



Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) Omicron - Guidance for Applicants

In response to the impact of the Covid19 Omicron variant on some businesses the Government has provided an additional allocation of Additional Restriction Grant (ARG) for local Authorities alongside the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG).

Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG).

Limited funding for the ARG has been provided to Northumberland County Council as a one-off lump sum payment from the Government for the current financial year (2021/22).

Although the Council has discretion in the allocation of the ARG, the total funds are limited and so criteria must be set to ensure consistency in the allocation of these finite financial resources provided to the Council by Government.

Northumberland County Council will provide financial support to certain businesses impacted by the Omicron variant that are not eligible for financial support under the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG) because they are outside of the business rates system, as well as providing support to those businesses operating in the supply chain of the identified sectors. The scheme will include a one-off payment to taxi drivers licenced by Northumberland County Council.

Unfortunately, the Council will not be able to extend support to all businesses in the County, given the financial constraints, but we are aiming to deliver this scheme as quickly as possible to those businesses within the criteria set out below.

The ARG Omicron scheme will run from 17 January 2022 to noon 28 February 2022, whilst funds last.

The Council reserves the right to close or vary the terms of this ARG scheme at any time, and without notice, should it be necessary to do so. The Council reserves the right to close the scheme earlier than advertised if all funds are exhausted.

Due to a limited availability of funding, applications will be verified and approved in the order in which they are submitted and all outstanding queries have been resolved. Failure to supply all necessary evidence in a timely fashion where requested may result in the approval of your application being delayed. As a result your application may be rejected as the limited funding may have been fully

allocated, or we may have reached the funding deadline by which we can make any further payments.

Scope of the ARG Omicron

Who can apply?

The grant is aimed at:

- businesses operating in the hospitality, hotel, registered bed and breakfast and leisure sectors which do not have a rateable value but still incur non-residential* commercial fixed property costs of over £200 per month
- businesses which directly supply businesses in the hospitality, hotel, bed and breakfast and leisure sectors which incur non-residential* commercial fixed property costs of over £200 per month
- Self-employed taxi and private hire drivers licensed by Northumberland County Council

Businesses must satisfy all of the following criteria:

- Be located in and operating within Northumberland;
- Not be classed as "home-based" (with the exception of registered B&Bs);
- Demonstrate a minimum of £200 per month (£2,400 per annum) non-residential* commercial fixed property costs;
- Demonstrate they were severely impacted by the effects of the Omicron variant;
- Demonstrate they were trading for a period of at least 3 months leading up to and including the 30 December 2021
- Not be eligible for a grant under the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant
- For businesses in the hospitality, hotel, bed and breakfast and leisure sectors they must have been:
 - Providing services in person to customers from the premises;
 - Occupying non-residential* business premises without a Rateable Value
- For self-employed taxi drivers they must have a current licence with Northumberland County Council, and have held it over the period including 30 December
- Businesses that were in administration, are insolvent or where a striking-off notice has been made are not eligible for funding under this scheme.
- Businesses that, were they to receive grant payments under this scheme, breach State Aid or UK Subsidy Control rules are not eligible for funding under this scheme.

Grant Awards

The level of grant funding available to an eligible business will be calculated based on the business' Rateable Value (RV) or, if it has no RV, the RV Proxy**, with the exception of Taxi drivers.

Indicative one-off grant levels are as follows:

Rateable Value (Or RV Proxy)	Grant
Licensed Taxi Drivers	£200
£15,000 and under	£1,500
Above £15,000 – under £51,000	£2,500
£51,000 and above	£4,000

To ensure the grant can be received by as many businesses as possible, licenced taxi drivers will receive a single one-off payment of £200 and registered B&Bs will receive the grant level for RV Proxy** below £15k.

Application Process

This ARG funding scheme must be applied for by means of an online application form, available on Northumberland County Council's website.

The online form guides businesses through the application process and prompts applicants for the information required, as well as any supporting documents needed (see 'Evidence to support application' below).

All applicants will be required to demonstrate their business income has been severely impacted by the Omicron variant as part of the application process. The applicant must make a declaration regarding this, which can be substantiated with evidence. The Council may write to ask for additional supporting documentation where necessary.

