

UKSPF Sunderland Creative Support Grant

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About the grant

The Sunderland Creative Support Grant programme is part of the UKSPF Sunderland Innovate and Grow (SIG) project and is part funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, supported by Sunderland City Council and led by University of Sunderland.

Sunderland Culture is proud to be one of the many cultural organisations, practitioners and businesses working in Sunderland and partnering with University of Sunderland through the Sunderland Innovate and Grow programme. We recognise the incredible impact that artists and creatives have on the city – and your potential to do even more. Creative businesses, cultural organisations and self-employed practitioners need support to sustain and grow their work, and Sunderland Culture is committed to help them to thrive.

As part of this commitment, we are launching the UKSPF Sunderland Creative Support Grant to support creative enterprises in the city.

Independent creative practitioners, businesses and organisations based in Sunderland are invited to apply for a grant of up to £2000. The UKSPF Sunderland Creative Support Grant is specifically targeted at business who want to:

- adopting a new to firm technology or process
- engage with a new market activity

The UKSPF Sunderland Creative Support Grant is open to all creative businesses in Sunderland, however we are particularly interested in receiving applications from creative business who are based in the Sunnyside area of the city. This is in acknowledgement of the ongoing regeneration of the area and in support of the long-term vision to position Sunnyside as a vibrant, mixed-use city neighbourhood, with a thriving Creative Hub at its core. You can find a map of the area which we are classifying as “Sunnyside” at the end of this document.

Eligibility

To be eligible for this grant programme you must fulfil all the following eligibility criteria:

- You must have a business address registered in Sunderland. To check whether your business is eligible, please use this postcode checker: www.gov.uk/find-local-council. Please note that not all SR postcodes qualify. Your registered business address must be within the Sunderland City Council local authority.
- The fund applies to sole-traders, freelancers, CIC, LTDs, registered charities and other registered businesses. You or your business must be registered with HMRC, Companies House or the Charities Commission at the point of application and have been trading for at least 12 months.
- Creative industries are defined broadly as a business with creativity at its heart – for example design, music, publishing, architecture, film and video, crafts, visual arts, fashion, TV and radio, advertising, literature, computer games and the performing arts.

- You must have a UK bank account in the exact name you are applying in
- The application amount must not exceed £2000
- You must be able to demonstrate a professional track record of working as a creative business in the city
- You must be able to evidence how the support would enable you to either introduce a new process or technology to your business and/or engage in a new market (please refer to definitions and example below)
- You must be committed to completing relevant paperwork and meetings associated with the support by 28 February 2026. The grant cannot support the costs of activity that has already taken place

We will work with you to support any access needs. Access costs can be applied for in addition to the support received.

What the grant can support

The UKSPF Sunderland Creatives Support Grant offers independent creative practitioners, businesses and organisations based in the city a grant to help improve the performance of their creative business by achieving one of the outcomes detailed below.

Adopting a new to firm technology or process

Definitions: A technology or process is new to the firm if it did not use a technology or process with the same functionality before, or the production technology or process is fundamentally different from those already used.

This could include:

- Upgraded equipment to enhance your creative businesses productivity
- Small capital work to open a new space or make a space more profitable
- Introducing new software or technology to streamline processes (e.g. a CRM system)

Engage with a new market activity

Definitions: “Engaged” means they have launched a product or service into a new domestic or overseas market or have undertaken research or attended conferences or events to prepare a launch into a new market.

“New market” refers to a new product market (i.e. creation of a product/service that doesn't compete or replace previous products produced by the business) or geographic market (i.e. operating in a new area which could be, for example, a new region or country).

This could include:

- You may want to take time to attend a conference or event to build your businesses networks to access new markets for future work.
- You might want to pilot a new product, workshop or commercial activity.
- You may need help to develop a new website or other marketing materials.

This is not an exhaustive list, and we will consider any application which can demonstrate that this will help your enterprise meet the above criteria.

We are looking to award a minimum of 7 grants per outcome.

Please note that this grant is not paid upfront, and you will need to submit a copy of invoices paid and a copy of your bank statement to show funds have left the account before receiving payment. This can be paid in one payment or in instalments - this will be agreed with the Programme Manager in advance.

This is a competitive programme, and we anticipate receiving more applications than we can fund so please feel free to email us questions about your idea or proposal.

Use of information

The information submitted within this form will be used by the University of Sunderland and the programme funders, Sunderland City Council.

As well as evaluating the project application, this information will be used to help monitor the progress of businesses in the region. The project may be

audited by the organisations listed in the following Data Protection Statement. The University of Sunderland must therefore retain this form until 31 March 2036.

Following project completion, you will be contacted to confirm your receipt of assistance and to provide evidence of the outcomes (for example, adopting new to firm technologies, engaging in new market activity). The University and programme funders are subject to the provision of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and any information that you provide may potentially be subject to a Freedom of Information request.

