



COVID Recovery Kick Start
Business Improvement and
Implementation
Support Programme
2021/22

tourismni.com/kickstart



**tourism
northernireland**

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1. About Tourism NI

Tourism NI is responsible for the development of tourism and marketing of Northern Ireland as a tourist destination on the Island of Ireland and works closely with Tourism Ireland to sell the destination overseas.

In 2019, tourism in Northern Ireland was a successful £1bn industry, employing 65,000 people. Northern Ireland had just launched a new experience brand to showcase the very best of what Northern Ireland had to offer.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound effect right across Northern Ireland. It has had far-reaching consequences for the tourism sector. While in the current climate it is difficult to make any predictions, it is unlikely that the tourism sector will return to pre-COVID revenue levels for

several years. It is also highly likely that most of the demand in the short to medium term will be from closer to home markets. More information on market reviews can be found at <https://tourismni.com/Grow-Your-Business/know-your-customer/markets-and-segments/>

Over the next number of years, the tourism marketplace, from both a destination and individual business perspective, will be fiercely competitive.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tourism NI has designed and developed a suite of industry supports and initiatives designed to support the Northern Ireland tourism industry to rebuild, recover and compete in this changed environment – helping stimulate and support the industry to build competitiveness within their business.

Potential applicants, interested in applying for support under this **COVID Recovery Kick Start Programme** are encouraged to contact Tourism NI in relation to any queries on the content of these guidelines.

2.

Programme Aim

The COVID Recovery Kick Start Programme is a Business Improvement and Implementation Support Programme which will provide expert independent support directly to eligible businesses.

The programme will provide support to existing tourism businesses to develop recovery action plans across four key business areas with a view to building industry competitiveness and aiding the longer-lasting survival of these businesses.

This programme is scheduled to run until the end of March 2022.

The Kick Start Programme will provide tourism businesses with free access to a range of advisory and mentoring support to inform critical business decisions now, and to ensure longer-term sustainability.

Due to COVID 19, many businesses do not currently have the cash flow to invest in the recovery and business improvement services required. Previously viable but vulnerable tourism businesses, critical to the tourism sector's recovery, will be able to access support to position themselves strongly for what is likely to be a very competitive marketplace over the next three-year period. This is particularly necessary for businesses that have suffered more than any other sector from the impact of COVID 19 and are now faced with little or no reserves to develop necessary recovery plans.

The Kick Start Programme will support tourism businesses to address the following areas:

- **Business Model Restructuring**
- **Digital Innovation and Productivity**
- **Recruitment and Talent Development**
- **Environmental Sustainability**

Details of the overall aim and type of support to be provided under each of the four areas are included overleaf.

3.

Programme Objectives

	Business Model Restructuring	Digital Innovation & Productivity	Recruitment & Talent Development	Sustainability
Objectives	To allow tourism businesses to examine and review their existing business model to drive efficiencies and improvements in how the business operates.	To enable tourism businesses to adopt new digital technology and innovations, that can help them to operate more efficiently, enable or accelerate the development of new products, processes, or services, give access to new markets, helping to safeguard and create jobs.	To empower tourism businesses to implement staff recruitment, talent development and staff training action plans.	To support tourism businesses in implementing environmental management and sustainability initiatives that will enable them to reduce costs, improve productivity and deliver a competitive advantage.
Examples of eligible activities (other eligible actions may be considered and supported through the programme.)	<p>Work with an independent industry expert ;</p> <p>To review and evaluate your existing business plan and model and provide recommendations on how it can be improved.</p> <p>To evaluate your business management structure.</p> <p>To conduct a SWOT analysis.</p> <p>To undertake a market or operational and organisational review.</p>	<p>Work with an independent industry expert ;</p> <p>To examine and map current processes, to identify the activities which create customer value and those that do not.</p> <p>To conduct a digital audit.</p> <p>To build internal capability to innovate and take on some projects that will increase customer value, through improved efficiency and better customer service.</p>	<p>Work with an independent industry expert ;</p> <p>To conduct skills gap and/training needs analysis.</p>	<p>Work with an independent industry expert ;</p> <p>To undertake a review and develop a register of opportunities to reduce energy, water and raw material consumption.</p> <p>To identify cost saving opportunities by developing no/low carbon options or by becoming a zero-carbon business.</p> <p>To deliver a sustainability plan and develop a 'Green Leader' within each business.</p>

3.

