

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FOR THE BUILDING RESILIENT INNOVATION FOR DIGITAL & GREEN ENTERPRISES (BRIDGE) GRANTS PROGRAMME

APPLICATION PROCESS AND EVALUATION

Q1: When is the deadline for applications?

A1: The deadline for Applications is November 9, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. (Barbados time). Please refer to the Guidelines and Procedures for the BRIDGE Grant and the Application Form for further submission details.

Q2: How long is the evaluation process?

A2: The estimated duration of the evaluation process is thirty (30) working days commencing the first working day following the deadline of the Call for Proposal (November 9, 2025). All applications submitted under this Call will be reviewed for eligibility. Eligible proposals will be evaluated by a committee against established criteria, Financial Capacity, Relevance, Effectiveness and Feasibility, Scalability, and Cost Effectiveness.

Refer to the Guidelines and Procedures of the Building Resilient Innovation for Digital & Green Enterprises (BRIDGE) Grants Programme for further details.

Q3: How many grants will be awarded?

A3: Grants are awarded competitively using the established criteria and rankings and not on a first-come, first-served basis. The number of grants will depend on the quality and funding requirements of proposals received.

Q4: Can I submit more than one proposal?

A4: Yes. A firm may submit more than one proposal; however, only one grant per company will be awarded per company under this Call.

Q5: Should the applicant declaration be certified by a Justice of Peace?

A5: No. Notarisation is not required for the Applicant declaration form, However, supporting documents such as the Certificate of incorporation or Registration should be notarized and Bank Statements should be stamped and certified by the applicant's bank

Q6: If my project combines both digital and green elements, which grant should I apply for?

A6: Applicants should select the facility that best represents the primary focus of the project. For example, if the project is mainly about reducing energy costs through solar, apply under Green. If it's about ERP systems with a minor efficiency gain, apply under Digital.

Q7: What does the term “implementation period” mean in relation to the BRIDGE Grant?

A7: The implementation period refers to the timeframe during which project activities will be executed, including procurement, training, consultancy, and reporting.

Q8: When does the implementation period commence?

A8: All contracts must be signed by December 31, 2025, and project implementation will begin in January 2026.

Q9: What are the disbursement arrangements?

A9: Funds are disbursed to the beneficiaries of a grant in three tranches, after the grant contract is signed by both parties. The first two tranches are advanced payments, whilst the final tranche is done on a reimbursable basis. For more information, please refer to Annex IV Procurement and Disbursement Procedures.

- First Tranche Disbursement - 40%
- Second Tranche Disbursement – 40%
- Final Tranche Disbursement - 20% (*the final tranche is disbursed on a reimbursement basis*)

Q10: If I am purchasing a piece of equipment that is EURO 20 000, and the supplier requires 50% down payment, how do I pay for this if I am receiving the grant in tranches?

A10: Applicants are required to provide counterpart funding for all project expenses. When purchasing equipment, you should make arrangements with your supplier so that the payment schedule aligns with the grant's tranche disbursement structure (40% - 40% - 20%). Please note that under EU rules, no more than 20% of the EU's contribution to the total project cost may be allocated to the purchase of capital goods.

Q11: What financial verification documents are required?

A11: Two years of certified financial statements and certified bank statements from the issuing bank (not notarized).

Q12: Should quotations or proforma invoices for any equipment or services to be procured be attached to the application?

A12: No, quotations or proforma invoices are not required at the application stage.

Q13: When will applicants be notified of the results?

A13: Applicants will be notified in early December 2025. Project implementation begins in January 2026.

ELIGIBILITY AND REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Q14: Are start-ups eligible to apply, and how will applications be handled if a business has recently registered but has been operating informally before?

A14: No. Start-ups are not eligible to apply under the BRIDGE Grant Programme. To qualify, firms must be legally registered and operating for at least two (2) years in one of the eligible CARIFORUM countries: Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, or Trinidad and Tobago. Businesses that were operating informally before registration do not meet the eligibility requirements. Applicants must provide two years of financial statements (income statement and balance sheet) to verify continuous operations since registration.

Q15: Are sole traders eligible or partnerships eligible?

A15: Yes, if legally registered and operating for at least two (2) years with valid financial statements and met all the other eligibility criteria.

Q16: Can non-profit organizations apply?

A16: Non-profit organizations, including chambers of commerce, cooperatives, and industry associations, are **not eligible** to apply under this Call. The BRIDGE Grant is open only to legally registered private sector firms that meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the Guidelines and Procedures.

Q17: Can an online-only business apply?

A17: Yes, provided that the business can meet all of the eligibility criteria for the call.

Q18: Can foreign-owned firms apply?

A18: Yes, provided the firm is legally registered and operates in a CARIFORUM member state and the benefits of the project accrue to the region.

