding for this area of the economy, **Food Processing** grants aim to provide capital investment to improve productivity and create new jobs in food processing businesses, and so boost domestic food production that provides an element of local resilience, good jobs for local people, and supports local small businesses.

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Particular consideration will therefore be given to applications from small businesses that specifically contribute to the region's food processing economy, in addition to the requirements of the previous Business Development theme set out above.

Farming businesses will be eligible where support, being sought, does not duplicate that already provided by other sources of public funding.

Any business with under 50 employees engaged in food and drink processing can apply for support under this theme, including meat, milk/dairy, grain, and root vegetable processors.

To be eligible for grant support, a project that falls within the **Food Processing** theme must lead to one or more of the following output and outcomes:

- Create new jobs.
- Safeguard existing roles.
- The creation of a new business.
- The adoption of new-to-firm technologies or processes.
- Commercial growth, through development of new products, or access to new markets.
- Measurable improvements to the productivity of your business / organisation.
- Commercial growth, through development of new products, or expansion into new markets, including exports.

The definitions and evidence requirements for outputs and outcomes can be found [here](#).

Example of project supported by the Combined Authority, via Rural Fund – theme 2 (Food Processing):

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A micro business engaged in the wholesale and distribution of food was looking to bring the manufacturing process in-house.

The business, that specialises in the wholesale distribution of cheeses and pies, has been sub-contracting the blending/manufacture of cheeses, which impacted directly on its profit margins.

Following a review of its business model, the business took the decision to bring the process in-house to reduce outsourcing costs.

The funding was provided via the Rural Fund, to support:

- investment in new capital equipment.
- refurbishment of part of the company's premises to accommodate the above.

The investment has, to date, created three new jobs.

THEME 3 - Visitor Economy / Tourism Infrastructure

The visitor economy is an important sector for West Yorkshire, contributing up to £460 million to the economy, with considerable potential for growth following recovery from the pandemic.

The **Visitor Economy / Tourism Infrastructure** theme of the Rural Fund offer gives special consideration to applications that will contribute to an increase in visitor numbers, visitor spend, or widening the tourist season.

To be eligible for grant support, a project that falls within the **Visitor Economy / Tourism Infrastructure** theme must lead to at least one of the following outputs and outcomes:

- Create new jobs.
- Safeguard existing roles.
- The creation of a new business.
- Increase business turnover.

The definitions and evidence requirements for outputs and outcomes can be found [here](#).

Example of project supported by the Combined Authority, via Rural Fund – theme 3 (Tourism/Visitor Economy):

A new start business in West Yorkshire, established to offer vineyard tours and wine tasting needed to invest in the construction of a new building to host tours and offer wine tasting. The business approached the Rural Fund for financial support towards the new building.

The project will create new employment opportunities and will benefit the wider local rural economy through increased visitor numbers to the area.

Who Can Apply?

Applications can be accepted from small businesses (including social enterprises, co-operatives, and charities with a trading arm) planning a capital related investment in an eligible rural area.

In addition, applicants must:

Have fewer than 50 full-time equivalent employees (FTEs). A FTE is defined as someone who works at least 30 hours per week.

- Be a new start or existing business.
- Be based in an eligible rural area within West Yorkshire, or the proposed investment/project will take place in an eligible rural area.
- Be able to fund the balance of project costs (where applicable).
- Demonstrate the financial and commercial viability (where appropriate) of the project and the need for grant support.

Your project must also fall within one of the three themes of the Rural Fund;

- **Business Development,**
- **Food Processing**
- **Tourism and the Visitor Economy** as detailed above.



How much can you apply for?

As detailed on **page three**, you can apply for a grant of **between £10,000 and £100,000** based on a percentage contribution ('**intervention rate**') towards the capital costs of your project.

The table below explains how much support you can apply for, and therefore the minimum project cost, according to the nature of your project.

