



Guidance for Shop Front Improvement

The Shop Front Improvement Grant supports independent businesses to enhance shopfronts, accessibility and energy efficiency, improving appearance, customer experience, and sustainability.



Contents

Accessibility3

Are we the right funder for you3

What We fund3

 We fund projects that are..... 4

 We do not fund projects that are..... 4

Eligibility Criteria and Project requirements5

Application Process6

Refurbishment Works (Steps).....8

Grant Conditions..... 11

Submission Guidance 11

FAQs..... 12

Further Support..... 13



Accessibility

We are committed to ensuring that all eligible businesses can access this funding opportunity.

If you require support to complete your application, please contact the Economic Development Team via conciergebusinesssupport@croydon.gov.uk. Reasonable adjustments and guidance can be provided where needed.

Are we the right funder for you

The Shop Improvement Grant supports projects that deliver clear economic and community benefits by helping businesses improve and fit out commercial premises in Croydon. The programme aims to enhance the appearance and functionality of shops, increase footfall, and strengthen the local independent business offer.

Funding is limited and demand is expected to be high. As a result, not all applications will be successful.

- Occupy, or are ready to occupy, a commercial unit in Croydon
 - Require capital funding to improve or upgrade their premises so it can operate effectively
 - Can demonstrate a clear, deliverable improvement plan and long-term sustainability
- Are ready to occupy a vacant commercial unit in Croydon

What We fund

The Shop Improvement Grant supports existing Croydon-based businesses to improve the appearance, accessibility and quality of their shopfronts, helping to revitalise local high streets and district centres. The programme aims to deliver visible, immediate impact by improving the customer experience, increasing footfall and strengthening the local economy.

We will prioritise a limited number of high-quality applications that clearly demonstrate alignment with the programme's objectives.

- Funding available: £50,000 total programme allocation, providing grants of up to £5,000 per business (capital grant only).
- Eligible costs: Funding will support capital improvements to shopfronts, including; New or improved shopfronts, Signage, windows and doors, External decoration and lighting, Accessibility improvements, Energy-efficiency measures
- Ongoing operational costs such as rent, salaries or utilities are not eligible.



- Eligible businesses: The grant is open to micro and small independent businesses based in Croydon. Chains, franchises and national brands are not eligible.
- Project timescales :Projects must be ready to proceed, with works starting shortly after funding is awarded and completed within an agreed timeframe.

We fund projects that are



- Support priorities to increase footfall, improve the customer experience and strengthen local economic activity
- Be ambitious but realistic, with clearly defined and deliverable improvement proposals
- Enhance the appearance, functionality, accessibility and overall quality of the shopfront
- Create a positive and lasting impact on the local area beyond the individual business
- Increase activity and vibrancy in town and district centres
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the local market, location and customer base
- Support business sustainability, local employment and enterprise growth
- Respond to the character and needs of the surrounding area
- Provide tangible benefits to local residents, visitors and neighbouring businesses
- Contribute to a diverse, inclusive and locally rooted high street economy

We do not fund projects that are



- Chains, franchises, or national brands
- Businesses that are not based in Croydon
- Businesses that cannot demonstrate a viable plan to occupy a vacant unit
- Ongoing operational costs (e.g. rent, utilities, salaries)
- Costs not directly related to fit-out, refurbishment, or activation
- Projects without the required three quotes for works
- Projects that do not involve a vacant commercial unit
- Projects that are not ready to proceed within the required timeframe
- Proposals that do not demonstrate clear economic or community benefit
- Activities that fall outside the scope of commercial unit activation



Eligibility Criteria and Project requirements

This fund is intended to support independent micro and small businesses that will contribute to the vitality and sustainability of Croydon's local economy.

Applicants must:

- Be a micro or small independent business, demonstrating the capacity to operate sustainably
- Be currently operating within Croydon, or planning to relocate into the borough
- Not be part of a chain, franchise, or national brand, ensuring that funding supports the growth of local enterprise and distinct high street offer

We are particularly interested in businesses that enhance the diversity, character, and resilience of Croydon's town and district centres.

Project Requirements

Projects must demonstrate that they are ready, deliverable, and capable of achieving impact within a short timeframe.

Applicants must:

- Applicants must be an existing Croydon-based businesses that occupy, a commercial unit in Croydon. Evidence of occupation, such as a signed lease or licence to occupy, will be required.
- Proposed refurbishment and fit-out works must begin within one month of receiving grant funding, demonstrating readiness to deliver and activate the unit without delay.
- Applicants must provide a minimum of three itemised quotes for all proposed works. These quotes will be reviewed and validated by the Council's appointed surveyor to ensure costs are appropriate, competitive, and represent value for money.

