



SME Business Support Grant Guidelines

Business Link Pacific

January 2023

What are the BLP Business Support Grants?

Business Link Pacific (BLP) is a private sector development programme delivered by DT Global and funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT).

This document outlines the eligibility criteria and application process for the Business Support Grants for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in participating Pacific Island countries. The document provides information to help SMEs understand the process for application, and the resources available to assist with preparing grant applications for submission, review and approval.

The Business Support Grants are designed to stimulate SME growth, innovation, access to finance, and investment in social inclusion and climate adaptation. SMEs in Pacific Islands Countries (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Tonga and Vanuatu) can present proposals that meet the criteria of at least 1 of the following 5 categories:

1. **Innovation:** grant will be used to drive innovation within the business
2. **Growth:** grant will be used to drive business growth
3. **Inclusion:** grant will be used to increase inclusiveness within and by the business
4. **Climate:** grant will mitigate, adapt or increase resilience to climate change
5. **Finance:** grant will be used to secure additional finance e.g. equity for a loan

More information about the categories can be found on the BLP website.

BLP will evaluate grants from SMEs with up to 50 employees, and we encourage applications from women, youth, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

The Business Support Grants are managed by BLP, with the assistance of the BLP network of local business advisory service providers (BASPs), Chambers of Commerce and other private sector organisations (PSOs) and are funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT).

What funding is available?

Grants will be awarded based on business size. As a guide, businesses with up to 5 employees are eligible for grants up to NZD 5,000 equivalent, and up to 10 employees are eligible for up to NZD 10,000 equivalent. Businesses with 20 employees or more can apply for grants up to NZD 20,000 equivalent. For businesses with up to 50 employees, grants up to NZD 30,000 equivalent.

BLP's local PSO partners (including the Chambers of Commerce in each country) will assist with the submission of applications. Interested applicants should contact their local PSO1, can complete a free business diagnostic and access business advisory support from a BLP approved business advisory service provider (BASP) to support the submission of the grant application, review their business plan, financial information, and forecasting.

¹ Please refer to the BLP website www.businesslinkpacific.com to find your local BLP contacts.

Who can apply?

An owner or authorized manager of a business that meets the requirements of the following business and project eligibility criteria can apply for a Business Support Grant. SMEs who previously applied or received grants from Business Link Pacific are now eligible to apply again.

Business Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for a grant, the applicant business must meet the following criteria:

1. Be an existing business currently operating in the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Niue, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu or Vanuatu.
2. Have a business license and/or registration as required to operate in their country.
3. Employ less than 50 people.
4. Be in compliance with all tax requirements and payment obligations.
5. Not be in arrears with loan repayments or be adhering to an agreed payment plan.
6. Not be subject to any bankruptcy proceedings.
7. Not primarily trade in alcohol, drugs, tobacco, gambling, firearms or other harmful substances (see IFC policy²)
8. Have no conflicting affiliation with DT Global, national Government or New Zealand Government. Any potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed in the application form.
9. Applications from businesses with at least 50% ownership by national citizens will be given preference for support over foreign owned businesses.

Project Eligibility

Grant funding can be used for a variety of purposes, including (but not limited to):

- Purchasing materials or equipment
- Working capital (e.g. buying stock)
- Cash equity to secure loan finance

Grant funds are not intended to be used to cover existing day-to-day operating expenses, such as payroll, rent, loan repayments, or pay for business advisory services etc.

² https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/topics_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/sustainability-at-ifc/company-resources/ifcexclusionlist

When do applications open and close?

Applications for Business Support Grants will open on a rolling basis and are promoted through BLP's local PSO partners.

What is the application process?

Applications will be made online through the BLP website. Online access and support to submit grant applications will be available through BLP's local PSO partners.

Applicants who are unable to access the online application should contact their local BLP representative or email grants@businesslinkpacific.com for assistance with their application.

Application process:

1. Check BLP website for updates on grants available in your area.
2. Review eligibility criteria to determine if you can apply.
3. Identify your grant idea, choose grant category for your application.
4. Contact the local BLP representative for application assistance.

The steps from application to grant approval and payment are as follows:

Step 1. Contact BLP's local partner to conduct a business diagnostic and discuss your needs for the application process.

Step 2. Complete the application form. With the support of BLP's local partner **complete all sections** of the online application form. Save your work as you progress through it, you can return to the online form at any time.

Step 3. Submit the application The completed grant application is submitted to BLP, you will receive a confirmation email to the email address provided in the application. Please note, unsubmitted applications will not be assessed. **Be sure to submit your application!**

Step 4. Application Assessment. The Grant Assessment Panel will review the completed application and supporting documentation and if necessary, will make further recommendation to the applicant. The panel will provide grant approval when all requirements are completed.

Step 5. Successful Applications. If approved by the Grant Assessment Panel, **BLP will contact successful grant recipients to confirm grant payment and next steps.**

Step 6. Successful applicants agree to complete periodic feedback surveys at 6, 12 and 18 months after the grant has been approved or payment has been made.

What business documentation will I need to apply?

The following business information will be needed for completion of the grant application. If all this information is not available or is incomplete, BLP's local PSO partner can assist and a BLP-approved business advisory service provider can work with you to complete the application.

- Registered name of business (and trading name if applicable);
- Location of business and contact details (ex: town, region/district, country);
- Business size (annual revenue) and number of employees (which will be verified),
- Details of business owners, gender of owners and their contact details;
- Business license documentation and/or registration number;
- Business activity such as the products and services you trade, target market you serve and general business sector (ex: tourism, manufacturing, professional services, retail etc)
- Tax status and tax returns, quarterly sales and financial statements (most recent or last financial year), and profitability (earnings before interest and tax).
- Business plan: how are you planning to use the grant to grow, innovate, access finance, invest in inclusion and/or climate adaptation?
- Impact of the grant: including employment and job retention, job creation, forecasts for your business growth, expected turnover etc.
- Grant usage and budget: Amount request, detailed budget of grant usage and expenses. A detailed budget for how the grant will be used is required.
- Additional financial resources: any other resources you'll be using or accessing to carry out your grant project (e.g. bank loans, government assistance, loans from family or friends, or other grants).

How will applications be assessed?

The Grant Assessment Panel will consider the extent to which the application:

1. Provides a compelling and viable description of what the business will do and why, including the extent to which this project will achieve the intended impacts.
2. Describes how the business will implement the grant project and shows adequate consideration of the activities, timelines and resourcing required.
3. Represents value for money, in terms of business performance, improved efficiencies, increased employment and other intended impacts.
4. Contributes to business growth, innovation, access to finance, and investment in social inclusion and/or climate adaptation, adaptation, mitigation, or green growth.