

**Utilise**  
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**European Union**  
European Regional  
Development Fund

## Utilise Plus Energy Efficiency Grant

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### How much can I apply for?

Grants of between £1,000 and £5,000 are available to cover up to one-third (33%) of the total cost of a best practice energy efficiency project.

#### What is match funding?

Match funding refers to the remaining cost of the project that you will need to pay for yourself without the Utilise Plus grant.

#### What does 'best practice' mean?

This means that your project will maximise energy and cost savings for your organisation, rather than simply replacing existing features.

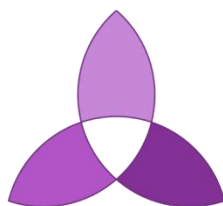
For an **LED lighting** installation best practice may be achieved by repositioning lamps to maximise natural light or incorporating self-dimming functionality.

If **upgrading a gas heating system** it will be expected that appropriate optimum start/stop or weather compensation controls will be fitted along with room thermostats and thermostatic radiator valves.

New or less commonly used technologies such as **energy storage or dry coolers** and those that encourage behaviour change including **sub-metering and Automatic Meter Reading (AMR)** will be eligible for funding.

For small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that wish to make building fabric improvements, **appropriate high quality materials** will need to be used with **low-impact products**, such as **sheep wool insulation**, particularly encouraged.

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## Who can apply?

Grants are available to any organisation which meets all of the following criteria:

- Employs fewer than 250 people.
- Has a turnover of less than €50 million per annum (£44.1m<sup>1</sup>) and/or balance sheet total of less than €43 million per annum (£37.9m<sup>1</sup>).
- Is eligible to receive [State Aid](#).
- Is not owned by a group or company that does not meet the above three criteria.
- Is registered with Companies House / Charities Commission **or** can demonstrate that they are engaged in 'economic activity' – usually some form of trading. Unincorporated associations and sole traders are eligible, provided they can show evidence of this.
- Is not engaged primarily in an ineligible sector.

## Which sectors are ineligible?

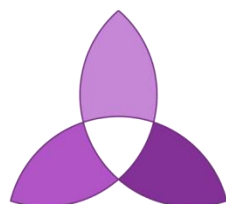
Due to funding opportunities through sector-specific programmes, enterprises engaged primarily in the following sectors are ineligible for the Utilise Plus programme and grant funding:

- Banking
- Coal
- Fisheries and aquaculture
- Insurance
- Primary production, processing and marketing of agricultural products
- Shipbuilding
- Statutory services (e.g. education, healthcare)
- Steel
- Synthetic fibres

## What kinds of projects are eligible for grant funding?

- Replacing halogen or fluorescent lighting with LEDs and optimising the number and position of light fittings to maximise use of natural lighting.
- Installing sensors to control lighting in communal areas dependent on natural light levels and movement of building occupants.

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- Upgrading an inefficient boiler to a more efficient model, installing heating controls including a timer and thermostat or thermostatic radiator valves, along with weather compensation controls.
- Installation of new technologies such as energy storage or dry coolers.
- Installation of sub-metering and/or Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) to allow accurate measuring and recording of energy usage for different areas across a site.
- Building fabric improvements combining appropriate high quality materials with low-impact products, such as sheep wool insulation.
- Renewable energy installations where energy efficiency improvements have already been addressed (grant beneficiaries are unable to claim Renewable Heat Incentive or Feed In Tariff).

## **What kinds of projects are ineligible for grant funding?**

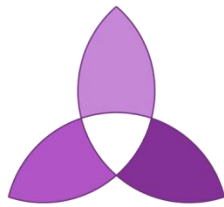
- Purchasing new IT equipment.
- Implementing an employee engagement campaign.
- Commissioning energy efficiency consultancy work.
- Installing a bike rack or purchasing new vehicles.
- Upgrading equipment where the main objective is not energy efficiency (i.e. installing equipment that would have likely been purchased even without grant funding).
- Projects that have already been installed.
- Projects that have already been awarded or received funding from the EU.

## **Can I apply for funding for more than one energy efficiency measure?**

Yes. While only one Grant Application can be submitted by an SME throughout the course of the Utilise Plus programme, this application can outline several different energy efficiency measures. For example, you may want to apply for LED lighting *as well as* a new heating system; while these are different installations, they would fall under the umbrella of a single energy efficiency project. We call this ‘bundling up’.

Grant funding criteria remains the same for these bundled projects (between £1,000 to £5,000 to cover one-third of total costs) and each element of the overarching project still requires 3 different quotes. You may be able to find contractors who can quote for all of the different elements of the project in one. Alternatively, you will need to source individual quotes from different contractors

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for each element in isolation; for example, if you're applying for LEDs *and* a new heating system, you would need 3 quotes for each, so 6 in total.

## **Do I have to own my organisation's premises?**

No. You can rent your premises and still apply for a grant, assuming that you also pay for your energy bills (i.e. they are not included in your rent). You will also need to declare that you intend on staying on this premises for the next 5 years. This ensures that any energy efficiency improvements made would benefit you directly.

If you rent and you do not pay your energy bills, you will need to ask your landlord to apply for the grant as they will be the one reaping the benefits of any energy efficiency improvements made.

## **What is State Aid?**

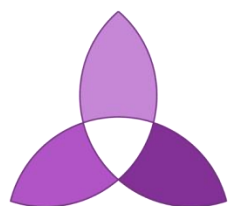
State Aid refers to public money being used to provide assistance to organisations. The use of State Aid is regulated and monitored to ensure that this State money is not used to distort competition and trade in the European Union. This public money can take various forms, including grants, tax breaks, and free or subsidised consultancy or event attendance.

In the UK, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can receive a maximum of €200,000 (£176,500<sup>1</sup>) from public money (State Aid) within any 3 consecutive financial years. Any less than this amount is considered *de minimis*, meaning it would not give an organisation any kind of unfair advantage.

The Utilise Plus programme operates within *de minimis* State Aid regulations. This means that you must be certain that the value of any of the services you apply for through the programme, plus any State Aid you have received or applied for under any other programmes, will not exceed your maximum State Aid allowance of €200,000 (£176,000<sup>1</sup>).

You will also receive a letter once the Utilise Plus programme concludes which will confirm the total amount of State Aid your organisation has been provided with.

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## **Do I have to choose the cheapest quote for my project?**

No. As part of your grant application form, you will need to provide 3 different quotes for your proposed project and justify that the one you have decided to proceed with provides the best value for money.

In some cases, this may indeed be because they are the cheapest. However, you may choose a more expensive contractor/supplier for a number of different reasons, such as their local reputation or because they can complete the project in a shorter time period, for example.

## **Should I include VAT in my project cost calculations?**

No. The total project costs outlined in your Grant Application Form must exclude VAT. Utilise Plus grants cannot contribute towards VAT costs.

## **What does ‘the forecasted end value of the asset’ mean?**

On page 7 of the grant application form, it is required that you state – for Capital projects – the forecasted end value of the asset(s) you are installing and explain how you have estimated this figure.

Each business will have its own accounting policies for determining what is considered ‘capital expenditure’, though it is expected that this will apply to any project installed under Utilise Plus. Each business will also have its own policies for determining how they depreciate the asset – that is, how the asset you have installed loses value over time. For example, LEDs might have a lifespan of 50,000 hours (roughly 6 years) and after this time the value of the LEDs will be 0.

<sup>1</sup> European Commission monthly exchange rate December 2017: €1 = £0.88293. You are responsible for calculating the exchange rate and assessing your eligibility at the time of your application.

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