The project outcomes, monitoring and evaluation will be subject to ongoing Impact Monitoring for a period of up to 2 financial years post March 2026 for the Sunderland Innovate & Grow project. This evaluation will be conducted on a 6 monthly review basis at which time you will be contacted by a member of staff from the University of Sunderland's Projects and Funding Team who will request to see evidence on impact monitoring and evaluation of your project for auditing purposes.

How to apply

To apply for the UKSPF Sunderland Creative Support Grant, please complete this online application form: forms.office.com/e/jiE1r5tyNr

Alongside contact and business details, the application asks three key questions:

1. Tell us about your creative business (300 words max)
2. The UKSPF Sunderland Creative Support Grant is to support your creative business to:
 - Introduce a new technology or process AND/ OR
 - to engage in a new market or get ready to engage in a new market

Tell us about how the grant will be used, with reference to one or both outcomes above (300 words max)

3. Please provide a budget breakdown. If your budget exceeds 2k, please provide an explanation of how you will cover the excess.

4. Please outline a plan for spending the grant, including key dates and milestones (300 words max)

To maximise your chances of a successful application, please provide as much detail as possible within the word limit.

Please note: the application form cannot be saved in progress, and so we recommend completing in a word document first.

Access needs

Applicants with access needs are encouraged to apply for additional budget towards the higher costs that they might face in carrying out grant activities. These may include access to an interpreter, additional technology, additional travel costs etc.

Please include any access costs in your budget, specifying the budget line as an access cost, for example: BSL Interpreter (access cost): £500.

Pre-application support

If you would like to discuss your application prior to submission, Laura will be holding drop-in sessions to discuss the grant on the following dates:

- Thursday 25 September, 10am-2pm at Port Independent
- Wednesday 8 October, 10am-2pm at Arts Centre Washington

To book a 30-minute chat at one of these drop-in sessions, please email laura.brewis@sunderlandculture.org.uk. Slots must be pre-booked.

If these times are not accessible, please email Laura to arrange an alternate time.

Deadline

The deadline for submitting the application is Friday 17 October, 5pm.

If you are unable to access the online form, please contact laura.brewis@sunderlandculture.org.uk to arrange an alternative means of submission.

Decisions

We aim to contact applicants with a decision on the week beginning 3 November 2025. This may be delayed depending on the volume of applications.

The process following decision

If your application is successful, we will be in touch by email to confirm, which will include paperwork to be completed. We will need returned:

- A signed and dated Registration Form
- A signed and dated Offer Letter
- Proof of your eligible address
- Proof of enterprise registration
- A completed Supplier Form

When this is completed, your business will be able to proceed with grant activities, as stated in your application.

To receive payment, you will need to submit a copy of invoices paid and a copy of your bank statement to show funds have left the account. Before payment of the final instalment, you will also be asked to complete an online Outcome Form which details how the grant has helped to achieve the outcome described in your application. When we have this, we will pay your final invoice.

Successful applicants will also be asked to supply progress reports every 6 months for up to 2 years after the close of the grant.

Data protection statement

This project is part funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund with Sunderland City Council as the lead authority. The rules of this fund require applicants and partners to maintain records to support and evidence all project activity. The purpose of this statement is to ensure that all beneficiaries are aware of what data will be held for the purposes of UKSPF funding, and to whom this information may be disclosed.

The Data Protection Act 2018 is designed to protect individuals from any disadvantage that might result from the processing of their personal details.

The Data Protection Act 2018 requires the University to focus on the implementation of the Act for personal data processed by the University. It is therefore important that you are aware of the following information: The Data Controllers are Sunderland City Council and the University of Sunderland. Each party is responsible for the data it holds. The Data Protection Act applies to all personal data held on the following UKSPF forms:

- Sunderland Creative Support Grant Company Capture Form
- Sunderland Creative Support Grant Quarterly Impact Monitoring Review Form
- Sunderland Creative Support Grant Outcome Impact Evidence Form

The purposes for which data are held are:

- As a requirement of UKSPF regulations, without which the funding would not be provided.
- For Project Evaluation Purposes.
- For use by Sunderland Culture and University of Sunderland UKSPF Innovate and Grow staff to compile claims and reports relating to the project.

The information will be disclosed to the following if requested:

- Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) or any organisation appointed on behalf of Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) to carry out analytical research.
- Sunderland City Council
- North East Combined Authority
- The Audit Authority and the National Audit Office.
- Internal / External Auditors of each partner university.
- This list is not exhaustive.

If, at a later date, you wish to amend any of the information you have supplied, please contact: laura.brewis@sunderlandculture.org.uk

A copy of the information you provide will be retained in a secure environment.

The information that you provide will be retained for the length of time required for UKSPF funding and regulation purposes. For the current

Programme records are to be retained until 31 March 2036.

