

SWEF - Start-up Grant

Applications Open: 29 th January 2026	Application deadline: 31 st October 2026
Size of Grants: up to £500	
Length of Grant: 12-month funding	
Location: Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth, and the Isle of Wight	

What is the SWEF Start-up Grant?

- SWEF is the name of the donor (think Dragons Den and Lord Sugar on the Apprentice).
- You are someone aged 18-30 who has a new business (trading for less than 2 years).
- Your business is pre-revenue or turning over less than £500 per month (if you have a higher turnover see Business Grant).

SWEF wants to fund young adults who need financial support to help their business grow and succeed. To access a grant, you need to fill in our online application form showing:

- You have already taken some steps to get your business off the ground, even if it is at an early stage. This could include setting up a social media account or opening a business bank account. We will **not** fund just 'ideas'.
- You need financial help to grow your business.

This is not a loan scheme, and you do not need to pay the grant back.

If you'd like to find out about other businesses SWEF has funded, please have a look at these case studies:

<https://www.swef.uk/case-studies>

We want this to be a supportive process, so please do drop us a line if you have questions about the application process or need help completing the application form.

Please get in touch with us by emailing grantsadmin@hiwcf.com

To apply: Complete our Application Form here: www.hiwcf.org.uk/grants

Please read the full eligibility below before completing your application

Eligibility

- You are aged **18 to 30**.
- Your UK business has been trading for less than 2 years.
- You currently live in **Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth, or the Isle of Wight**.
- You are facing financial challenges preventing you from developing your business.
- You are the majority shareholder of the business.
- You have a business bank account or are in the process of setting one up. Grants are only paid into business bank accounts.
- You are a sole trader/limited company/CIC limited by shares.

Applying for a Start-up Grant

- To qualify for a Start-up grant your business could be pre-revenue or generating less than £500 a month, but you must show you have taken steps to get a business off the ground (for example, doing market research or pro-bono work, developing your social media following, investing money into early business costs). Applications solely for business ideas will not be considered.
- You can apply for up to £500.
- Grants should be for immediate use and ideally spent within one month of receipt of funds.

Your Start-up Grant application form must show that

- Your business idea has the potential to be profitable.
- You have enough relevant experience and/or training to potentially succeed.
- You have specific plans for how you will spend the grant, such as web links and costs for the items requested.
- Your business has public visibility - e.g. social media presence, website, leaflets.
- The grant will transform your business and take it to the next stage.
- You have the intention to move towards the business being your main income/ sole work focus.

This table explain the type of things we can and cannot fund. Please contact us if you'd like to chat about your grant budget.

How can you use the grant?	You CANNOT use the grant for the following
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Equipment that will help achieve increased profit.✓ Materials or stock.✓ Prototypes and product development.✓ Building a website or booking system.✓ Training.✓ Other business costs that will make a significant impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">× Salaries.× Debt repayment.× Rent or utilities.× New computers, phones, tablets (we can consider second hand or refurbished items).× App development or software development costs – apps/software should be ready to launch or already launched at the point of applying to SWEF.× Invasive beauty treatment such as Botox, aesthetics, semi-permanent make up, facial tattoos, dermal fillers; Property development; Drugs (including any idea linked to vaping or tobacco); Political or religious agendas; Gambling; Illegal or unregulated activity (such as cryptocurrencies); Finance or trading (e.g. we will not fund ideas that need FCA approval).

Great to know...

... **If your business grows to have revenue of over £500 a month** and still meets fund eligibility criteria you can contact HIWCF to see if you can apply for a follow-up Business Grant (e.g. if you received a £500 Start-up grant you can then apply for up to £2,000 as a Business Grant).

Application Process

Complete our online Application Form

The application form asks about your business and how a grant would help you to make it more successful or help take your business to the next stage. Please ensure you attach a business bank statement to your application as this forms part of the bid.

You can save and return to the form.

After we receive your application we will review it against the criteria and contact you to let you know if we are able to progress the bid. We may at this stage ask you for further information.

- If your bid meets all fund criteria, HIWCF will have a short chat with you (online or by phone) to add any final details to your application before it is submitted to SWEF.
- If SWEF are interested in your bid, you will be invited to an online meeting with SWEF staff. This 15-30 minute online meeting helps them to decide if they will offer you a grant.

Support after the Award

- If you are awarded a grant, you will have an opportunity to be part of an online community run by SWEF; this includes a Facebook group and newsletters.
- You will need to **spend your grant within one year** and provide light-touch feedback to SWEF and HIWCF 12 months after you receive the grant.



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