Type of project	Maximum % Contribution	Minimum project cost
Commercial, profit-making project (including investment in capital equipment, buildings, and tourist attractions)	Up to 50%	£20,000
Generates some income to offset costs but is not intended to make a profit (for example small buildings providing tourist information)	Up to 80%	£12,500
Generates no income (for example free tourist attractions, landmarks, and nature-based solutions)	Up to 100%	£10,000

Please note that if successful, a grant award may be less than the level requested, reason(s) for which will be provided. Maximum grant levels are reserved for applications that align most strongly with the West Yorkshire Rural Fund criteria, its strategic objectives and demonstrate the strongest **added value**.

How much funding should you ask for?

Just because you may be able to apply for up to £100,000 grant funding, it does not mean you should.

Asking for less grant money will make your project better value for taxpayers' money.

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All grant awards are at the total discretion of the Combined Authority and will be based on the level of project costs, nature of the project, alignment with Rural Fund outputs/outcomes, and the benefits/positive impact on the rural economy.

Please note applications may be approved at the level requested, an amount lower than what is requested (the reason for which will be given) or rejected (again, the reason for which will be given).



What the Grant can and cannot be used for

The grant **may be used** for:

- Investment in capital equipment, machinery, and modern/new technologies.
- Improvements to premises.
- Non-statutory professional fees (up to a maximum of 15% of total eligible project costs), particularly in relation to building projects.
- Specialist computer software (if one element of a wider programme of investment).

It is essential to note that grant funding cannot be awarded retrospectively for investments already completed or committed to.

Any spend (including deposits) committed to prior to the date your application is approved will not be eligible and we will be unable to pay any grant awarded.

It may **not be used** for the following:

- **Costs specific to tourism:** such as refurbishment necessary purely to retain the current star rating of tourist accommodation, brown signs, or hire costs (covering equipment or temporary structures)
- **General costs:** including marketing costs, housing, relocation costs, the cost of obtaining permissions or consents, contingency funds, costs incurred after the grant **approval date**, or items for which you have already received grant support.

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- **Buildings, land, and equipment costs:** repair and maintenance of existing structures or equipment, the purchase of land or buildings, like-for-like replacements of existing items, consumables, moveable fixings or soft furnishings, the cost of any equipment or fixtures that will not be on the balance sheet of the applicant after completion of the project.
- **Business operational costs:** including salaries, in-kind contributions, recurring licence fees such as subscriptions or service charges (including software), mobile phones and marketing.
- **Agricultural business costs:** buildings, machinery and equipment used for growing and harvesting agricultural or horticultural products, standard agricultural equipment, inputs like animals and crops, the cost of agricultural production rights and payment entitlements, and developing or setting up an agricultural business.
- **Financial costs, or costs where there is a statutory duty to provide them:** including bad debts, advance payments, insurance policies, working capital, lease costs, pensions, and reclaimable VAT.
- **Projects that have already received funding from other Defra schemes.**
This includes but is not restricted to; The Farming Investment Fund, the Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund, or the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

If you have any questions about the eligibility of your project costs, please speak to a member of the team.

The Application Process

The application process for a Rural Fund grant in West Yorkshire is in two stages, as detailed below:

STAGE 1

- First, you must submit an outline application, providing us with a brief description of the project and its benefits, along with your contact information.
- A member of the Rural Fund team will then check this for eligibility.
- A phone, video call or a visit to meet you and see the project site, may be necessary.

Please allow for up to 14 days for a decision on eligibility, and next steps.

STAGE 2

Once your eligibility for the Rural Fund has been confirmed, you will be sent the full application form. This will be sent to the email address provided in the outline application, and will come in two parts:

- **Part 1** asks for the facts, figures, and dates, relating to you, your organisation, and project. This is completed as an online form.
- **Part 2** is where you will be asked to provide more detailed narrative regarding your application, including your organisational structure and history, the nature of the proposed investment(s), the need for it, and how the project will benefit you as a business and/or the wider community/economy.

Parts 1 and 2 should be submitted together along with the other supporting documents requested, such as financial accounts, and quotes. If you require any clarifications in terms of what you need to supply, please contact a member of the team.

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Once all information has been received and the application is deemed to be in a finalised state, an appraisal officer will work with you to bring your application forward for a decision (appraisal). The time required to reach a decision will vary depending on the complexity of the project, and the level of grant requested. In general:

- applications of up to £25,000 will receive a decision within three weeks.
- applications of over £25,000, decisions will usually be made within six weeks.
- applications of over £50,000, decisions may take up to eight weeks.

