

SUPPLIER SKILLS PROGRAMME

SME GUIDE TO MAKING GRANT CLAIMS & SUBMITTING THE MONITORING EVIDENCE

The Supplier Skills Programme (SSP) is funded through the European Social Fund (ESF) and is subject to rigorous audit requirements with regard to payment of grant awards.

Birmingham City Council (BCC) Project Officers (POs) are required to collect very specific evidence around payments made to grant beneficiaries, both for the purpose of prevention of fraud and because external auditors could class project costs as ineligible and we will be financially penalised. There is no flexibility around this so your PO will not pay grant monies to you unless all the required evidence is in place.

- Birmingham City Council (BCC) Project Officers (POs) are required to collect very specific evidence for payments made to Participant Businesses, both for the purposes of prevention of fraud and to avoid claimed project costs being made ineligible with financial implications of clawbacks.
- BCC will check records & evidence throughout the programme to ensure risks are being managed
- Participant Business expenditure is only eligible for grant funding if all mandatory information has been collected, checked and retained. N.B. There is no flexibility or exemptions on this requirement and no grant monies will be paid unless all the required correct and compliant evidence is in place.

This guide will assist you in compiling your grant claims. Please note that claims submitted that do not meet the requirements outlined will be subject to query and may have to be returned to you for amendment or for further information to be supplied. This will cause delays in the payment of your grant money.

Any items of expenditure within the claim which do not meet the requirements of eligibility or do not have the relevant evidence to support them will be disregarded.

Before making any claims, please ensure that the **new vendor form** sent to you with your Funding Agreement has been completed and returned to your BCC PO (ref point D3).

GUIDE TO MAKING GRANT CLAIMS

A. GENERAL RULES

1. **Only invoices dated after the date of the receipt of the acceptance of grant offer by your BCC PO will be eligible for grant funding. Any that pre-date this will not be eligible.**
2. **All invoices must correspond to the quotes/tenders that you supplied with your grant application.**
3. All invoices and bank statements submitted as part of a claim should be clear and legible.
4. **Prevention of fraud:** POs are required to use best endeavours to prevent fraud. This means that they will carry out checks on suppliers which have provided invoices to verify their trading status. They will also check any links between suppliers and the applicant business, interrogate bank statements for suspicious transactions and query anything that raises any concerns. Please be

aware that if we pay grant monies and later find the evidence to be fraudulent, we will look to reclaim the funds and any future claims will be put in jeopardy.

5. Invoices from individuals/businesses who have acted on your behalf in preparing the application and/or compiling claims, eg business advisors, are not eligible for grant funding.
6. If payment for an invoice has been made from a foreign currency account, we will need to convert the cost to GBP using the European Central Bank conversion rate that applied at the time the payment was made - this is an ESF rule. Where your bank has done the conversion on your behalf, the cost that appears in GBP on your bank statement will be used.
7. No claims will be accepted after the project end date stated in the Funding Agreement unless an extension to your project has been previously agreed by your PO. We therefore ask that in the event of any significant delays, you inform your PO as soon as possible.

B. PAYMENT OF INVOICES YOU PLAN TO CLAIM FOR

The best way to pay invoices you intend to claim for is via direct bank transfer or BACS payment. This provides a clear audit trail.

If you are not able to make payments by bank transfer, please note the following points:

1. Never make these payments by cash - cash payments are not eligible under ESF programmes as no true audit trail can be provided.
2. Cheque payments are acceptable, but please take a copy of the filled out cheque before you pass it on to your supplier and submit that along with the bank statement showing the cashing of the cheque so that we can evidence that the payee corresponds to the supplier invoice(s).
3. Credit Card Payments: By prior agreement with Council only.
4. If payment against an invoice you are claiming for has been included in a payment with other invoices to the same supplier, we will require copies of the other invoices that the payment covered. For example, if you claim for an invoice that is £5,000, but you have paid the supplier £8,000 to cover this and other invoices, we need to see all the invoices that make up the £8,000. This is so that we can track the specific payment you are claiming for.
5. If a payment against an invoice is part of a BACS payment run that appears as a bulk payment on your bank statement, we will need to see the list of payments that the BACS run covers with the relevant payment(s) clearly shown within that list.

