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SFSY Connection and Innovation Voucher Scheme

Guidance for Applicants: Innovation Vouchers

The purpose of the Innovation Vouchers are to assist businesses and third sector organisations to adopt superior ICT business solutions that will provide significant business benefit and growth. Applicants will need to clearly demonstrate the benefits that the innovation will bring and how this will support business growth.

The Scheme is funded by Sheffield City Region, European Development Fund (ERDF), and part of the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF 2015-2020).

1. Is my business eligible to apply?

The basic eligibility for the Scheme is described by the European Commission's definition of a Small and Medium Sized business – SME. To be eligible your business must be a trading entity. So a Sole Trader is eligible and so are not-for-profit organisations and charities so long as they meet the SME definitions. People who are employees are not eligible. Your business must:

- 1.1: Employ fewer than 250 people or volunteers
- 1.2: Have a turnover of less than €50m and/or have a balance sheet of less than €43m
- 1.3: Have received less than €200k in public grants in the last 3 years (the “de-minimis” limit)
- 1.4: Not operate in a sector which is excluded from the scheme, namely:

Fishery and aquaculture sectors supported by European Fisheries Fund, primary production, processing and marketing of agricultural products, supported by European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, coal, steel and shipbuilding sectors, the synthetic fibres sector, generalised (school age) education, banking and insurance companies.

- 1.5: Have a parent company or linked enterprise which does not meet the eligibility criteria:

Linked and Partner Enterprises: if enterprises are linked or in partnership they will be treated as a single entity. So, if you add up the employees or financials of your businesses and they exceed the SME limits, then you won't be able to have a voucher. If in aggregate they still qualify as an SME then they are eligible for a voucher – so long as the other Scheme rules are met.

- 1.6. Your business must also not have had an SFSY Innovation Voucher already, or an ICT voucher, or similar in the past.

- 1.7. Your business property must be located within an eligible area, these are the local authority areas in the Sheffield City Region. You must pay business rates to one of the listed local authorities, this will be confirmed as part of your application. If your business has any business rates arrears, these must be cleared prior to application.



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1.8. The address must be the registered office or trading address of your business. If you work from a residential property as your main business base you can still apply. You cannot apply if you are employed and work from home.

1.9. If you are a tenant of a business park or a commercial property landlord, additionally you must have the approval of your landlord to proceed with the work.

2. What can I use my Innovation Voucher for?

2.1: You can only apply for one Innovation Voucher. If you have multiple premises you may use the voucher to upgrade more than one premise but the total value of all innovations may not exceed £24999 excluding VAT.

2.2: The cost of your innovation must be more than £5000 excluding VAT. If it is below that, we cannot offer you a grant.

2.3: Superior ICT business solutions that will provide significant business benefit and growth.

2.4: Eligible innovations must be new to the business and not be on-going costs.

3: Eligible Costs: Innovation Vouchers

Innovation Vouchers will be offered to help fund superior ICT business solutions for SMEs that will provide significant business benefit and growth. This may include, but is not limited to: Video conferencing, Client Relationship Management systems, cloud solutions, new products and processes. The Innovation Vouchers can also be used for new-to-the-market technologies.

Because of the nature of innovation, it would be too restrictive to provide a list of ICT innovations that would be eligible for an Innovation Voucher. To address this, eligible costs will be those where satisfactory evidence can be provided to show all the following:

3.1: The business problem/ issue faced by the SME that could be improved through an ICT innovation, including information about the area of the business that will benefit.

3.2: A clear description, specification and quote for the new ICT innovation that the SME is seeking to introduce. (If your project is below £24999 you will need to supply one fully itemised quote. If your project is above £24999 you will need to supply three fully itemised quotes. You will justify your chosen supplier using the 'Quotation Scoring Matrix' on the website. If you are unable to provide three quotes there is space to explain the reasons why in the application form)

3.3: That the ICT Innovation is new to the SME and enables new activity to occur.



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3.4: The benefits that are expected to be delivered as a result of the ICT innovation. Include projections on relevant outputs, including timescales, e.g.:

- a. Increased productivity
- b. Increased efficiency
- c. Growth in sales
- d. Access to new markets

3.5: Details of any additional jobs that will be created as a result of the ICT innovation. Include information on:

- a. Number of new full/part time jobs
- b. Expected start dates
- c. Type of contract: Temporary/Permanent

Each Innovation Voucher application will be assessed on a case by case basis. If sufficient information is not provided at application stage, this will be requested by the SFSY Connection and Innovation Voucher Team. The SFSY Connection and Innovation Voucher Team reserves the right to decline applications that do not satisfactorily meet the criteria, and thereby would not provide a significant benefit for the SME. The SFSY Programme Managers decision is final and binding.

Innovation Voucher limit: Innovation Vouchers will fund 50% of the cost of final invoices between £5000 and £24999 (so, between £2500 and £12,499.50), excluding VAT.

4: Excluded Costs

4.1: Any retrospective costs incurred prior to the issuing of an Innovation Voucher.

5. What other conditions apply?

5.1: You must not have already received public sector funding to provide an innovative solution to your business premises/ property.

5.2: You or your business/organisation must have no outstanding debts to the Local Authority at the time you apply.



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5.3: You must confirm that you have not already received de minimis aid that, together with this voucher, would exceed the threshold of €200k over a three-year fiscal period. You will have been issued with a letter by any schemes that grant de minimis aid telling you how much aid you have received. You can find more guidance at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-aid-a-beginners-guide-guidance-notes> or see the full EU de minimis Regulation at: Commission Regulation (EC) No 1998/2006 of 15 December 2006 on the application of Articles 87 and 88 of the Treaty to de minimis aid, L 379/5, OJEU, 28 December 2006, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:379:0005:0010:en:PDF>

Businesses in certain sectors are not eligible for de minimis aid or are eligible but with different financial limits. If your business/organisation is active in the fisheries, agricultural or coal sectors, or if you are unsure of your entitlement to benefit from de minimis aid, it is recommended that you seek professional advice before participating in the scheme.

5.4: Your organisation is not a public sector organisation or is not (i) a school funded by DFE (ii) a privately funded school operating over the ages of 3-18 or (iii) an organisation solely involved in offering provision under the requirement for young people to remain in education or training until their 18th birthday.

5.5: Your business must be financially viable at the time you apply.

6. What's the process?

6.1: Check that your business is in eligible area, these are the local authorities in the Sheffield City Region, a full list is on our website.

6.2: We advise that you read the following documents before you start your application:

- Applicant Terms and Conditions: Innovation Vouchers
- Guidance for Applicants: Innovation Vouchers
- Innovation Voucher Application: Information Needed to apply
- Procurement Law ESIF Compliance Guidance Note (ESIF-GN-1-001)

6.3: If you are eligible, and your project is below £24999 you will need to supply one fully itemised quote. If your project is above £24999 you will need to supply three fully itemised quotes. You will justify your chosen supplier using the 'Quotation Scoring Matrix' on the website. If you are unable to provide three quotes there is space to explain the reasons why in the application form.



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Complete and submit the online application form, and post in your declaration and supporting documents.

6.4: When we receive your application form we will check your eligibility, check that the supplier quote is appropriate for the kind of innovation installation that you have requested and, if ok, we will send you an email or a letter confirming that you have an offer of an Innovation Voucher and confirm the value of that voucher.

Vouchers will fund 50% of the cost of final invoices between £5000 and £24999 (so, the voucher value will be between £2500 and £12,499.50), excluding VAT.

6.5: Once you have your Innovation voucher you have up to 28 days to place your order with your chosen supplier. Please make sure you complete the process in that time as we may withdraw your offer and reallocate the funding after that date. You must let the SFSY Voucher Team know when you have placed your order. Once you have placed your order you have 3 months for the innovation to be installed and paid for. After this time the voucher will expire.

6.6: When the innovative installation is made, you need to make your claim and send the original fully itemised supplier invoice along with your voucher redemption invoice and other supporting documentation listed on the claim form. If you need the original invoice returning, please let us know. The form contains a declaration that the new service has been installed and is performing as expected. You must pay the full value and any VAT due, and any costs not covered by the Innovation voucher direct to the supplier. Once they have checked your claim the SFSY Connection and Innovation Voucher Team will reimburse you to the value of the voucher.

We then send you a letter to say how much grant you have received from the SFSY Connection and Innovation Voucher Scheme.

The SFSY Connection and Innovation Voucher Scheme final end dates for applications and claims are listed on the website. Please make sure that you apply and make your final claim before the end dates, please note that these dates may be subject to change.



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7: Key timescales:

Activity	Timescale
SFSY: Process application and issue innovation voucher	10 working days from receipt of application & all supporting documents*
Applicant: Order must be placed with supplier within	28 days from receipt of voucher (un-used vouchers expire after 28th day)
Applicant: Innovation installed within	3 calendar months
SFSY: Assess claim and pay Voucher Redemption Invoice	28 days from receipt of completed claim documentation**

*subject to eligibility and documentation being completed correctly

**subject to documentation being completed correctly

If you have any questions at any time through the process, contact the SFSY Connection and Innovation Voucher team. Contact details can be found at our website.