Details on what to do if you are successful are included on **page 15**.

How to Apply

Once we have confirmed the eligibility of your project for support through the Rural Fund, use these steps to complete the application form questions.

PART 1

Applicant details

- Provide the name, title, and contact information for the person in your organisation who it is most appropriate to contact with any questions about your application.

Your Business

- Provide the address and sector information for your organisation.
- Here you should indicate which one of the Rural Fund 'themes' best fits your project, as specified on pages six to eight.
- This section includes your organisation's legal status, and requests information about any linked entities (i.e., parent companies, or organisations linked through common ownership or trustees).

Other application questions

- Provide details of any public funding your business has received within the past three years, including the name of the body/programme that provided the funding, the date it was awarded, and the amount.
- If you have been referred to the Rural Fund by a Consultant or a Local Authority Growth Manager, and they are continuing to support you with completing the application, please provide their contact information.

Project Proposal (Quantitative questions)

In this section, provide the information requested for the project only. This should include:

- The anticipated start, and end, dates.
- The address / location of the project, if different from your business / organisation address.
- Whether planning permission is required, and whether this has been applied for or not, is under consideration or has been granted.
- A list of project costs - please be as precise as possible, and ideally base them on quotes.
- An explanation of where the balance of funding for the project will come from and whether secured, or under negotiation.
- Details of the proposed outputs and outcomes.

PART 2

In this section, space is provided for you to describe in more detail your organisation, the proposed project, and its proposed benefit(s).

For each question, please refer to the relevant bullet points listed to ensure that you provide the minimum level of information required.

Additionality (added value)

Your application should explain why funding is needed to deliver the project.

Applicants should note that projects will only be supported where there is a robust, credible explanation of at least one of the following:

1. The project will not proceed in any form without grant support; or
2. Support will allow a project to proceed within a shorter timescale; or
3. Support will increase the scope of the project; or
4. Support will allow a project to proceed on a larger scale, and/or at a higher level of quality.
5. Support will ensure the project takes place in West Yorkshire, as opposed to competing location(s).

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

When you submit your application, please also include the following:

- Quotes for the proposed investment(s) for which grant support is being requested. Where possible, applicants should endeavour to supply up to **three competing quotes** for the proposed works and include an explanation as to how the preferred supplier(s) were chosen.

Where only a single potential supplier has been found, your application should include a description of why and how you have ensured the quote will provide good value for money.

- Your most recent financial accounts/statements.
- If your accounts are more than six months old, an up-to-date Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss statement will be required.
- Evidence of funding that is in place to fund the balance of project costs (if known at the date the application is submitted).



If you are successful

Once your application has been considered, you will be formally notified of the outcome via email.

This email will include:

- The **approval date**, which is the date on which the decision was made to award the grant. The grant can only be paid against invoices and works that are undertaken and costs incurred and evidenced **after this date**.
- A brief description of any specific conditions attached to the grant, for example written confirmation being provided that planning permission is in place.
- A request for details of your business bank account for us to pay the grant when claimed.

To proceed, you must review the contents of the email and respond with any information requested, and also confirm that you accept the terms and conditions of the grant offer.

Once you have accepted the grant, a **Grant Funding Agreement** will be issued. Once you have reviewed and signed this, it will be countersigned and dated by West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Legal team, and a completed copy sent to you for your records.

Grants can only be claimed against expenditure that relates to the project that was proposed in the application and approved by the Combined Authority.

We do recognise that some variances to projects can be unavoidable. If for any reason you expect that the scope of the investment may change, or deviate from the original proposal in any way, please discuss this with your Appraisal Officer as soon as you can, to ensure it can still be supported.