Queries regarding this scheme can be addressed to the County Council at the following dedicated email address: Covid19@advancenorthumberland.co.uk

Businesses can submit an application for each eligible business property that they operate from within Northumberland. Each property requires a separate application. Some businesses may, therefore, receive more than one grant payment. A successful application for one property does not guarantee the same business a successful application for any additional properties. State Aid and Subsidy Control rules will apply to single and multiple applications.

Evidence Required to Support the Application

Businesses are required to submit the following evidence to support their application:

All businesses:

- The address of the property from which they operate.
- Bank statement prove business was operating on relevant dates (a full statement including legible name, account number and sort code. Screen shots will not be accepted)
- Narrative of how they have been severely impacted by the Omicron variant
- Evidence demonstrating a minimum of £200 per month (£2,400 per annum) of commercial, on-going fixed property costs (e.g current legible copy of signed premises' lease, licence or other formal rental agreement, or commercial mortgage clearly showing the rental cost)

Businesses with an RV

- Latest NNDR statement from Northumberland County Council (even if "Nil" payable) showing the business rates reference number
- Suppliers will be asked to supply evidence of on-going supply directly with hospitality, accommodation and leisure businesses, e.g. three current or recent contracts or invoices.

Businesses without an RV

- Current legible copy of signed premises' lease, licence or other formal rental agreement, or commercial mortgage (RV Proxy) clearly showing the rental cost.
- Current legible copy of one of the following:
 - o premises insurance
 - o fire certificate
 - o registration with regulatory services (e.g. Northumberland County Council for all Food businesses)
- Registered B&Bs a Council tax reference number.
- Unique Taxpayer Reference

Licensed taxi drivers

- Name of applicant / licensed driver
- Northumberland County Council driver licence number

This will be part of the online application process.

Northumberland County Council may require additional evidence to the above.

Variation to the fund

The Council reserves the right to close or vary the terms of the schemes at any time, and without notice, should it be necessary to do so.

If the fund is oversubscribed with the applications received, the Council reserves the right to amend the grant levels and the scheme will close earlier than advertised if all funds are exhausted.

Appeals

There is no appeal process. Applicants whose applications are rejected may request a review. The review will be carried out by an officer who was not involved in the original decision and will be based on the information submitted in the application. The decision of the review is final. Details about how to request a review will be provided to every applicant whose application is rejected and must be requested within 2 working days of receiving this communication.

Managing the risk of fraud

Neither the Government nor Northumberland County Council will accept deliberate manipulation and fraud - and any business caught falsifying their records to gain grant money will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to claw back, as may any grants paid in error.

It is important that applicants ensure that they provide accurate bank details for grant payments and that these relate to the business concerned.

Definitions Guidance

*with the exception of registered B&Bs

** **RV Proxy** means the annual payment under a premises' lease, license or other formal rental agreement, or commercial mortgage for those who own their own premises.

Directly Supplying means providing services for which an invoice would be issued to the business being supplied.

Home based – 'home based' businesses are not eligible for this fund and eligibility requires the demonstration of fixed non-residential property costs of at least £200 per month (with the exception of registered B&Bs).

Public-facing means a business that primarily interacts directly with public customers / consumers on its premises.

Severely impacted means a negative financial impact to the net income of a business.

Hospitality means a business whose main function is to provide a venue for the consumption and sale of food and drink

Leisure is a business that provides opportunities, experiences and facilities, in particular for culture, recreation, entertainment, celebratory events, days and nights out, betting and gaming

Accommodation, for the purposes of this grant, is a business whose main lodging provision is used for holiday, travel and other purposes and where in-person service is provided. Self-catering holiday lets that are not in the business rates system are not eligible for this grant.

Registered bed and breakfast refers to businesses providing Bed & Breakfast accommodation (accommodation in rooms which are serviced daily and offer the option of breakfast cooked by the proprietor) that are registered with Northumberland County Council food hygiene rating scheme as a food business and are registered with organisations such as Northumberland Tourism, Visit Northumberland or Visit England.

Trading - business is considered to be trading if it is engaged in business activity. This should be interpreted as carrying on a trade or profession, or buying and selling goods or services in order to generate turnover, for example managing accounts, preparing for reopening, planning and implementing COVID safe measures, or trading online.