

Business Funding Opportunities in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin (2025)

Businesses in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin have access to a variety of funding programs. These include local council grants, regional funds, and national or industry-specific schemes. Below is a comprehensive overview, organized by locality and type, along with eligibility criteria, funding amounts, deadlines (where available), and relevant links.

Local Grant Schemes in Shropshire (Shropshire Council Area)

- **UKSPF Small Business Grant Scheme (Shropshire)** – A capital grant program funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. It offers *grants from £2,000 up to £10,000* to small businesses (1–49 employees) in the Shropshire Council area[1][2]. Grants support purchase of new equipment or improvements to premises, with a requirement that the project helps create new jobs or develop new products, processes, or services[3]. **Match funding:** 50% from the business (grant covers up to 50% of project cost)[2]. An Expression of Interest (EOI) stage is used to screen projects before full application[2]. **Status:** This scheme reopened on **12 May 2025** for new applications[4]. (It had previous rounds which are now closed.) Funding is limited to Shropshire-based SMEs, and applications will likely remain open until the allocated UKSPF budget (which runs through March 2025) is exhausted[5].
- **West Midlands SME Grant Programme (Shropshire)** – A large grant fund for SMEs in Shropshire, delivered in partnership with Birmingham City Council and funded by UKSPF[6][7]. It provides **grants from £5,000 up to £100,000** for established small or medium-sized businesses (<250 employees, >6 months trading) in Shropshire[8]. Most awards are expected in the £10k–£20k range, with only exceptional projects getting near the £100k maximum[9]. Eligible uses include **expansion projects, entering new markets, innovation (new product development), capital investments, and property improvements (new builds, refurbishments, expansions)** – but all applications **must demonstrate job creation** as a result[10][11]. **Match funding:** 50% (the grant can cover up to half the project cost)[11]. **Status:** The program operated in rounds – for example, one round closed 18 Oct 2023 with the next opening 23 Oct 2023[12]. As of late 2024, businesses were urged to apply *before funding ends in March 2025*[13]. (This scheme is part of a time-limited UKSPF initiative, so **no further rounds are expected beyond early 2025** without new funding.)[13]
- **Shropshire Manufacturing Growth Programme (MGP)** – A business support and grant program targeting manufacturing SMEs in Shropshire[14][15]. It provides a dedicated Manufacturing Growth Manager who helps identify improvement opportunities using a diagnostic tool (GROWTHmapper)[16]. Based on the growth

plan, the program offers **grant funding to cover 40% of the cost** of hiring external experts/consultants to implement improvement projects[17]. There is no fixed grant amount stated, but typically grants have supported projects that improve productivity, competitiveness, sustainability, develop new products, or adopt digital technologies[18][19]. *Eligibility:* Manufacturing sector SMEs in Shropshire. There is no sector sub-limit besides manufacturing, and support is tailored to each business's growth needs. *How to apply:* Businesses engage with the Shropshire MGP manager (contact via ) to undergo the initial diagnostic and develop a project plan[20]. (This program is ongoing and not a limited-time fund; it's a support service available to Shropshire manufacturers.)[21][22]

- **Marches Energy Grant (Energy Efficiency Fund) – (Regional program available in Shropshire).** This scheme helps businesses fund energy efficiency and renewable energy measures. After a free energy audit of the business's premises and equipment, companies can apply for grants up to **£20,000** for most projects, or up to **£100,000** for deeper energy-efficiency projects under a pilot fund[23][24]. The grant typically covers **up to 40%** of the investment (business provides the other 60%)[24]. For example, a £30,000 energy-saving project might get a £12,000 grant[24]. Eligible measures include lighting upgrades (LED, sensors), heating improvements (heat pumps, insulation, better doors/windows), renewable installations (solar panels), more efficient machinery or process equipment, waste-heat recovery, etc.[25][26]. *Who can apply:* SMEs in **any sector** across the Marches (Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, and Herefordshire) are eligible, as well as community buildings[27][28]. Applicants must have been trading 12+ months and not exceed subsidy allowance limits[29][30]. Certain sectors are excluded (primary agriculture, schools, and mainly public-sector bodies are not eligible)[31]. *Deadlines:* The program is currently **open and ongoing** (it replaced earlier EU-funded energy schemes)[32][33]. Businesses are encouraged to apply as soon as possible, since these funds operate on finite budgets. (Shropshire Council noted in Dec 2024 that *energy grants were still available but “time is running out” with current funding ending by March 2025*[34][13].) Notably, this grant can be very generous – some projects have been funded up to **75% of their costs** (business paying 25%) when significantly cutting carbon footprint[35][34].