Projects should also:

- Clearly outline the scope of works, including refurbishment and fit-out activities
- Demonstrate how the unit will be made fully operational and open to the public
- Include a realistic timeline showing key milestones from start to completion

Preference will be given to applications that demonstrate a high level of readiness, clear planning and the ability to deliver improvements quickly, ensuring shopfront enhancements are implemented without delay.



Application Process

1. Expression of Interest (EOI)

Applicants are required to submit an initial Expression of Interest by email. This should provide a concise overview of your business and proposed project.

Your EOI should include:

- A brief overview of your business, including what you do and your target market
- Details of the existing commercial premises where the shopfront improvements will be carried out, including the address and current use
- An outline of how the grant funding will be used (e.g. fit-out, refurbishment, equipment)
- The expected impact of your project, including how it will contribute to footfall, local economy, or community benefit

The Expression of Interest is intended to be a short, high-level summary to assess initial eligibility and suitability.

Following submission, suitable applicants will be contacted by the Business Concierge team, at conciergebusinesssupport@croydon.gov.uk. This may include a site visit and/or meeting to better understand the proposal, assess readiness, and provide guidance on progressing to the next stage.

2. Full Application

Applicants who are successful at the EOI stage will be invited to submit a full application.

The full application will require more detailed information, including:

- Comprehensive business details, including trading history and operations
- A detailed activation proposal, outlining how the vacant unit will be refurbished and used
- A clear project timeline, including key milestones from start to completion
- A full budget breakdown, supported by a minimum of three quotes for proposed works
- Financial and viability information, such as accounts or forecasts demonstrating sustainability

At this stage, applicants will be expected to demonstrate that the project is well-developed, deliverable, and represents value for money.



3. How Applications are Assessed

All applications will be assessed by the Council's Economic Development Team against a set of core criteria to ensure funding is awarded to projects that deliver the greatest impact and are ready to proceed.

- Applications must clearly demonstrate alignment with the objectives of the Shop Front Improvement Grant, including improving the quality, appearance and accessibility of shopfronts, supporting the vitality of Croydon's high streets, and strengthening the local independent business offer.
- Impact: Applications will be assessed on the economic and community benefits of the proposed improvements, including their potential to increase footfall, enhance the attractiveness of the area, support local employment and contribute positively to the wider high street. Strong applications will demonstrate benefits beyond the individual business.
- Deliverability: We will consider whether the proposed improvements are realistic, well planned and ready to proceed, including a clear delivery timetable and confidence that works can commence shortly after funding is awarded and be completed within the agreed timeframe.
- Financial Viability: Applications must demonstrate that the business is financially sustainable, with evidence that it can continue trading and maintain the improvements beyond the grant period.
- Value for Money: We will assess whether the proposed use of funding is appropriate, justified and supported by competitive quotes, and whether it represents good value in relation to the expected visual, economic and community impact.

4. Refurbishment Works

The shopfront improvement grant process begins with applicants submitting a completed application form, details of the proposed shopfront works, budget estimates, supporting quotes and any necessary landlord or statutory permissions. Applications are checked for eligibility before progressing to a technical review, which assesses the quality, feasibility and suitability of the proposed improvements, including compliance with any relevant planning, conservation or highway requirements, alongside a financial assessment to confirm costs are realistic and represent value for money. Final approval is made by the Council, after which successful applicants enter into a grant agreement setting out approved costs, delivery milestones, evidence and reporting requirements. Grant funding may be released in instalments or on completion of agreed milestones, subject to verification of progress. Works are monitored to ensure compliance with grant conditions and appropriate use of funds, and the process concludes once the improvements have been completed as approved, final evidence has been provided, any remaining grant funding has been released, and the project is formally closed.



Refurbishment Works (Steps)

1. Application Made

Applicants must submit a completed application to Croydon Council. Applications must include

- A completed application form, a description of the proposed shopfront improvements (which may include simple sketches or a basic scope of works)
- Detailed budget estimates supported by quotations, and details of any permissions obtained or required, such as landlord consent, planning permission, listed building consent or building regulations approval, where applicable.

Upon receipt, the Council logs the application and issues a unique reference number.

2. Initial Eligibility Check

Following receipt of an application Croydon Council undertakes an initial eligibility assessment to confirm;

- Applicant eligibility, business location, compliance with the grant criteria, and completion of required verification checks.

Applications that do not meet the eligibility requirements will be rejected and the applicant notified. Eligible applications proceed to technical review.

3. Technical Review

Eligible applications are referred to the Council's appointed delivery partner Ayer Associates for technical assessment. This review considers the feasibility, quality and deliverability of the proposed shopfront improvements, including buildability, compliance with relevant planning or conservation requirements where applicable, and suitability of the proposed contractor.

Including:

- buildability considerations, including structural integrity, fire safety, and party wall matters where relevant;
- background and due-diligence checks on proposed contractor(s), including Companies House and relevant trade body checks, and any potential conflicts of interest;
- compliance with planning use class, planning policy, building regulations, and listed building requirements where applicable; and



- environmental and sustainability considerations.

A non-invasive site survey may be undertaken, with recommendations for further specialist assessment if required.

4. Financial Assessment

Ayer Associates undertakes a financial review to assess the robustness and affordability of the proposed project. This includes:

- reviewing the scope of works and associated budget to confirm that costs are realistic and appropriate;
- consideration of any additional funding required to ensure that works can be completed in full and in compliance with relevant standards; and
- assessment of overall value for money through a cost-benefit appraisal.

Based on this assessment, a recommended grant amount is determined.

5. Approval Decision

Croydon Council reviews the assessment outcomes and makes a final funding decision.

Decision:

Approved – application proceeds to grant agreement

Rejected – applicant notified with reasons

Waitlisted – application held subject to funding availability

6. Grant Agreement and Contracting

For approved applications, Ayer Associates prepares a grant agreement setting out:

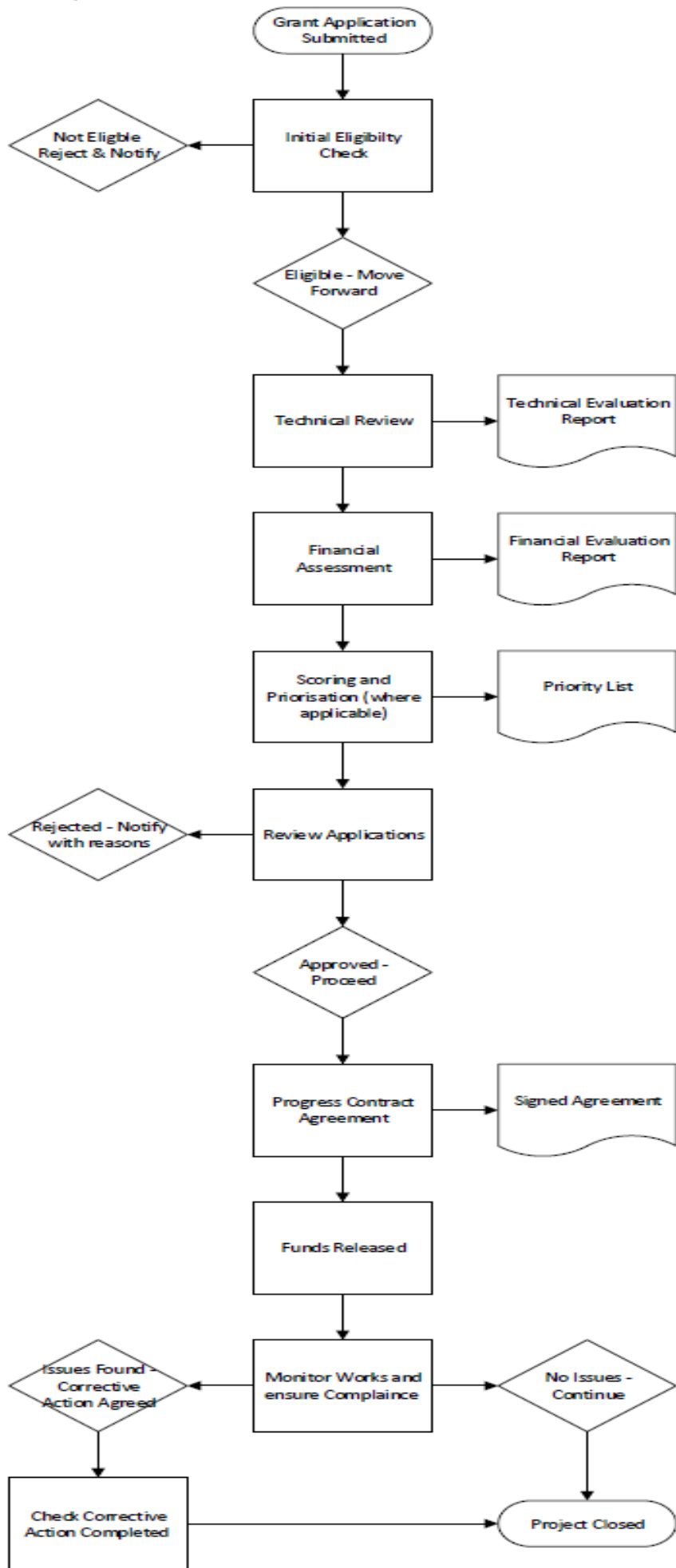
- The approved grant amount;
- the appointed contractor(s) undertaking the works;
- delivery milestones and interim payment arrangements; and
- monitoring and reporting requirements.