Programme Objectives

	Business Model Restructuring	Digital Innovation & Productivity	Recruitment & Talent Development	Sustainability
<p>Examples of eligible activities (other eligible actions may be considered and supported through the programme.)</p>		To support your business to invest in the implementation of new or improved service delivery or organisation process to increase competitiveness.		To benchmark your business to develop resource efficiency and carbon KPI's.
	To develop a Business Model Canvas.	To identify operational efficiencies that can be delivered through new technologies.	To consider options for coaching & mentoring in leadership & management development / change management.	To support your business in the identification of renewable energy sources and the methodology and costs to implement solutions.
	To undertake a strategic review.	To implement new business models or value propositions.	To provide skills analysis and development plans.	To support your business in implementing a 3rd party environmental certification (GTSC or a similar globally recognised accreditation) programme which incorporates an EMS policy, green procurement and bespoke action plans.
	To undertake scenario planning, situation assessment and impact evaluation.	Plans could consider technologies such as cloud computing, mobile apps, location-based services, geo-tag services, beacon technology, virtual reality, augmented reality, and social networking services – offering the tourism industry new ways to attract and engage visitors.	To plan workforce management.	To implement “Green” messaging into your business’s marketing & promotion activities.
	To rebuild a viable business model.	To provide enhanced accessibility – physically and digitally.	To consider plans for employee engagement, welfare, and wellbeing.	
	To advise on how to restructure your debt.			
To ensure your management information is sufficient for monitoring purposes.				
To set KPI's for your business.				

4.

What assistance can I expect?

Tourism NI will provide, through the Kick Start Programme, fully funded, bespoke business improvement and implementation plans in one or more of the four key areas of the programme

Following an initial Expression of Interest (EoI) process, eligible businesses will be invited to take part in a free diagnostic clinic with a Tourism NI allocated mentor.

At the clinic, all businesses will undertake a free financial health-check with expert advisors to ensure that they have the necessary financial foundation on which to build their business and are aware of all restructuring options open to them. A summary report will be provided to each business detailing the conclusions reached.

The aim of the clinic is to identify if Tourism NI can support your business within the 4 programme areas.

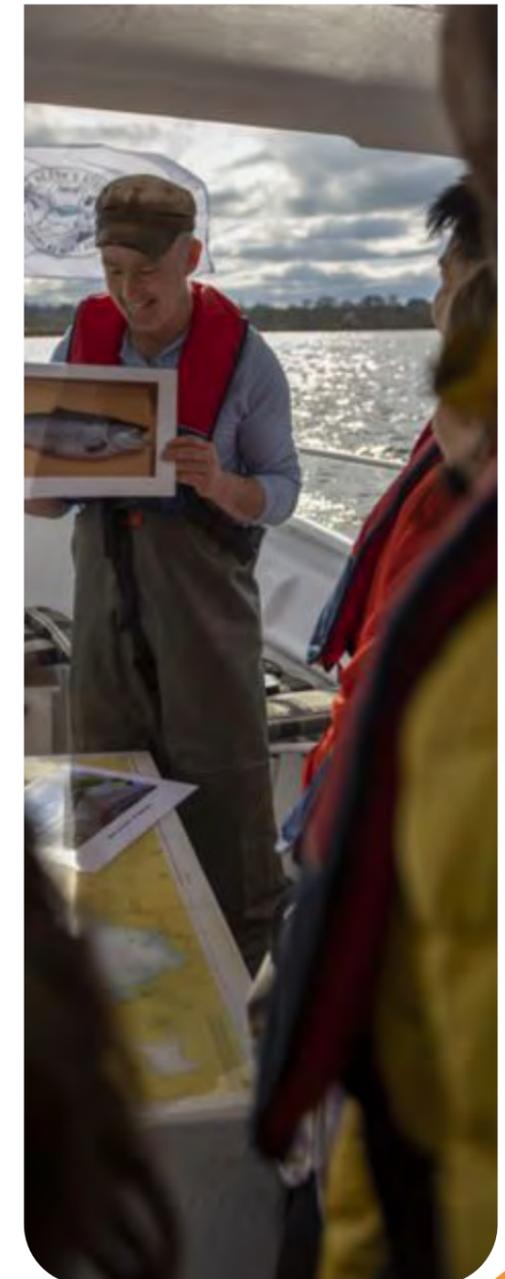
Your appointed advisor will work with you to determine a scope of work for your business.

