

Guidance Note

UKSPF – Export Support Programme

Overview

The Export grant programme is a £300K grant scheme that forms part of the UKSPF support for business. The programme's primary objectives are:

- Increasing the number of Tees-Valley businesses involved in export activities
- Increasing the amount/range of exporting carried out by existing Tees-Valley based exporters

Revenue grants of between £3,000 – £10,000 are available. Businesses are required to fund 25% of the total project cost themselves (this is called match funding)

It is anticipated that there will be multiple funding rounds between now and March 2026. However, we reserve the right to close the programme early should the initial rounds use all the available funds.

Applicant Eligibility

The scheme will only be available to businesses with a trading address in the Tees Valley. Businesses will need to have been customer trading for a minimum of 12 months.

Businesses must have a demonstrable existing interest in exporting. For those businesses not already exporting, examples of how this interest might be evidenced include participation in the DBT Export Academy course, meaningful previous engagement with DBT representatives, or completion of initial export research (relevant to the business/sector).

Project Eligibility

Export projects that are completed by the end of March 2026 will be eligible for the grant.

Eligible Activity

Revenue projects designed to help a business start exporting or diversify/increase its current export activity. Examples of eligible projects include:

- Attending trade events and/or purchase of trade stand equipment
- Adapting websites and /or marketing materials for audiences abroad
- Fees for export-related consultancy or legal advice
- Buying or carrying out market research

The above list is not exhaustive.

Ineligible activity

- Capital expenditure
- Routine revenue costs
- Food/subsistence costs (on trips)
- Salary/employment costs
- Production/operational costs including product development
- Costs relating to the transport or logistics of exporting goods, e.g. insurance, warehousing
- Activities that support general business processes rather than development of international markets
- Recoverable VAT
- Projects/purchases that have already taken place
- Projects that won't be completed before the end of March 2026

Assessment Process

We will carry out an initial screening of all applicants to ensure they meet the applicant and project eligibility criteria given in this guidance. Applications passing this check will then be passed to an appraisal team who will review the application. This will include an assessment of:

- Project deliverability – the ability of applicants to deliver in full within the timeframe specified
- Impact – the degree to which all outputs and outcomes are likely to be achieved
- Value for money – the delivery of outputs and outcomes at reasonable cost
- Experience – demonstrable experience of delivering similar programmes/projects, where appropriate to the programme.

Applications and appraisers' assessments will be presented to an independent decision panel of internal and external experts.

Timescales

Milestone	Date
Application Process Open (Round 1)	15 th September 2025
Application Submission Deadline (Round 1)	10 th October 2025
Notification of Outcome (Round 1)	Early November 2025
Application Process Open (Round 2)*	17 th November 2025
Application Submission Deadline (Round 2)*	12 th December 2025
Notification of Outcome (Round 2)*	Early January 2026

*** Note: Round 2 is subject to available funds and will only proceed if funds remain available after Round 1**

Form Guidance

This section provides specific guidance on questions in the application form. Guidance has not been included for questions that have been deemed to be self-explanatory.

Section 1: Applicant information

Trading Start Date

The date the business started trading with its customers

Is your business part of a larger group?

This question helps us confirm whether your business meets the eligibility criteria for this fund, which is aimed at Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

If your business is part of a larger group of companies, we may need to consider the size of the whole group (not just your individual business) when assessing SME status. This includes parent companies, subsidiaries, or other businesses under common ownership or control.

Please answer Yes if your business is owned by, owns, or is otherwise linked to one or more other companies. If you answer Yes, you may be asked to provide further details about the group structure so that we can confirm your eligibility.

Example: If your company is a subsidiary of a larger parent company, or if your directors also control other businesses within a group, you should answer **Yes**. If your business operates independently and is not linked to any other companies, you can answer **No**.

Section 2: Project Information

What countries do you currently export to?

If you have not yet started exporting, please enter N/A.

Please tell us how you plan to use the grant funding.

