

Eligibility for Innovation Vouchers

Eligibility

Businesses that meet the following criteria can apply:

- Located in one of the target LEP areas
- Have received less than Euros 200,000 de minimis state aid in the last three years;
- Meet the European Union definition of a small and medium sized enterprise i.e. employ less than 250 full time staff (or equivalent), have an annual turnover of no more than 50 million euros and/or annual balance sheet no more than 43 million euros;
- Able to contribute a minimum of £2,500 to match fund the grant;
- Meet the eligibility guidelines for use of the Innovation Voucher;

Suitable Business Types

- Start-ups of all sizes, whether or not VAT registered
- Self-employed & sole traders
- Partnerships/limited liability partnerships
- Companies (private or public limited companies; private unlimited companies)
- Independent spin-outs from established businesses, universities and other research and development organisations;
- Not for profit companies, co-operatives, community enterprises, social enterprises
- Farm enterprises
- New to the region branches of businesses which remain established elsewhere in the UK (i.e. expansions)
- Foreign direct investment (FDI) bringing new enterprises to the region;
- Time investment and subsequent expansions

Eligible Sectors

Companies from certain sectors (and those associated with these sectors) will be given priority access to the grants (see table below), however, applications from companies not included in these groups that have good innovation ideas will also be considered.

Greater Birmingham and Solihull:

Districts:

- Birmingham
- Solihull
- Cannock Chase
- Lichfield
- Tamworth
- East Staffordshire (based upon Burton and Uttoxeter)
- Redditch
- Bromsgrove
- Wyre Forest (based upon Kidderminster)

Priority Sectors

- Advanced Manufacturing including Automotive and Aerospace
- Low Carbon
- ICT
- Digital and Creative
- Life Science

Black country

Districts:

- Dudley
- Sandwell
- Walsall
- Wolverhampton

Priority Sectors

- Transport Technologies including Aerospace and Automotive
- Building Technologies / Construction
- Advanced Manufacturing including Advanced Engineering

- Environmental Technologies
- Business Services

The Marches:

Districts:

- Telford and Wrekin
- Shropshire
- Herefordshire

Priority Sectors

- Defence and Securities;
- Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing;
- Environmental Technologies and Services;
- Renewable Energy, water technology, waste management and pollution control;
- Food and Drink (processing, food packaging, materials innovation, testing and development, specialist logistics and preservation)

Eligible And Ineligible Activities For The Innovation Voucher

Eligible activities:

General activities and processes:

- New product/ process development
- New business model development
- Efficiency audit, process change
- Supply chain management and logistics
- New service delivery and customer interface
- New service development
- Product and service testing and economic impact assessment
- Innovation/technology audit

Specific activities where particular limitations apply:

- Exploiting advances web technologies for the region and/or industry (this does not include standard web design, development or search optimisation)
- Market research
- Equipment purchases to develop prototypes
- Capital items to develop prototypes
- Software purchases to develop prototypes

Types of processes that include the above themes:

- Opportunity Analysis to support your ideas in the Idea Screening Phase
- Idea Screening
- Concept development, prototyping and testing
- Development the marketing and engineering details
- Identification & investigation of intellectual property, including the process for intellectual property creation, protection (but not patent maintenance fees to Intellectual Property Office or relevant official organisations)
- Feasibility through virtual computer aided rendering and rapid prototyping
- Concept testing
- Development of Business Plan
- Beta Testing and Market Testing
- Producing a physical prototype or mock-up
- Testing the product (and its packaging) in typical usage situations
- Conducting focus group customer interviews
- Producing an initial run of the product
- Technical implementation
- New programme initiation
- Finalising Quality Management System
- Resource estimation
- Requirement publication
- Publishing technical communications such as data sheets
- Engineering operations planning
- Department scheduling
- Supplier collaboration
- Logistics plan
- Resource plan publication

- Program review and monitoring
- Contingencies - what-if planning
- Commercialization (often considered post-NPD)
- Launch the product
- Critical path analysis
- New Product Pricing
- Impact of new product on the entire product portfolio
- Value Analysis (internal & external)
- Analysis of competition and alternative competitive technologies
- Analysis of costs and selling price
- Forecast of unit volumes, revenue, and profit

Exploiting advanced web technologies for the region and/ or industry (this does not include standard web design, development or search optimisation)

- Consultancy towards IT Strategy and Value Optimisation
- Building security algorithms & AI
- Design & building of Integrated Development Environments (IDEs)
- Specialist electronic system, Software design and computer engineering tools
- Designing of Specialist CRM systems that drive hardware
- APP design & development for Mobile & portable devices (such as tablets, phones and PDAs)
- Development of GIS (Geographical Information Systems)
- Analysis and Design of Algorithms
- Electronic Communication and Concurrency
- Compression Methods for Multimedia
- Cryptography and Information Security
- System Modelling
- Distributed Systems and Applications
- Software Measurement and Quality Assurance
- Informatics (including Bioinformatics) e.g. Software & hardware design of fingerprint or IRIS scanners etc. that can be controlled through web technologies

Market research

- Launch new products or services

- Off the shelf market research reports
- Customised market research done through professional consultants & market research Companies
- Overseas market entry research reports done by specialist Accredited organisations / trade & industry bodies in the UK & overseas

Ineligible activities:

- Achieving compliance with statutory regulations or legislation
- Intellectual property protection
- Standard training courses
- Software purchases
- Capital equipment purchases
- Aid that would promote/subsidise the cost of exports
- Internships for students of knowledge providers
- Design and production of advertising materials
- Sales and marketing activities –this includes standards website design, development and search optimisation (the only exception would be the exploitation of new web technology for the region and /or industry)
- Advertising and promotional activities e.g. design of posters leaflets etc.
- Accreditations
- Capital items
- Travel costs
- Continuation and existing projects with the knowledge providers
- Legal advice