C. SUBMITTING A CLAIM

You are welcome to submit a series of claims rather than waiting to complete your project and claiming your grant all in one go. However, for administrative reasons, claims must be for the whole amount or instalments if project costs are in excess of £5,000. Your PO will e-mail the SME Grant Claim Summary Form to you with the individual intervention percentages approved stated on the form.

You must ensure invoices are claimed only **once** and not resubmitted in later claims.

The process for submitting claims is as follows:

1. Complete the SME Grant Claim Summary form with details of the supplier name, invoice number, goods/services supplied and value of the invoice net of VAT. (The form will automatically calculate the amount of grant you can claim.)
2. Each item listed on the claim summary form should be given a sequential item number. This number should then be written next to the corresponding payment shown on the bank statement. This is so that payments can easily be identified by your PO, finance department and auditors. Any claims that are submitted without this cross-referencing will be returned to you to carry out this process which will cause delays in the processing of your grant payment.

3. All items being claimed for must have a corresponding invoice and bank statement showing the transaction made to pay the invoice.
4. **Each invoice and bank statement must carry the words “Certified as a true copy of the original” and this certification must be signed and dated by a managing director duly authorised to sign for and behalf of the business.** Any claims that are submitted without this will be returned to you to carry out this process which will cause delays in the processing of your grant payment.
5. Bank statements must carry the name of your business along with your bank sort code and account number. This is so that we can verify that the approved business has borne the costs that are being claimed. Prints from internet banking are acceptable as long as they are certified and carry the business name and account details.
6. Please do not blank out other transactions on the bank statements as we need to see that no circular payments are being made.
7. Sign and date the claim form and scan it along with the supporting evidence. E-mail the scanned copies to your PO.
8. List of documents required at point claim is submitted to SSP:
 - Beneficiary Outcome Form
 - Invoice for payment to Training Provider /Strategic Partner
 - Bank Statement – Showing payment being processed
 - Copy of Certificate of achievement.
 - Grant Claim Summary
 - Photograph of SSP Poster

D. BCC GRANT PAYMENT PROCESS

1. Once your claim has been received by your PO, they will cross reference the claim form with the supporting evidence and check that the evidence has been certified. If everything is in order, the PO will sign off the claim and pass it to the finance officer for processing.
2. The finance officer will upload the payment onto BCC's payment system.
3. Payment of the grant will be via BACS transfer into your business bank account using the details supplied on the new vendor form. The payment should appear in the account within 1 to 2 weeks.

If you have any queries, please contact your PO who will clarify the process.

GUIDE TO SUBMITTING THE MONITORING EVIDENCE

A. MONITORING

1. A condition of this grant is that the assisted businesses must upskill new and existing employees, leading to accredited training, which may be full qualifications, units or a unit of qualification at basic, level 2 and below and at level 3+ that will commence after the date of the acceptance of the Skills Funding Agreement. These will need to be completed within the agreed timeframe detailed in the application form and generally completed within 4 months from the date of acceptance.
2. Businesses will be sent a Beneficiaries Output Form for completion. The forms should be e-mailed to your PO along with the evidence of the accredited training – copies of the full qualifications, units or a unit of qualification.
3. Failure to complete this form or complete the agreed accredited training may result in grant monies paid being reclaimed by Birmingham City Council.

4. When you have submitted your last claim, where applicable, your PO will arrange a verification visit.

B. SUBMITTING A MONITORING EVIDENCE

Your PO will e-mail the Beneficiaries Output Forms to you. You must ensure each beneficiary are claimed only **once** and not resubmitted in later submissions.

The process as follows:

1. Complete the Beneficiaries Output Forms with details of the personal details, training provider details, course details, completion dates etc.
2. All beneficiaries / accreditations being reported, must have the corresponding copy of original certification, ID's, and completion documentation.
3. **Each copy of original certification, ID's and completion documentation must carry the words "Certified as a true copy of the original" and this certification must be signed and dated by a managing director duly authorised to sign for and behalf of the business.** Any monitoring evidence that is submitted without this will be returned to you to carry out this process which will cause delays in the processing of your grant payment.
4. Please do not blank out any information on monitoring evidence. Sign and date the form and scan it along with the supporting evidence. E-mail the scanned copies to your PO.