In this section, please describe in your own words what you intend to spend the grant on. Be as specific as possible, so we can understand exactly what activity, item, or service you are applying for and how it will support your export growth.

Examples of eligible activities could include (but are not limited to):

- Attending or exhibiting at an overseas trade fair
- Purchasing translation or localisation services for marketing materials
- Commissioning international market research or consultancy support
- Obtaining product testing or certification needed for overseas markets
- Developing or upgrading your website or e-commerce platform for export sales
- Travel and accommodation linked to export development activities

Outline how this grant will help your business take the next step in its exporting journey

In this section, please explain how the activity or purchase you are applying for will help your business progress in exporting. We are looking to understand the *difference the grant will make* — for example, how it will help you enter a new market, expand sales in an existing one, or build the capacity needed to grow internationally.

You might want to consider:

- What stage you are currently at with exporting (e.g. first steps, occasional exports, growing into new markets).
- The barriers you are facing (e.g. lack of market knowledge, need for certification, limited sales channels, capacity to attend international events).
- How the grant-funded activity will help you overcome those barriers.
- The specific outcomes you expect (e.g. access to new distributors, increased export sales, new jobs created, markets safeguarded).

It would also be useful to include evidence (data/reports/research) that supports or gives background to this answer.

Provide a SMART goal.

We would like you to set a clear **SMART goal** for your grant project. This means your goal should be:

- **Specific** – Clearly state what you will achieve.
- **Measurable** – Show how you will measure success (numbers, £ value, % increase, etc.).
- **Achievable** – Ensure it is realistic given your resources and the grant amount.
- **Relevant** – It should directly support your export growth.
- **Timebound** – Include a timeframe or deadline for when the result will be achieved.

Examples of SMART goals:

- “To secure **two new distributors in Germany** by **May 2026**, generating at least **£150,000 in export sales** within 12 months.”
- “To **increase international website traffic by 30%** through translation and SEO improvements, by the **end of March 2026**.”
- “To **achieve product certification for the US market** by **December 2025**, enabling entry into that market in 2026.”

Tip: Think about how you will know if your project has been successful, and put that into a clear statement.

By what date will your project end?

Please tell us the date you expect your project to finish. This should be the date when **all activities are completed and fully paid for**.

Important: All projects funded through this programme must be completed and all costs defrayed (paid in full) **no later than 31 March 2026**. Any costs incurred after this date cannot be claimed.

Tip: Build in enough time for suppliers, delivery, and payment before this deadline.

What is the total cost of the project?

Please provide the full cost of your project, based on the quotes or estimates you have included with your application.

- If your business is **VAT registered**, enter the cost **excluding VAT** (as you can usually reclaim this).
- If your business is **not VAT registered**, enter the cost **including VAT** (as you will need to pay this as part of the project).

Tip: This should be the total value of the project, not just the amount you are requesting from the grant.

Please itemise the total project cost

In this section, please provide a breakdown of your total project costs. We need to see:

- Each item, activity, or service you plan to purchase.
- The proposed supplier for each item (based on the quotes you have obtained).
- The estimated cost (excluding VAT if you are VAT registered, including VAT if not).

This helps us check eligibility, value for money, and confirm that your project costs are supported by quotes or estimates.

For Example:

<i>Item / Activity</i>	<i>Supplier</i>	<i>Cost (£)</i>
Trade fair exhibition stand	ABC Events Ltd	£4,000

<i>Item / Activity</i>	<i>Supplier</i>	<i>Cost (£)</i>
Flights and accommodation	Screenshot attached (airline/hotel)	£1,500
Translation of brochures	XYZ Translations	£1,200

Tip: The total of your itemised costs should match the "Total Project Cost" you entered above.

Upload Quotes

Please upload quotes or evidence of the expected costs for the activities or services you are applying for. Each document should clearly show the supplier, the item or service, and the cost.

Examples of acceptable evidence:

- A formal quote from a consultant or supplier
- A screenshot of flight, accommodation, or event booking costs
- A printout or screenshot of online subscription/service pricing

Tip: You can upload more than one file if your project has multiple costs or suppliers.

