

£16 million funding boost to support thousands more customs experts

This new government funding is now available to help businesses train staff in making customs declarations, and to help businesses who support others to trade goods to invest in IT. This will ensure that trade with the EU continues as smoothly as possible after Brexit on 31 October.

Customs agents currently help businesses who trade outside the EU. This funding will help increase the capacity of the sector as businesses trading with the EU consider whether to get an expert to complete customs documentation for them after Brexit. Ministers have been determined to support the industry in both training up more staff and becoming more efficient, in order to ensure that we are fully ready for leaving the EU on 31 October, whatever the circumstances.

More than 3,000 agents have already been trained as part of an £8 million investment earlier this year, which has also been used to develop new online learning products for customs staff such as an electronic learning package and a new UK Customs Academy, launched on 12 August. This second wave of government grants launching today will go further, with the additional £16 million to be invested to help ensure businesses have all the support they need to get ready for Brexit.

Businesses based in, or with a branch in, the UK can apply for funding ahead of the UK leaving the EU. Grants can be used to support:

- training costs for businesses who complete customs declarations, or who intend to in the future
- funding for IT improvement, which is available to small and medium sized employers who are currently involved in trade as an intermediary

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Jesse Norman MP said:

Brexit takes place on 31 October and we urge all businesses to make the necessary preparations to be fully ready. The government has doubled the support available, so that thousands more customs experts are on hand to help businesses on and after Brexit day.

Ministers are continuing to move forward with Brexit preparations, with the Chancellor allocating an extra £2.1 billion for government departments last month to prepare for no deal, and doubling Brexit funding for this year. As part of the cash injection, border and customs operations will receive an additional £344 million to be ready for Brexit, including by hiring more border officers and improving transport infrastructure around ports.

To ensure maximum impact, the second wave of the grant scheme allows businesses to apply for the full cost of training, within certain limits as

set out in the [guidance](#).

Notes

Businesses who would benefit from the funding should [apply](#) early and those who applied for the first wave may apply again as part of this new wave of grants for expenditure incurred on or after 31 July 2019. Applications will close on 31 January 2020, or earlier once all the funding is allocated.

Background:

1. The customs intermediaries market consists of a wide range of third party firms that facilitate the import/export process, helping businesses to move goods and to comply with customs formalities.
2. Following an initial £8m investment, on 31 July the [Chancellor announced](#) that HMG would be doubling the support made available for customs agents, traders and hauliers to train new staff or invest in better IT so businesses can get the support they need to complete customs declarations. This has enabled HMRC to launch a second, improved wave of the Customs Intermediaries grant scheme with a £16m investment.
3. The initial £8 million investment announced in December 2018 also continues to support the sector through new learning products which are now available. These include an electronic learning package, available through a number of organisations, and a new UK Customs Academy which provides online courses and industry-recognised qualifications.
4. An [electronic learning package](#), was developed in partnership with business representative bodies and training providers, which was made available in March 2019.
5. A new [UK Customs Academy](#) will provide online training courses and industry-recognised qualifications as part of a long-term training offer that will sit alongside the existing high-quality training offered by providers across the UK. This learning programme consists of four courses; the first is already available with the remaining three to launch between September and November.
6. Course fees for both of these new learning products can be funded through the training grants which are now available. Other training providers also offer courses on this topic, so businesses are encouraged to consider all options and what suits their needs.
7. PwC is administering the grants on behalf of HMRC as an accredited grant administrator. Businesses who wish to apply for funding should not contact HMRC directly but can apply online, for more information see

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