



Background

Bedford was one of the first 12 towns in the UK to receive funds for the Portas Pilot initiative.

The Bedford Portas Pilot Town Team is made up of committed people from across the town that share an appetite for change and want to see Bedford thrive. Members include Bedford Borough Council, The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford as well as individual retailers, landlords, local press and the Bedford Business Improvement District who represents 575 levy paying businesses in Bedford Town Centre working to welcome customers, investors and tourists to Bedford

Bedford Portas Town Team won £51,000 to promote the High Street and to date a number of activities have been undertaken including the decoration of empty shop windows along the High Street, supporting a window dressing competition, the Big High Street Showcase event on July 27th as well as training courses for businesses and social media promotions. Last year, a consultation event highlighted criticism of too many vacant units and charity shops on the high street.

Opportunity

The Bedford Town Team has allocated £15,000 of the Mary Portas funds to encourage entrepreneurs onto the High Street. Applicants can only apply for one grant up to a value, of one of two categories:-

1. Start-up grants up to £2k to new businesses that have signed a minimum of 1 year lease with no break clauses.
2. Pop-up tenants up to £500 for set up costs

Grants will be provided to 'start-up businesses and pop ups' (not for landlords with empty properties) in the town who can demonstrate a benefit by helping to create a busy, safe and attractive High Street that draws people from the local community and beyond as well as a tangible benefit which the town team can use to support the town and its on-going reputation and promotion. Ideas to be discussed at application.

The awarding of grants is at the sole discretion of the Town Team against set eligibility criteria (see below).

Grants **will not be awarded to businesses or pop ups that are deemed to be in direct competition with or similar to, businesses already trading in the locality.**

Start Up Grants – Eligibility Criteria

- a) Provide proof of a signed lease, minimum 1 year with no break clauses;
- b) Provide proof of business and public liability insurance;
- c) Provide an overview of a business and/or marketing plan;
- d) Provide evidence of any necessary legal or licensing requirement for the business;
- e) Provide a budget of what the funding is to be used for.

Pop Up Grants – Eligibility Criteria

- a) Provide proof of a signed agreement with the Landlord/Agent of the property for a minimum period of 2 weeks;
- b) Provide a budget of what the funding is to be used for;
- c) Provide an overview of a business and/or marketing plan;
- d) Provide evidence of any necessary legal or licensing requirement for the activity;
- e) Provide proof of public liability insurance;
- f) Consider health and safety implications of the activity;
- g) Provide feedback and evaluation including visitor numbers and photographs.

Please note: the registered business ratepayer/landlord may decide to pass on his liability for the Business Rates and apportioned Business Improvement District levy. It is the responsibility of the impending 'tenant' to clarify these payments in advance of their occupation. For more information on the BedfordBID levy, contact BedfordBID on 01234 404500.

Grant Payments

Grants will be paid retrospectively, requiring proof of expenditure by the submission of receipts and paid invoices. Pop-up grants will be pro-rated depending on the length i.e. 6 weeks gets the full £500, 3 weeks gets £250, 2 weeks £200 etc.

Grants are to be used for start-up costs only as set out below:

- 1) Marketing & Advertising – advertisements, business cards, window displays, uniforms, signage etc.;
- 2) Property Improvements – fit out, fixtures and fittings, decoration, wheelchair access, external signage/window graphics etc.;
- 3) Training – customer service, finance, other job specific etc.

Marketing/PR

There should be no reference to this grant in ANY media form without the express approval of Bedford Town Team through Christina Rowe as Chair christina@lovebedford.co.uk

The grant should be referred to as the Portas Pilot Bedford Start-Up/Pop Up grants with the Portas Pilot Bedford logo (attached).

All and any references in social media should use the term Portas Pilot Bedford Start-Up/Pop Up grants.

All PR material and press releases by third parties should be issued only with the approval of Bedford Town Team through Christina Rowe as Chair christina@lovebedford.co.uk

No relationship with third parties or media organisations which could impact on Portas Pilot Bedford should be entered into without the express approval of Christina Rowe as Chair.

The standard boiler plate used for 'Any Notes to Editors' should include:

The Bedford Portas Town Team is a group of volunteers including , Bedford Borough Council, and BedfordBID which represents 575 levy paying businesses in Bedford Town Centre.

The Bedford Portas Town Team includes High Street businesses, community groups and media who work together with the town to make Bedford better.

Projects have included: retailer training courses, "wrapping" empty shops, a creative consultation event, start-up business grants, #citizenbedford social media campaign, plus support for town centre events including the Big High Street Showcase.