

Press release: £8 million funding scheme for customs intermediaries and traders open

Customs intermediaries and traders completing customs declarations can now apply for grants to support training and IT under a £8 million investment from government, as applications open today (4 December).

The government has engaged extensively with industry bodies and key providers of customs broker services – including freight forwarders, fast parcel operators and independent customs brokers – to better understand the challenges they face in supporting existing and new clients.

Based on this useful engagement, HM Treasury and HMRC announced a one-off investment of £8 million to support broker training and increased automation in September, which will help increase capacity of the sector ahead of March 2019.

This includes £3m HMRC is investing to increase training provision in this area. They have worked with learning service provider Knowledge Pool who are engaging with training providers to increase the number of courses available in the short term, as well as investing in the development of new courses which will be available over the coming months to support customs broker training.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mel Stride, said:

Following extensive engagement with the customs intermediaries sector, we have listened to their concerns about how they will satisfy the extra demand for customs broker services.

I'm really pleased we are investing £8m to support the sector and help them expand their capacity as we prepare to leave the EU on 29 March 2019.

As part of this investment, £5 million in funding is now available to help businesses, based in, or with a branch in, the UK to meet the costs of employee training and IT improvements. Businesses who will benefit from the funding are encouraged to apply early. Applications will close on 5 April 2019, or earlier once all the funding is allocated.

Businesses can apply for one or both grants:

- There is £2 million available to fund training for intermediaries and traders completing customs declarations (or intending to complete customs declarations in the future). The grant will provide funding for

up to 50% of the cost of training staff.

- There is £3 million available in IT improvement funding, available to small and medium sized employers in the customs intermediaries sector currently completing customs declarations on behalf of importers and exporters. The grant will fund investment in packaged software that increases the automation and productivity of completing customs declarations.

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 and can apply online. More information, and a link to the online application page are available on GOV.UK.

Who can apply? A businesses or sole trader that completes customs declarations, this includes customs brokers, freight forwarders and fast parcel operators. Customs intermediaries or sole traders need to meet certain requirements, depending on which grant is being applied for, and they must be based in, or have a branch in the UK. Businesses can apply for just one of the grants, or both.

Training grant

IT improvements grant

To apply for the training grant, customs intermediaries or trades must either:
1.) Complete customs declarations for themselves or someone else (or intend to in the future) import from.
2.) Export to the EU and complete customs declarations (or intend to complete customs declarations in the future)

To apply for the IT improvements grant, customs intermediaries must:
1.) Currently complete customs declarations on behalf of importers and exporters.
2.) Have 250 employees or less.
3.) Have an annual turnover of £50 million or less

What must you use the grants for? You must use the funding towards upfront training costs for the training grant and/or buying software for the IT improvements grant.

Training

IT Improvements

The grant will provide funding for up to 50% of the cost of training that provides your employees with skills to: complete customs declarations; facilitate other businesses to use import and export procedures; and carry out the technical processes of customs procedures. The training does not have to lead to a formal qualification.

You must use the funding to buy software that's a packaged solution and is used to increase the automation or productivity of your business in completing customs declarations. The funding can also be used: to buy hardware that's needed for the software to run; to install and configure the software and hardware; for the first year license; and for training employees to use the software.

It cannot be used towards the existing costs of current training or for other unrelated training

It cannot be used to commission bespoke software or for unrelated networking costs.