Q19: My business name or registration type has changed recently. Would it be okay to send a certificate with the change of name, or do you need the original registration certificate as well?

A19: You will be required to submit both the current certificate of registration or incorporation and the original certificate showing the name that was changed.

Q20: If registration is in progress, will a receipt from the Companies Office be accepted?

A20: No. Applications can only be accepted once legal registration is complete, and a valid certificate of registration or incorporation is available. A receipt showing that registration is pending will not meet the eligibility criteria.

Q21: What are the eligibility requirements for sector-specific firms (e.g., processing, packaging, etc.)?

A21: Firms in all productive sectors may apply if their projects focus on digital or green transition activities that enhance competitiveness and sustainability.

Q22: Is a company that has achieved strong local sales and is beginning to export eligible for the grant, particularly if it packages food products and has confirmed overseas orders?

A22: Yes. MSMEs with proven local operations and export potential are encouraged to apply. The project should demonstrate how BRIDGE funding will support export readiness, such as achieving product certification, improving production efficiency, or enhancing digital logistics and e-commerce capabilities.

Q23: Are joint applications or consortiums allowed?

A23: Yes. Consortium or joint applications are permitted, provided that the lead applicant meets all eligibility criteria. The roles, responsibilities, and financial contributions of each partner must be clearly defined in the proposal. Please note that only the lead applicant will sign the grant contract.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND CO-FINANCING

Q24: Does the grant cover activities that have already been undertaken?

A24: No, there is no retroactivity; activities undertaken or costs incurred before the applicant is awarded a grant are not eligible for disbursement.

Q25: Are taxes (e.g., VAT, GCT, customs duties, tariffs) paid by the BRIDGE Grant?

A25 No. Taxes and other government-imposed fees are not eligible expenses under Caribbean Export's (EU-funded) contribution to the BRIDGE Grant. However, beneficiaries may include these costs as part of their 40% counterpart contribution, provided they are directly related to the approved project activities.

Q26: Can the 40% co-financing come from a loan or third party?

A26: Yes. The required 40% co-financing contribution may come from various sources, including the applicant's own funds, a bank loan, private investor, or another third-party financier. However, **in-kind contributions** (such as staff time, equipment use, or donated materials) are **not eligible** as part of the co-financing.

Q27: What are "capital goods" under the 20% limit rule?

A27: Capital goods refer to durable assets such as machinery, solar panels, and equipment used in the production or delivery of goods. The specific types of capital goods eligible for support may vary depending on the nature and objectives of each project. Under the BRIDGE Grant Facility, applicants may allocate no more than 20% of the EU's contribution toward the purchase of such items. However, additional capital goods may be financed through the applicant's 40% co-financing contribution, provided they are directly linked to the project's intended results. When planning these purchases, applicants are encouraged to factor in maintenance, servicing, and repair costs to ensure sustainability and continued value from the investment

Q28: What happens if my project finishes under budget?

A28: Only actual eligible costs incurred will be financed under the BRIDGE Grant. If your project finishes under budget, unused funds may be reallocated to other eligible project activities or costs within the approved project scope, subject to Caribbean Export's prior written approval. Any remaining unutilized funds after final reporting cannot be claimed or disbursed.

Q29: What level of detail is expected in the financial capacity section

A29: Applicants must demonstrate sufficient liquidity or financial ability to meet co-financing Bank statements, and recent financial statements will be used to confirm this.

Q30: Can a group of companies or a parent company submit financial statements for a subsidiary?

A30: No, the named applicant must submit their financial statements.

INELIGIBLE & ELIGIBLE COSTS

Q31: Is the procurement of consumables such as packaging materials (bottles and labels etc.) eligible?

A31: No. The purchase of raw materials, consumables, or packaging items such as bottles, labels, and promotional materials is not eligible under the BRIDGE Grant.

Q32: Are salaries or stipends for staff eligible?

A32: No. Staff salaries, stipends, and bonuses are not eligible costs

Q33: Can I use grant funds to construct or renovate buildings?

A33: No. Construction, renovation, or purchase of real estate is not eligible.

Q34: Are consulting firms or subcontractors eligible if they are implementing infrastructure (e.g., an alternative energy transformation)?

A34: Yes. Consulting firms or subcontractors may be engaged under the BRIDGE Grant if their work forms part of the approved project activities. In such cases, their professional service fees may be considered eligible consultant costs, even where the work involves implementation of physical infrastructure. However, any equipment or installation costs associated with that work will be treated as capital goods and must comply with the rule that no more than 20% of the EU's contribution can be allocated to capital expenditure.

Q35: What other costs are eligible beyond capital goods?

A35: Eligible costs include consultancy fees, digital systems, software, renewable energy audits, certifications, and training directly tied to project execution. For detailed guidance on eligible and ineligible expenses, please refer to the **BRIDGE Guidelines and Procedures** document available on the Caribbean Export website

Please refer to *Section 2.4 – Ineligible Project Expenses* of the Guidelines & Procedures for further details.

INNOVATION, SUSTAINABILITY, AND PROJECT DESIGN

Q36: How strict are the “innovation” requirements for BRIDGE projects?

A36: Projects must demonstrate a clear transformative impact within the enterprise — whether through digital innovation (e.g., AI integration, automation, advanced software systems) or green innovation (e.g., renewable energy adoption, circular economy models, or resource efficiency technologies). Generic activities such as developing a basic website,

running social media ads, or purchasing standard office equipment will not be considered innovative and are therefore ineligible in project areas.

Q37: Can grant funds be used for pilot projects or prototypes?

Q37: Yes, provided the pilot/ prototype is directly tied to the company's operations and demonstrates clear potential for scale and/ or improved competitiveness and productivity.

Q38: How will sustainability be assessed for BRIDGE projects?

A38: Sustainability will be evaluated based on measurable and lasting outcomes achieved throughout the project. For Green Transition initiatives, this may include indicators such as energy saved, emissions reduced, or water conserved. For Digital Transformation projects, sustainability may be demonstrated through efficiency gains, reduced resource consumption, improved competitiveness, or long-term operational resilience.

Applicants are encouraged to review the evaluation grid outlined in the *BRIDGE Guidelines and Procedures* for detailed assessment criteria.

Q39: What if my business is seasonal or export-dependent, how should I plan Project timelines?

A39: Applicants should structure project activities with realistic timelines, factoring in seasonality, procurement delays, and cash flow for co-financing.

Q40: What is meant by “resource efficiency” and “frugal/nature-based innovation”?

A40: Resource efficiency means using materials and energy efficiently to reduce waste and cost. Frugal/nature-based innovation involves simple, sustainable solutions using local or natural resources.

CLUSTER AND PARTNERSHIP APPLICATIONS

Q41: Can I partner with another firm to apply for the grant?

A41: Yes. Applicants may submit a joint proposal in partnership with another firm. However, each partner must independently meet the applicable eligibility criteria outlined in the Call for Applications. A lead firm must be clearly identified in the application and meet all eligibility criteria. Applicable criteria for the partnering firm are:

- Minimum 2 years of operations, supported by financial statements for the last two years
- Must be exporting or demonstrate credible export potential

Under the BRIDGE Grant Programme, partnerships with EU firms are recognized and strongly encouraged; however, the lead firm will be responsible for submitting the proposal, managing and executing the grant agreement, and serving as the main point of contact throughout the project's implementation.

Q42: Can clusters apply for the BRIDGE Grant?

A42: The cluster's legally registered association or a lead firm may apply under the BRIDGE Grant. Unregistered groups or informal associations are not eligible to apply directly.

The application must include documentation showing:

- The composition of the cluster (list of member firms)
- The roles and responsibilities of each participating company
- Evidence of collaboration, such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or partnership letter

Only the lead applicant will sign the grant contract and be accountable for project execution and reporting.

Q43: Should we submit consolidated financial statements or individual financials for each member?

A43: Each participating company in the cluster must submit its own financial statements confirming at least two years of operations. Consolidated cluster financials are not required, but the lead applicant/cluster association must demonstrate sufficient financial capacity to manage and implement the project.

Q44: What is the minimum or maximum number of companies required for a cluster application?

A44: There is no fixed minimum or maximum number of companies for a cluster application. However, the cluster must be clearly structured, demonstrate shared objectives, and show mutual benefits for all members involved in the project.

Q45: What level of auditing or financial review is expected for clusters?

A45: Clusters must maintain transparent records for all activities and expenditures. Depending on the project's value and risk level, Caribbean Export may require an independent financial verification or audit upon completion. Specific reporting and audit requirements are detailed in the Grant Contract.

Q46: Is there any concession for clusters that are in the process of registering as a not-for-profit entity and can show proof of intent to incorporate?

A46: No. The applicant must be legally registered at the time of application to be eligible.

PROCUREMENT

Q47: Can goods (e.g. equipment, tools etc.) and services (e.g. consultant, etc.) be purchased from Non-African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), European Union (EU) member countries, the USA and Canada?

A47: Yes, you can buy goods and services from anywhere in the world, and the Rules of Origin don't apply. Please note that the European Union's contribution is subject to a limitation: no more than 20% of its contribution to the total project cost may be allocated to the purchase of Capital Goods.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For full details on eligibility, application procedures, and evaluation criteria, applicants are encouraged to carefully review the following documents available on www.carib-export.com:

- BRIDGE Guidelines and Procedures
- Procurement and Disbursement Procedures
- Application Form and Budget Template

If you have additional questions not addressed in this FAQ or in the documents listed above, please contact the BRIDGE Grants Team at: grants@carib-export.com