



Covid Business & Financial Planning Support Programme 2021/22

Advisory support to assist in the development
of business and financial recovery plans.

PROGRAMME GUIDELINES

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1. Introduction

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 recent 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 a number of years. It is also highly likely that the majority of demand in the short-to medium-term will be from closer-to-home markets.

More information on market reviews can be found at tourismni.com/build-your-business/opportunities-campaigns/

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

This programme is one of a number of initiatives designed to support the industry in Northern Ireland to rebuild, recover and compete in this changed environment – providing assistance to eligible tourism businesses in developing recovery plans.

Potential applicants are encouraged to contact Tourism NI in relation to any queries on the content of these guidelines.



2.

Programme Aim

The overall programme aim is to help re-set tourism businesses for sustainability and recovery in the post-COVID environment.

Businesses which were successful and sustainable in the past are now in a vulnerable position, resulting from a loss in revenue and a sharp decline in consumer demand – with an uncertainty over when previous demand levels will return.

The core consumer markets have changed significantly for many businesses who now need to adapt their offer to appeal to closer-to-home markets and changing consumer demand.

Tourism businesses are in need of advisory and mentoring support to inform critical and major decisions now, and to ensure longer-term sustainability. Many businesses do not currently have the cash flow to invest in the recovery planning and turnaround services required.

Previously viable tourism businesses, critical to supporting recovery, will need this support to position themselves strongly for what will be a very competitive marketplace over the next three-year period.

This programme will support the development of recovery plans including:

- A Health Check and Financial Plan
- Review of Business Model
- Identify Funding Shortfalls and/or Debt Restructuring



3.

What Assistance Can I Expect?

Tourism NI will provide assistance via its Tourism Enterprise Development Programme to support the development of recovery plans. Successful applicants will be assigned an advisor to work with them in developing these plans.

This process will be fully funded by Tourism Northern Ireland.

4.

Eligibility

4.1. Who 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 this status.

The programme is targeted at tourism providers and the following businesses are ineligible under this programme:

- Sports Clubs
- Events
- Business Start-Ups
- Local Authority or Destination Management Organisations
- Day spas
- Visitor Information Centres
- Shops, Restaurants, Bars, Cafes etc.

4.2. Minimum Eligibility Criteria

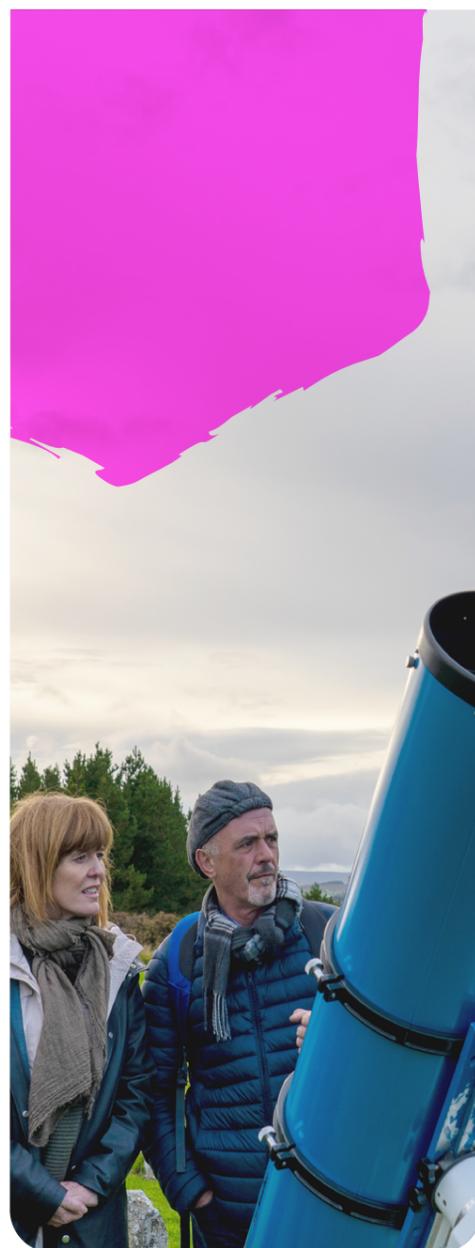
- **Business Type:** You must be a tourism business located within Northern Ireland. Business categories which are ineligible to apply are listed above in section 4.1.

- **Active Tourism Listing:** You must have an active listing on our consumer website discovernorthernireland.com as at 01 April 2020.
- **Operational Thresholds:** You (as a business) should have been operational on or before 01 September 2019. However, in limited circumstances, if you haven't been operational on or before 01 September 2019 and Tourism NI can get sufficient evidence that there is a strong future pipeline of business, this requirement may be relaxed. