Grants Update

Allocation, timing and eligibility

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Exchange For Change announced grants for independent retailers in April 2026

Recap of Grants commitment:

- **£60m in grant funding to help up to 10,000 small, independent retailers** meet the cost of installing Reverse Vending Machines.
- **Grants of £6,000 will be made available per site** to qualifying small, independent retailers in **three annual payments of £2,000**, which will be funded three months after launch / the installation of an RVM.
- The intention of the grants was to **help retailers of different sizes make the best choice for their business, whether that's installing an RVM or applying for an exemption**.

Allocation and timing

We propose to distribute grants across 3 distinct allocations:

Allocation	# of Grants	Timing	Details
G1 Rural	4,000	• Opens in January in line with Ph2 Registration	• Split across Rural and Urban to ensure fair distribution of grants and develop a robust national return point network
G2 Urban	4,000	• Intended opening window of 3 months, may close early if allocation is used and may be extended if required	• Intended to encourage early registration and readiness amongst retailers • Successful applicants in this window will be requested to show proof of order before scheme launch in order that those not following through can be released back into G3 allocation • Those who are unsuccessful in this round or are unaware of the opportunity will have a further opportunity for grant access in G3
G3 Targeted	2,000	• Intended to open in Summer 2027 • Open as long as required. EFC retain ability to open and close this window as needed to ensure a fair allocation of grants	• Provides a further opportunity to offer grants to: - Sites which may initially opt for an exemption and seek to change their mind - Sites which are initially unaware of grants - Sites which are unsuccessful in G1 / G2 • Can be targeted to support robust geographical coverage with better visibility of return point mapping • Distinct eligibility criteria from G1 / G2, which will be determined by EFC once better information is in place following the initial allocations

If there is insufficient uptake of grants in the initial G1 and G2 allocations then any remaining grants from these allocations will be added into G3.

Allocation across nations

Within the G1 and G2 allocations (total 8,000), Exchange For Change wants to ensure a fair distribution across the four nations:

The national allocations have been estimated through analysis of market data looking at the volume of the following premises types by nation – independent grocery retailers, symbol group retailers, off-licenses, independent forecourt operators, and symbol forecourt operators. The definitions available within third-party market data do not allow for precise mapping to eligible retailers so this is intended to represent a reasonable proxy by nation rather than a perfect distribution.

Nation	Estimated share of grants	Population share (for reference)
England	80.8%	84.3%
Scotland	9.8%	8.2%
Wales	5.6%	4.6%
Northern Ireland	3.8%	2.8%

Exchange For Change intend to provide a nation by nation split for each of G1 and G2, thereby ensuring that both rural and urban retailers within each nation are able to receive a fair share of grant funding. This requires more detailed mapping work which will be undertaken in due course. Exchange For Change also needs to consider whether additional funding can be made available given the expansion of the scheme to Wales – we will take this away to consider but relative shares across nations will remain.

Please note that the G3 allocation will have distinct eligibility criteria to support enhanced geographical coverage once EFC has visibility of registered return points, and to support organisations which may not have been able to benefit from the G1 and G2 allocations

Eligibility definitions for G1 and G2 allocations

Application criteria	Definition	Notes
Business status: Independent Retailer	Aligned to wider industry definitions: • Unaffiliated independents, operating under their own fascia • Symbol Group stores – independent retailers trading under common fascia, including franchises	• A retailer is considered independent if they are operating **3 or fewer stores**, including where using a common 'Symbol' fascia • E.g. If a chain of 3 stores is operated, either under an owned brand (i.e. Jane Blogg's Stores) or a symbol group (e.g. Spar), they will be eligible for grants provided other criteria are hit
Business status: Mandatory return point (eligible groceries retailer)	Aligned to regulatory definitions of mandatory return points, covering: i) sales area (dependent on urban / rural classification); ii) operating as a groceries retailer	• Sales area defined criteria 3 • "groceries retailer" means a supermarket of any size, a grocery store, a convenience store, or a newsagent
Sales area: Rural <200m2 **OR** Urban 100-200m2	• Retail Sales area, in line with exemptions process definitions	• Urban <100sqm automatically exempt, but can opt-in to operate voluntary Return Point – excluded from initial Grants allocations
Grants per business: Only 1 grant available per business	• Businesses which have multiple eligible premises will only be eligible for a grant for one site within the initial application windows	• This criteria is in place initially to ensure a fairer distribution of grants across UK retailers. It may be revised for the targeted allocation (G3).
Ongoing criteria	**Definition**	**Notes**
Operational availability: Availability of RVM >90%	• Availability of the RVM being able to accept consumer containers as a proportion of the premises Opening Hours	• Failure to meet the availability threshold in each year may mean no Grant payment for that year

*As part of the registration process and entry point to the Grants application process applicants will be asked to attest to meeting the various qualifying criteria for Grants **AND** will be reminded that the decision to buy an RVM sits with them at their risk*

Thank you

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