

CRITERIA

SWEF ENTERPRISE FUND

A FUND MANAGED BY
BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

FUNDED BY
SWEF



OVERVIEW

The SWEF Enterprise Fund supports young entrepreneurs aged 18–30 who are developing or growing a business venture.

The Fund is designed to help you take your business to the next stage, whether you are just starting out or already trading.

The programme offers two types of grants:

Grant Type	Description	Grant Amount
Start-Up Grant	For very early-stage businesses or businesses turning over less than £500 per month	Up to £500
Established Business Grant	For businesses that have been trading for up to 2 years and are ready to grow.	Up to £2,000

You should read this document carefully before applying to make sure you meet the criteria for the grant type that best suits your stage of business.

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY (applies to both grants)

To apply for any SWEF grant, you must:

- Be aged 18–30 at the time of application.
- Be the majority owner or sole trader of the business.
- Be based in the UK and live in the eligible area served by your local Community Foundation.
- Have a business bank account in your name or your business's name.
- Be able to demonstrate financial need for the grant.
- Clearly show how the grant will transform or grow your business.
- Provide a detailed cost breakdown and, where possible, quotes or links showing what you intend to purchase.
- Grants must be spent within one month of receipt of funds.

Applications for business *ideas* without evidence of progress (for example, no trading, prototype, or launch preparation) will not be considered.

START-UP GRANT

Purpose

This grant helps very early-stage businesses get started and move from idea to trading.

You can apply if:

- Your business has been trading for less than 6 months, or you are pre-revenue but can show genuine steps taken toward launch (for example, developing products, creating a website or marketing materials, engaging customers).
- Your business generates less than £500 per month in income.
- You intend to make the business your main source of income.

Grant amount: Up to £500

What the grant can be used for:

- Essential tools or equipment.
- Materials or initial stock.
- Website, online store, or booking system setup.
- Training or qualifications directly linked to your business.
- Marketing materials or initial advertising.
- Prototypes or product development.

What the grant cannot be used for:

- Salaries, wages, or personal living costs.
- Debt repayment or loan consolidation.
- Rent, utility bills, or general running costs.
- Ongoing software subscriptions.
- New technology such as laptops, tablets, or phones (unless refurbished and clearly justified).
- Businesses that are still at the idea stage with no progress shown.

ESTABLISHED BUSINESS GRANT

Purpose

This grant helps existing young businesses grow, scale up, or introduce new products or services.

You can apply if:

- Your business has been trading for up to 2 years.
- You can provide evidence of income, customers, or ongoing activity.
- You can show a clear plan for growth or expansion.

Grant amount: Up to £2,000

What the grant can be used for:

- Equipment or machinery to expand production.
- New product development.
- Training or development to improve skills or operations.
- Website or system improvements.
- Marketing to reach new audiences.
- Materials or stock for a new product line.

What the grant cannot be used for:

- Salaries or living costs.
- Debt repayment.
- Rent, utilities, or ongoing software subscriptions.
- Stock for an existing product line (unless it supports a new expansion).
- New technology such as computers, tablets, or phones (unless refurbished and clearly justified).
- Activities or purchases not directly related to business growth.

Note: If you apply for £500, you will be able to reapply 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

BUSINESSES WE CANNOT FUND

The SWEF Enterprise Fund cannot accept applications from businesses in the following areas:

- Invasive beauty treatments such as Botox, aesthetics, semi-permanent makeup, facial tattoos or dermal fillers
- Property development
- Drugs (this includes any business or idea connected to tobacco or vaping)
- Political or religious agendas
- Gambling
- Illegal or unregulated activity (such as cryptocurrencies)
- Finance or trading (e.g. any ideas that would need approval from the FCA)

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Check your eligibility – Make sure you meet the general and grant-specific criteria.
2. Complete the online application form – Available on the BLCF website www.blcf.org.uk
3. Attach supporting documents, such as:
 - A copy of your business bank statement (no more than 3 months old).
 - Any business plan, budget, or cost breakdown.
 - A copy of your ID (passport or driving license).
 - Make sure to add any relevant website links and costs to any requested items in your application.
4. Provide a referee – Someone who can confirm your abilities and commitment (e.g., teacher, employer, or mentor).
5. Submit your application – Incomplete applications may not be considered.

6. Assessment – Applications are reviewed against the criteria.
Shortlisted applicants may be invited to an online meeting to discuss their business.
7. Decision – You will be notified by email whether your application has been successful.
8. Grant payment – Grants are paid into the business bank account only.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

If you receive a grant:

- You must use the funds as stated in your application.
- You must provide receipts or proof of purchase if requested.
- You will be asked to provide a short progress update after 6 months and 12 months.
- You may be invited to join the SWEF Business Forum – a peer group for other young entrepreneurs who have received funding.
- Any unspent funds after 12 months must be returned.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- SWEF grants are non-repayable (not loans).
- Funds must be used only for the approved purpose stated in your application.
- Any major change in your business circumstances must be reported.
- Misuse of funds or false information may result in repayment or exclusion from future grants.
- SWEF and your local Community Foundation reserve the right to verify your information and request follow-up evidence.

- Successful applicants may be asked to share feedback or take part in publicity to promote the programme.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

SWEF and partner Community Foundations are committed to equal opportunities and do not discriminate based on age, gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic.

DATA PROTECTION

By submitting an application, you consent to the collection and use of your personal information for the purpose of assessing and administering the grant. Information will only be shared with organisations directly involved in managing or evaluating the fund.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions about the eligibility or application process, please contact your local Community Foundation or email administrator@blcf.org.uk