General Notes and Guidance /

Technical Information

- Use simple language and avoid the use of advanced terminology and jargon, where possible. If industry-specific or technical terms must be used, please include a layman's explanation.
- Give candid responses for all questions. Avoid giving a 'sales pitch' for the business or project, and instead give easily understandable terms and tangible examples of your business' work, clients, and contracts.
- Descriptions of trading circumstances, productivity barriers and growth opportunities should ideally be supported by examples. When describing growth forecasts, include details of your sales pipeline (whether under contract, or in negotiation) including client name(s), and the indicative values of expected sales. Note: We recognise the commercial sensitivity of this information and will not share details of your growth forecasts any more than is necessary to fully consider your application. Please be advised that if you choose not to or are unable to share sufficient information to support your bid, this may be detrimental to your application.
- Where appropriate, appraisal of your application will include a visit to the project location by your appraisal officer to see your site in a pre-investment state.
- Approval for a grant does not imply approval under any other relevant legislation or requirements. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain and comply with all necessary consents such as planning, building regulations, environmental health, and landlord's consent etc.
- Repayment of the grant in full will be sought if any aspect of the application or grant claim is found to be fraudulent.

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- West Yorkshire Combined Authority reserves the right to withdraw the availability of the Rural Fund at any time.
- The fund will run until 31 March 2025, or until funding is exhausted, whichever is the sooner. Therefore, **all projects must be fully completed and claims for payment submitted by 15 March 2025 at the latest.**

To submit an application you are required to complete the following: [Enquiry Form](#).



How we will pay you and how to claim?

Grants are paid as follows:

- Up to 20% of the grant will be released upon receipt of a signed copy of the Grant Funding Agreement for the project (by both parties).
- Following release of the first payment, a reconciliation of project expenditure will be requested by the Combined Authority within three months of the initial payment having been made), including a request for copy invoices and payment evidence, to verify that the initial project expenditure has taken place.
- The remaining 80% of the grant will be released in a maximum of two further instalments.
These payments will be made subject to the applicant providing sufficient evidence of the continuing progress / completion of the project, and progress against meeting the contractual outputs/outcomes of the grant.
- When you are ready to claim, a pro-forma will be issued that will list what financial and outputs/outcome evidence is required. A site visit will also be arranged by your appraisal officer to see the progress of the project.

TIP

As soon as you start your project, create a desktop folder specifically for copies of the invoices and payments, and add them as soon as they occur.

When you come to claim, everything will be in one place, which can speed up the claim process.

Inclusive Growth

As part of West Yorkshire Combined Authority's commitment to deliver Inclusive Growth that benefits everyone, successful applicants in receipt of a grant of £25,000 or above, an Inclusive Growth commitment is mandatory, and above £50,000 two commitments. For awards below that level applicants are encouraged to make a voluntary commitment. The Combined Authority, and its network of partners, can help you access a number of products and services that will help you to take these positive actions.

More information on Inclusive Growth, including some suggested commitments and examples of the impact other West Yorkshire businesses have made, can be found in the accompanying Inclusive Growth document or at

<https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/growing-the-economy/enabling-inclusive-growth/>

Your appraisal officer will be able to discuss your commitments with you in more detail during the appraisal of your application.

Equality, Diversity, And Inclusivity

As a public body, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority has a duty to ensure that access to its support is equitable, and that marginalised communities or underrepresented demographics are able to benefit from public sector support including the Rural Fund.

Over the course of your application, you will be invited to take part in an anonymous questionnaire about you. The questionnaire is optional, anonymous, and neither your answers nor your decision whether to take part will have any effect on the outcome of your application.

Glossary

What we mean by:

Additionality - the benefit of grant funding. To be awarded a grant, the application should demonstrate that a contribution of taxpayer funding will improve, accelerate, or increase the scale of the project.

Approval date - the date on which grant was awarded. The grant cannot be used to pay for costs that predate approval.

Capital costs - permanent assets that will be paid for by the applicant over the course of the project. To be eligible for grant support, the assets must remain on your balance.

Outline application - this is stage one of the application process, where the project is first detailed.

Intervention Rate - the maximum contribution that the Rural Fund can make to your project, as a percentage. When you claim your grant, regardless of the final project costs, the payment cannot exceed either the amount of grant awarded or the intervention rate.



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[UK Shared Prosperity Fund - West Yorkshire Combined Authority
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West Yorkshire Combined Authority

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All information correct at time of writing



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West Yorkshire**