You will then be issued with a letter of offer to agree the extent of mentoring support, your responsibilities and deadlines which apply.

At a later date in the 2021/22 financial year, participants who complete the Kick Start Programme may

be invited to make an application through a ‘closed call process’ for funding support to implement agreed business interventions recommended during the programme.

This element of the programme is subject to budget availability and successful completion of Stages 1-3.



5.

Eligibility

Which businesses can apply?

To apply, you must be an existing tourism business operating in Northern Ireland. The programme is open to the following sectors:

- **Private sector: Companies and other legal entities and individuals.**
- **Voluntary / Community Sector: Community and not for profit bodies including companies limited by guarantee. Applicants from this sector will be required to have a charity number as evidence that they qualify for the status.**
- **Local Authority or Destination Management Organisations.**

The programme is focused on tourism providers and the following businesses are ineligible under this programme:

- **Sports Clubs.**
- **Business Start-Ups.**
- **Visitor Information Centres.**
- **Shops, Restaurants, Bars, Cafés etc.**
- **Businesses which are primarily craft or retail outlets.**



6.

Other Eligibility Criteria

• **Business Type:** You must be a tourism business located within Northern Ireland.

• **Active Tourism Listing:** You must have an active listing on our consumer website

www.discovernorthernireland.com as of 1st April 2020.

• **Operational Thresholds:** You (as a business) should have been operational on or before 01 September 2019.

• **Turnover Levels:** - We need to ensure that the cost of investing in a plan can deliver a strong return on investment and value for money in terms of its ability to support tourism. Tourism NI will require proof of turnover through the provision of recent statutory accounts (in at least one of the previous three business years) which clearly demonstrate an annual business turnover in excess of £100 k per annum.

• **Business Viability:** You must be able to confirm that the business was a viable business prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tourism NI may request supporting information at a later stage to provide further assurance in relation to this.

• **UK Wide Industry Standard:** If currently open and trading you must be registered, to the UK wide industry standard "We're Good to Go".



7. How can I apply?

This is an on-line application process - the various stages of the process are set out below.

Stage 1.

Expression of Interest (EoI's)

You should first check your eligibility for the programme by reading these guidelines.

The programme will open at 3.00pm on 25th October 2021.

You must complete an online expression of interest form which can be found at <https://tni.flexigrant.com>

After logging in, please select the "Application Portal" tab at the top of the screen and select "Start" to begin the expression of interest form.

Please note, if you have previously used Tourism NI's online forms you should use your existing username and passwords to apply. If you are a new or first-time user, please register to gain access to the form.

If you have any issues or questions when completing the expression of interest form, please contact us using the 'Contact us' email on our guidelines page - <https://tourismni.com/kickstart>

The closing date for receipt of Expression of Interest Forms is 3.00pm

on 19th November 2021.

Once your expression of interest form has been received it will be reviewed to determine that it meets the minimum eligibility criteria. Businesses who do not satisfy these criteria will be directed to other support available at <https://www.tourismni.com/build-your-business/opportunities-campaigns/help-to-grow-your-business>

Stage 2.

Business Diagnostic Clinic

Applications who have satisfied the eligibility criteria will be invited to attend a business diagnostic clinic with a Tourism NI approved business advisor.

The purpose of the clinic is to provide a free financial health check and to identify which areas of business performance may be strengthened through your participation in the Kick Start process.

This session will allow for an in-depth discussion on the overall performance of the business and to identify the key priority areas or issues to be addressed as part of this programme. The cost of this clinic will be fully funded by Tourism NI.

Applicants should provide their last three years financial statements and recent management accounts to be able to proceed with the clinic.

Stage 3.