Local Grant Schemes in Telford & Wrekin (Thrive Telford Programme)

Telford & Wrekin Council's **Thrive Telford** initiative encompasses several grant funds and support services for businesses in the borough. These are funded by UKSPF and have recently been extended through March 2026[36][37] thanks to additional funding. Key grant schemes include:

- **Thrive Telford Large Grants Fund** – Supports established SMEs with larger capital investment projects aimed at growth or innovation. It offers **match-funded grants from £3,000 up to £10,000**[38][39] for projects such as expanding into new markets, adopting advanced technologies or processes, launching new products,

or scaling up production capacity[40][41]. **Intervention rate:** up to 70% of eligible project costs (business contributes 30%)[38]. For example, a company buying £10,000 of equipment could receive £7,000 and pay £3,000 themselves[42]. *Status:* *Opening soon* (as of mid-2025) – earlier rounds have closed, but T&W Council announced that new funding will **launch a refreshed program through to 2026**[43][36]. Businesses should monitor Invest Telford for the Expression of Interest form when the fund is live[44].

- **Thrive Telford Small Grants Fund** – A micro-grant scheme for smaller-scale investments. Provides grants **from £500 up to £2,000**, and uniquely can cover **up to 100% of project costs (to a £2k max)**[45][46]. This is designed for quick-win purchases that facilitate growth – e.g. buying a piece of equipment, software, or minor upgrades – especially for younger or micro businesses that might struggle to provide match funding. Any project cost beyond £2,000 must be self-funded (the grant cap is £2k)[45][46]. Ineligible expenditures include retrospective purchases and any assets bought on credit/HP/lease agreements[47][46]. *Status:* **Open now** as of 2025[48] – businesses in Telford & Wrekin can apply immediately via the online EOI form[49].
- **Thrive Telford Export Grants Fund** – A specialized fund to encourage international trade. It offers **100% grants up to £3,000** for projects that help local SMEs start or grow their exports[50][51]. Eligible activities include market research into overseas opportunities, translation of marketing materials or websites, cultural consultancy, international social media/SEO campaigns, attending or exhibiting at trade shows abroad, developing export strategies or obtaining export-related training/coaching[52]. Essentially, it will pay for professional services or resources that build a company's export capability. *Status:* **Open now** (ongoing). Businesses can express interest through Invest Telford; since the fund covers costs fully up to £3k, it's an attractive opportunity for first-time exporters[50].
- **Thrive Telford Business Development Fund** – This fund helps established businesses access **specialist third-party support** to drive expansion or innovation. It provides *larger consultancy or professional services grants* in the range **£5,000 to £9,000** per business[53][54]. The focus is on funding *expert advice* or technical support as part of a growth plan – e.g. engaging a consultant for product innovation, market research, business process improvement, or other high-level advice[55][56]. **Match funding:** 30% from the business, as the grant covers up to 70% of the service cost[57][58]. There are two grant ceilings: up to **£7,000 max** if hiring a private-sector specialist, or up to **£9,000 max** if collaborating with a university or other higher education institution on the project[58]. All industry sectors may apply (both B2B and B2C are eligible), but applications from certain priority sectors are given preference: *manufacturing, engineering, digital/tech, professional services, office-based businesses, logistics/distribution, wholesale, construction, and environmental (green tech)*[59][60]. *Status:* Open (with the

program extended through 2025). Interested businesses should prepare a growth plan identifying the external support needed, and then apply via Invest Telford[61].

- **Telford “Upskilling” Grant Fund** – A workforce development grant to help companies invest in staff training. Offers **grants from £1,000 to £3,000** to cover **90% of the cost of training** (the business pays just 10%)[62][63]. Each employer can use the grant for up to 5 employees max. (in practice, potentially up to £15,000 in training support if fully utilized)[62]. The training funded must be **Level 4 or above qualifications** (post-college level, e.g. professional courses, advanced technical training) *or* other industry-specific training that clearly leads to an employee’s career progression or skills enhancement[64]. The grant *will not* fund any mandatory training (e.g. legally required certifications) or courses that are readily available through other government-funded programs[63]. *Goal:* to upskill the workforce, aid employee retention and advancement within local companies[65]. *Status:* Currently open. Businesses in Telford & Wrekin can apply via Invest Telford’s portal[65][66]. This is part of the UKSPF-backed skills support and is slated to continue into 2026 alongside the other Thrive schemes[36][37].

Note: All *Thrive Telford* grants are managed through the Invest Telford website. Since the program’s extension, the council will be updating guidance and application forms for new funding rounds up to March 2026[37][67]. Businesses should check the Invest Telford “Thrive” pages for the latest on application opening dates and submit an Expression of Interest. Already, by late 2024 the Thrive grants had invested over **£1 million** in 174 projects (across the small, large, and business development funds) in the borough[68], and the additional £1.9m UKSPF allocation will allow many more firms to benefit[69][70].

Regional and National Funding Programs

Beyond local council schemes, businesses in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin can tap into broader regional or national funding sources:

- **Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) II** – A regional **debt and equity finance fund** operated by the British Business Bank. Launched in early 2024, **MEIF II has £400 million available** for SMEs across the Midlands[71]. It offers **small business loans from £25,000 up to £2,000,000** and **equity investments up to £5,000,000** to fuel growth[72][73]. This fund covers the entire West Midlands and East Midlands (including Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin)[72]. **Use of funds:** broad – e.g. financing expansion, new product development, working capital, management buyouts, etc., for companies that have viable business plans but need capital. MEIF is not a grant; these are commercial **loans (with interest)** or equity stakes (through appointed fund managers). However, it exists to improve access to finance for SMEs that might struggle to get traditional bank lending[74]. *How to apply:* Businesses can approach MEIF’s fund managers through the MEIF website. The program is **open for applications on a rolling basis**[75]. (As of Feb 2025, MEIF II had already made 100+ investments, indicating active deployment of funds[76].)

- **Start Up Loans (British Business Bank)** – A national scheme providing **government-backed loans for new businesses**. Entrepreneurs across the UK (including Shropshire/Telford) can borrow between **£500 and £25,000** at a fixed 6% interest rate, repayable over 1–5 years[77][78]. Start Up Loans are aimed at businesses in the early stages (pre-start or first 2 years of trading). They function as *personal loans* to the founders (so credit checks apply), but come with up to 12 months of free mentoring and support once drawn[77]. **Eligibility:** You must be 18 or older, a UK resident, and planning to start a business or have one trading for under 3 years (the program recently expanded to include second loans for businesses trading 3–5 years). **Application:** online via the Start Up Loans Company website, year-round. There are no specific deadlines – it’s an ongoing program. This is a loan (needs repayment), not a grant, but it is a key funding option for startups that cannot get bank financing.
- **National “Finance and Support” Finder** – The UK government maintains an online portal to search **all government-backed funding schemes** by region, industry, and business stage[79]. This includes grants, loans, investor programs, and tax incentives. Local businesses can use the Gov.uk **Business Finance and Support Finder** to discover additional schemes that might not be listed on the Growth Hub site[79]. For example, innovation grants, apprenticeship incentives, rural development funds, or COVID-recovery loans (if any still available) would appear there. *Tip:* Always check this portal for the most up-to-date funding announcements – it aggregates everything from small local grants to large national programs[80][81]. (The Marches LEP also offered a Government Funding Tracker tool, but this was essentially a feed of government funding news[80].)
- **R&D Tax Credits and Incentives** – While not a traditional “fund to apply for,” it’s worth noting that **UK R&D Tax Relief** programs allow companies engaging in research and development to **claim back a portion of their R&D expenditure as a tax credit or cash refund**. SMEs in Shropshire/Telford developing new products or technologies can get ~18–33% of qualifying R&D costs back (rate varies by scheme and profitability). This can amount to thousands of pounds to reinvest in the business. Additionally, from April 2023 a new **“R&D intensive” SME credit** offers up to 27% payable credit for loss-making innovators. Businesses should consult with tax advisors to ensure they claim these incentives – effectively, it’s government funding for innovation through the tax system.

Industry-Specific and Innovation Funding Opportunities

Certain funding sources are targeted to specific industries or innovation activities. Businesses in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin can leverage these if they meet the criteria:

- **Innovate UK & UKRI Competitions** – Innovate UK (part of UK Research & Innovation) runs competitive grant calls for **research and innovation projects** across all sectors. These grants fund cutting-edge product development, feasibility

studies, or collaborative R&D. Some competitions are *open to any sector* (for example, the regular “Smart Grants” have historically offered funding for game-changing innovations in any field), while many are *thematic*. **Examples of current calls (Aug 2025):** a £1.6 million fund for **AI technology demonstrators**[\[82\]](#)[\[83\]](#), biomedical and agriculture innovation grants, and various challenges in areas like clean energy, smart manufacturing, etc. Each competition has specific eligibility (often requiring a UK-registered business, sometimes collaboration with other companies or academia) and a defined application deadline. *How to find/apply:* Use the UKRI **Funding Finder**[\[84\]](#)[\[85\]](#), which lists all open opportunities with details on deadlines and how to apply. For instance, as of August 2025, an Innovate UK call for “Sovereign AI” opened on 11 Aug 2025 and closes 10 Sept 2025[\[86\]](#) – highlighting the importance of checking the portal frequently. Innovate UK grants typically range from tens of thousands up to millions of pounds depending on the scope, and often require some match funding or contribution from the business. Winning these awards is competitive, but businesses in our region **have succeeded** in the past, especially by partnering with local universities or companies to strengthen their bids.

- Farming Innovation Programme (DEFRA/UKRI)** – For businesses in agriculture, agri-tech or horticulture, DEFRA’s Farming Innovation Programme provides funding for R&D and innovation on farms. It is delivered via Innovate UK competitions under themes like sustainable farm productivity, climate-smart farming, and farm-based innovation trials[\[87\]](#)[\[88\]](#). Grants are available for collaborative projects – for example, farmers working with tech firms or research organizations to develop new equipment, crop varieties, or farming practices. Multiple funding streams exist: **Research Starter grants** (smaller projects to kickstart an idea), **Feasibility projects**, and larger **Collaborative R&D** projects. Each has its own scope and grant size. (Recent rounds have offered grants in the £500k–£1m range for large collaborations, and smaller awards ~£50k for feasibility studies.) *Status:* Competitions under this program open periodically. In 2024–25, new calls (such as the **ADOPT programme** in April 2025) were launched to fund on-farm trials of innovative technologies[\[88\]](#). Farmers or rural businesses in Shropshire/Telford should watch the Farming Innovation Programme page for announcements[\[89\]](#).
- Advanced Propulsion Centre (APC) UK Funds** – The APC provides **industry-led funding** to accelerate development of **zero-emission and low-carbon vehicle technologies**. It runs several initiatives:
- Collaborative R&D Competitions (APC Grants):** large consortia projects (often automotive manufacturers together with tech suppliers and researchers) can get multi-million-pound grants to develop next-generation vehicle components, batteries, motors, power electronics, hydrogen fuel cell systems, etc. These competitions (APC21, APC22, etc.) typically open twice a year. SMEs can participate as partners in these consortia.

- **Automotive Transformation Fund (ATF):** capital funding to support scaling up production in the UK supply chain for electric vehicles (e.g. gigafactories, motor production lines). This is aimed at more mature companies for industrialisation projects[90][91].
- **SME Programs (e.g. “DRIVE” and Mobilise):** targeted at smaller companies and start-ups developing early-stage motor vehicle technology. For instance, the **DRIVE35 programme** was introduced to offer grants across different stages of innovation, and **Mobilise 2025** offers up to **£180,000** in phased grant support for zero-emission technology start-ups[92][93].

Eligibility: These funds specifically support the **automotive sector** – including vehicle manufacturers, supply chain companies, and technology firms in areas like battery tech, powertrain, lightweight materials, etc. A Shropshire or Telford engineering firm developing an automotive innovation could either lead or join a project. *Status:* APC competitions are recurring. For example, a recent APC competition (“**DRIVE35 – Demonstrator**”) was open in 2025 for late-stage R&D projects up to £40 million total fund[94]. Companies should check the APC’s “Automotive Funding Opportunities” page for current calls[95]. Deadlines vary by competition, and most require consortium building in advance.

- **Sector-Specific Government Funds:** Various UK government departments occasionally release grant schemes for specific industries or policy goals. A few notable ones:
- **Industrial Energy Efficiency/Decarbonisation Funds:** Programs like the *Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF)* and the *Industrial Energy Efficiency Accelerator (IEEA)* (run by the Carbon Trust) have provided grants to manufacturers to invest in energy-efficient equipment or pilot innovative low-carbon processes[79][33]. These schemes have had multiple rounds (the IETF Phase 3 ran through 2023). Businesses in sectors like food processing, chemicals, metals, etc., should watch for any future rounds as the government pushes towards net-zero goals.
- **Creative Sector and Cultural Grants:** The UK Shared Prosperity Fund has enabled some local creative-industry grants (e.g. Herefordshire launched Cultural Enterprise and Programming grants). While Shropshire’s focus has been more on broader business support, creative businesses should keep an eye on Arts Council England and UK Creative Industries funders for grants (for example, **Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants** for arts projects, or **UK Games Fund** for video game start-ups). These tend to be national competitions with specific cultural criteria.
- **Skills and Employment Funds:** Aside from Telford’s local Upskilling Fund, national programs like the **Apprenticeship Grant** (support payments to employers hiring new apprentices) and the **Skills Bootcamps** (free training courses in digital/manufacturing skills, often with hiring incentives) can financially benefit businesses who participate. For instance, SMEs can receive £1,000 for taking on a 16-18 year old apprentice (through the government’s apprenticeship support

scheme). Such initiatives are not direct grants for a project, but they reduce the cost of workforce development.

Finally, always stay alert to **new funding announcements**. As the current UKSPF-funded schemes wind down by March 2025, the government may introduce successor programs (under the “Levelling Up” agenda or new devolution deals). **Local Enterprise Partnerships have been integrated into local councils**^{[96][97]}, so future business funding in Shropshire and Telford will likely come via council-run programs or West Midlands Combined Authority initiatives. Checking the Marches Growth Hub site regularly and subscribing to its newsletter is a good way to hear about the latest funds. The **Marches Growth Hub** advisors can also provide one-on-one guidance – they encourage businesses to reach out for help navigating the application processes^{[98][99]}.

Sources:

- Marches Growth Hub – *Grants and Finance* pages^{[100][101][8][58]}
- Invest in Shropshire – UKSPF funding news and guidance^{[1][7]}
- Invest Telford (Telford & Wrekin Council) – Thrive Telford scheme details^{[38][45][50][58]}
- Shropshire Council News (Invest in Shropshire) – “Large amounts of grant money still available” (Dec 2024)^{[35][7]}; Shropshire Star (May 2025) on Thrive Telford extension^{[36][37]}
- British Business Bank – Midlands Engine Investment Fund II overview^{[72][73]}
- UKRI Funding Finder – current Innovate UK opportunities^{[82][86]}
- APC UK (Advanced Propulsion Centre) – information on automotive funding programmes^{[90][102]}.

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[62] [63] [64] [65] [66] Invest Telford - The Upskilling Grant Fund - Marches Growth Hub

<https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/support/the-upskilling-grant-fund/>

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<https://newsroom.telford.gov.uk/news/over-1million-invested-in-telford-and-wrekin-business-through-thrive-telford-grants>

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