Outline what steps you've taken to ensure best value for the project cost stated

Answers should explain what efforts will be taken to keep project costs reasonable and ensure that any services provided are at a competitive price. Please outline the steps you have taken to check that your proposed project costs are fair and reasonable.

You may wish to include:

- Whether you have obtained more than one quote and compared prices.
- If only one supplier can provide the service/product, why they are the most suitable choice.
- How you considered quality, experience, or track record alongside price.
- Any evidence that the cost is in line with market rates (e.g. online pricing, published tariffs).
- If applicable, whether you have chosen the most cost-effective option that still meets your needs.

Example responses:

- "We obtained three quotes for translation services and selected the middle-priced supplier based on experience in our industry."
- "Flight costs were checked against two major airlines to confirm the chosen option was the lowest available at the time."
- "Certification can only be carried out by one accredited body, so we have attached their standard published fee schedule."

Tip: You don't need to upload every comparison you made, but please explain briefly how you ensured best value for the project costs.

How much grant funding are you requesting?

Enter the amount of funding you are requesting from this programme. This should not exceed the maximum grant available (£10,000) and must reflect the funding rules.

(Remember: the grant can cover up to 75% of eligible project costs, and you must contribute at least 25% match funding.)

Fund Objectives

All projects supported by this programme must contribute to one or more of the fund's objectives. Please review the list below and tick all that apply to your project.

What this means in practice:

- **Adoption of new-to-firm technologies or processes / enhancing productivity and innovation**
e.g. introducing a new CRM system, upgrading your e-commerce platform, adopting a new export process, or bringing in specialist expertise to improve efficiency.
- **Safeguarding existing jobs**
e.g. securing overseas orders that protect the roles of current staff, preventing redundancies by opening new markets.
- **Creating new jobs**
e.g. hiring new staff to manage export sales, appointing an overseas distributor manager, or increasing production staff to fulfil export orders – any new jobs reported must be expected to be in place by April 2026.
- **Increasing export capacity**
e.g. developing an international marketing strategy, expanding distribution channels, building overseas networks, or gaining certification to sell abroad.
- **Increasing export sales (£)**
e.g. projecting additional revenue from new markets, or setting sales targets for overseas growth.
- **Other (please specify)**
If your project has another positive impact (e.g. sustainability improvements, upskilling staff, collaboration with international partners), please describe it here.

Tip: Select all that genuinely apply to your project and use the free text box to explain briefly how your activity will achieve the outcomes you have ticked.

Please explain how your project will achieve these outcomes

In this section, please explain *how* the activity you are applying for will deliver the outcomes you have ticked above. We want to understand the link between what you plan to do and the difference it will make for your business.

If you select safeguarding or creating jobs, please also provide the number of jobs you expect to safeguard or increase.

You may also wish to include:

- The **specific activity** (e.g. trade fair, certification, translation, consultancy).
- The **barrier it helps you overcome** (e.g. lack of market access, regulatory requirement, language barrier, limited capacity).
- The **direct impact** on your business (e.g. increase in export enquiries, ability to sell in a new market, more efficient processes).
- The **expected outcome** (e.g. jobs safeguarded, new jobs created, growth in export sales,

adoption of new processes).

Example responses:

- “Attending the international trade fair in Dubai will allow us to meet potential distributors. We expect this to generate new export sales of £200,000 in the following year, supporting the creation of 2 new jobs.”
- “Achieving US product certification will remove a regulatory barrier and enable us to enter that market, safeguarding 5 existing jobs and opening the potential for £500,000 in new sales.”
- “Investing in translation and localisation of our website will increase our export capacity by making our products accessible in French and Spanish, with a target of 20% growth in overseas enquiries within 12 months.”

Tip: Be as specific as possible so we can clearly see the link between your project activities and the outcomes claimed.

If you have any questions about completing the application, please email UKSPFenquiries@teesvalley-ca.gov.uk and one of our Business Solutions Advisers will be happy to help.