The applicant must formally accept the terms and sign the agreement before any funding is released.

7. Disbursement of Funds

Grant payments are released in line with the agreed payment structure, which may include:

- a partial upfront payment, where applicable;
- staged payments linked to agreed milestones and supported by valuation certificates issued by Ayer Associates; and
- a final payment upon satisfactory completion of the works and issue of a practical completion certificate.





Grant Conditions

Successful applicants will be required to comply with the following grant conditions to ensure public funding is used appropriately, delivers the intended outcomes, and represents value for money.

- Funding must be used strictly for the approved shopfront improvement works set out in the application, including capital costs such as shopfront works, signage, external decoration, lighting, accessibility and energy-efficiency improvements. Grant funding cannot be used for unapproved works or for any ongoing operational costs.
- All proposed works will be subject to review and verification by the Council's appointed surveyor or delivery partner, who will assess the scope, costs and suitability of the improvements to ensure they are appropriate and represent value for money.
- Applicants must demonstrate readiness to proceed, with all funded works required to commence 1 month after grant approval and be completed within the agreed project timeframe.
- Grant recipients must maintain clear and accurate financial records and provide evidence of expenditure, including invoices, receipts and proof of payment, upon request. Payments may be subject to verification, and the Council reserves the right to audit the use of grant funding.
- Applicants will be required to comply with monitoring and reporting requirements, which may include providing updates on progress, evidence of completed works, and information on outcomes such as improved appearance, increased footfall or wider benefits to the high street.
- As part of the grant agreement, successful applicants may be required to acknowledge the support of Croydon Council in promotional materials, signage or public communications where appropriate. The Council may also request access to the premises for site visits during and after delivery to verify progress and outcomes.
- Failure to comply with any of the grant conditions, including misuse of funds, unjustified delays, failure to cooperate with appointed surveyors, or failure to provide required evidence or reporting, may result in grant funding being withheld, withdrawn or recovered in whole or in part.

Submission Guidance

Applications for the Shop Front Improvement Grant will open in April 2026.

All applicants are required to submit an initial Expression of Interest (EOI) by email. This should provide a concise overview of your business and proposed project, enabling the Council to assess initial eligibility and suitability for the programme.

Expressions of Interest must be submitted to: conciergebusinesssupport@croydon.gov.uk

Your email should clearly outline:



- A brief overview of your business, including the nature of your products or services
- Details of the vacant unit you intend to occupy, including location and lease status
- An outline of how the grant funding will be used, including proposed refurbishment or fit-out works
- The anticipated impact of your project, including contribution to local footfall, employment, and high street activity

Please include the following in the subject line of your email:

Shop front improvement – Expression of Interest – [Business Name]

The Expression of Interest stage is intended to be a short, high-level submission. Applicants who demonstrate a strong fit with the programme will be contacted by the Council's Economic Development Business Support Team and may be invited to progress to the full application stage.

FAQs

Question	Answer
How much funding can I apply for?	Up to £5,000 per business subject to eligibility and available funding
Do I need a lease before applying?	You must occupy, or be close to occupying, a commercial unit in Croydon. Evidence such as a signed lease or licence to occupy may be requested.
Can I apply for multiple units?	No, applications are limited to one unit per business.
How long does the process take?	Applicants will be notified following assessment of Expressions of Interest and full applications. Timescales may vary depending on demand and the complexity of proposals.
What can the grant be used for?	The grant can be used for capital shopfront improvement works only, including shopfronts, signage, windows and doors, external decoration and lighting, accessibility improvements and energy efficiency measures. It cannot be used for rent, salaries, utilities or other ongoing operational costs.
Can I apply if my business is not yet trading?	No, Yes. Start-ups may apply where they can demonstrate a clear, viable business plan and readiness to trade from the premises.
Do I need to provide quotes?	Yes, a minimum of three itemised quotes is required. These will be validated by the Council's appointed surveyor.
When do the works need to start?	Works must begin within one month of receiving funding.



Question	Answer
What happens after I submit an Expression of Interest?	Suitable applicants will be contacted by the Economic Development Business Support Team and may be invited to submit a full application.
Will I receive the funding upfront?	Payment arrangements will be confirmed upon approval and may be subject to verification of works and expenditure.
What happens if my project is delayed?	Delays must be communicated to the Council. Unjustified delays may affect funding.
Can I apply if I already occupy a unit?	Yes. The grant is open to existing Croydon based businesses seeking to improve their shopfronts.
Will I need to report on outcomes?	Yes. Successful applicants will be required to provide monitoring information, including evidence of completed works and the impact of the improvements.

Further Support

For further information or support with your application, please contact:

conciergebusinesssupport@croydon.gov.uk