The University of Sunderland Privacy Policy and details of how we process and store your data can be found below.

Privacy Notice

Data processing purposes	<p>The information provided to the University of Sunderland will be shared with Sunderland City Council and used to evaluate this project. Data will be used for the purpose of reporting to the University of Sunderland, Sunderland City Council and may be shared with government departments (e.g., Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education, HM Revenue and Customs) and the North East Combined Authority for project reporting and UKSPF compliance. It may also be used within Sunderland City Council's governance structures to manage and administer the UKSPF programme effectively.</p> <p>Your data is stored securely by the University of Sunderland and Sunderland City Council, with access restricted to authorised project staff. If shared with third parties, only the minimum necessary data will be provided, and third parties are required to take appropriate security measures to keep your information safe and follow strict data protection policies set out above.</p> <p>For more details, see: Sunderland City Council UKSPF Privacy Notice; Sunderland University Privacy Notice; Governments UKSPF Privacy Notice</p>
Legal basis for processing	<p>We process all data according to the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (UK GDPR). The Data Protection Legislation sets out when we are lawfully allowed to process your data. The lawful basis for this processing is Article 6 (1) (e) of the UK GDPR. Sunderland City Council is the data controller for all data related to the UKSPF in Sunderland. University of Sunderland, as a grant beneficiary organisation of UKSPF in Sunderland, is data processor for participant data in the operations and projects funded.</p> <p>Sunderland City Council does not control any other/additional data collected by the University of Sunderland that is not essential for UKSPF delivery, or</p>

	<p>data the University of Sunderland would normally collect for other purposes.</p> <p>Sunderland City Council UKSPF Privacy Notice sets out the lawful basis for processing personal data UKSPF. Further details for University of Sunderland's processing can be found at Sunderland University Data Protection Policy.</p>
Retention period	<p>Your data will be retained for up to ten years from the commencement of the UKSPF Programme (31 March 2036).</p> <p>Personal data held by Sunderland City Council and University of Sunderland for the purposes as required by the UK Government under UKSPF will be retained in line with UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p>
Your data rights	<p>You can request a copy of the information that Sunderland City Council holds about you (known as a 'Right of Access Request'), see more at Sunderland City Council UKSPF Privacy Notice or contact data.protection@sunderland.gov.uk</p> <p>University of Sunderland will process data in accordance with Sunderland University Data Protection Policy. On how to request a copy of information held by University of Sunderland, please contact dataprotection@sunderland.ac.uk.</p> <p>For concerns or independent advice on data protection, contact: The Information Commissioner's Office</p>
Virtual training	<p>If training is to be delivered by an external supplier, it may be necessary for us to provide them with some of your details for you to access the virtual classroom. In this case, only the minimum required data will be provided, and third parties must follow strict data protection rules.</p>
Marketing consent	<p>The University of Sunderland would like to keep you updated with any future training and education opportunities. This would therefore require us to hold contact details for you and your organisation. To opt in, please tick the consent box in Part 1 of this form. You can opt out at any time by emailing skills@sunderland.ac.uk. The University will process this data in accordance with Privacy notice - marketing The University of Sunderland.</p>

More Information

Sunniside map



Figure 1: A map showing the Sunniside boundary in Sunderland.

North boundary: West Wear Street
 East boundary: Sans Street
 South boundary: Borough Road
 West boundary: Fawcett Street

Sunderland Culture

Sunderland Culture was set up in 2016 to bring together the cultural programmes of Sunderland City Council, University of Sunderland and Sunderland Music, Arts and Culture (MAC) Trust into a single, independent, delivery model.

Sunderland Culture delivers the programme in National Glass Centre and Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens and Arts Centre Washington, as well as cultural engagement and events in communities across the city. It works to ensure the power of great art, culture and creativity is harnessed for the benefit of Sunderland, its residents and visitors. Sunderland Culture is a registered charity and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. Its mission is to improve life for everyone in Sunderland through culture.

About Sunderland Innovate and Grow

[Sunderland Innovate and Grow](#) is a partnership project between the University of Sunderland and Sunderland City Council and consists of four main strands with activity that support all steps of the innovation cycle through:

- Identifying and promoting new technologies to stimulate innovation in process, product and business model via subject innovation specialists ([Arrow](#));
- Addressing gaps in business capacity and capability to innovate through active engagement and grant support, and student and graduate placements ([Arrow and Innovation Placements](#));
- Spotting innovative ideas and bringing them to market through engagement with commercial partners ([Northern Accelerator](#));
- Addressing innovation needs in the creative sector by engaging sector specialises, Sunderland Culture

Sunderland Innovate and Grow is funded by the UK Government through the Shared Prosperity Fund. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund provides £900 million of funding for local investment in 2025/26. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills. For more information, visit UK Shared Prosperity Fund: 2025/26 technical note - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)