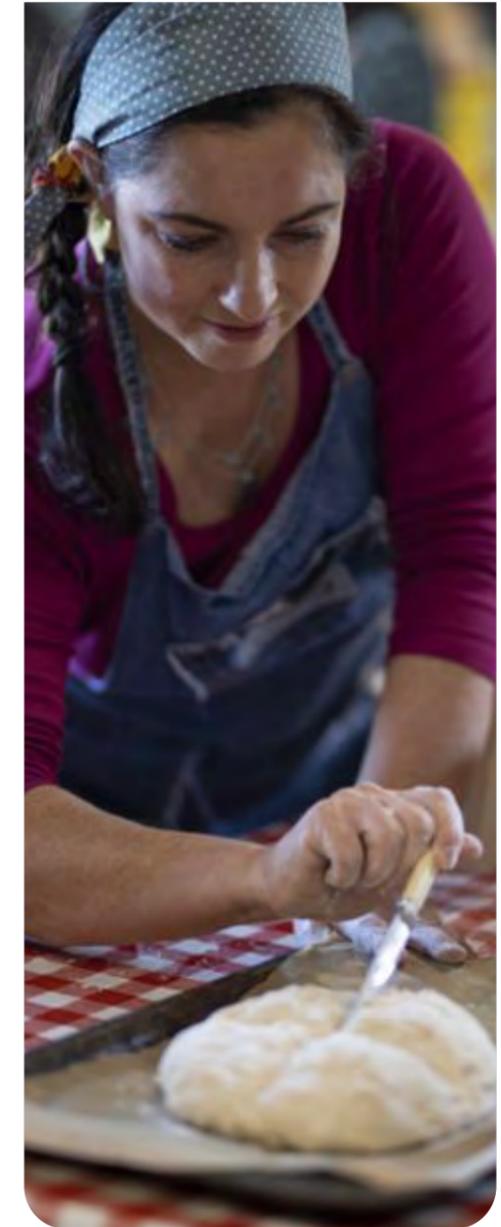
Access to suite of Kick Start Resources and Support

Successful applicants who progress from Stage 2 will be assigned a consultant / advisor who will work with them to support and design the project / actions / measures or initiatives discussed and agreed as part of the business diagnostic clinic.

Successful applicants will be required to sign a Letter of Offer with associated conditions, and this becomes a legally binding document. Applicants will have 2 weeks to accept the offer otherwise it will lapse.

TNI will fully fund the scope of works agreed within the Letter of Offer.

Business improvement and implementation plans funded under this Kick Start programme must be completed by March 2022.



8.

Additional Programme Information

Appeals Procedure

An appeals procedure is in place for those applicants who deem the process of assessing their project has been conducted unsatisfactorily. Further detail on the appeals procedure is available on request.

EU-UK Trade & Co-operation Agreement (TCA)

When this grant is provided to economic actors and is a subsidy, as defined in Article 363(1) of the EU-UK Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA), Tourism NI confirms the scheme complies with the 6 principles set out in Article 366 of the TCA. Tourism NI also confirms that Article 367 (prohibited subsidies and subsidies subject to controls) does not apply, it will ensure compliance with Article 368 (use of subsidies) and it will meet all its obligations and transparency, consultations, the provision of information and recovery as set out in Articles 369-373. Full details relating to the TCA can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukey-and-eaec-trade-and-cooperation-agreement-ts-no82021>



Equality Statement

Tourism NI is committed to the fulfilment of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) in both the promotion of equality and of good relations through our overall thinking and decision-making processes. Obligations under this Act will be included in any Letter of Offer issued.

FOI and Data Protection

We are committed to being open about the way we will use information that you give us as part of your application. By submitting the declaration form to validate the application for, applicants are confirming that they understand our obligation to comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

By applying for funding, Tourism NI takes care that it respects the rights and freedoms of all those involved. How we handle any personal information we receive in respect to those rights and freedoms is described in our privacy policy.

New applicants will be asked to accept the policy before proceeding to the online application form.

About us

Tourism Northern Ireland is responsible for the development of tourism and marketing of Northern Ireland as a tourist destination on the island of Ireland and works closely with Tourism Ireland to sell the destination overseas. Under the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, Tourism NI is empowered to provide selective financial assistance to the tourism sector in Northern Ireland for projects that seek to achieve economic growth in Northern Ireland.

Procurement

Applicants will be required to adhere to Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy. Failure to adhere can result in expenditure being considered ineligible for financial assistance. Detailed information on the public procurement process and the procurement thresholds can be found on the CPD website

<http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/topics/procurement>





Covid Recovery Kickstart Business Improvement and Implementation Support Programme 2021/22

It is the responsibility of the Board of Tourism NI to ensure that these guidelines are adhered to. Tourism NI may amend the scheme and its guidelines at any time during the period of the programme. These guidelines can be made available on request in Braille, audio and large print. Every care has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of these guidelines. Tourism Northern Ireland cannot accept responsibility for omissions or errors but these will be rectified in future publications when brought to our attention.

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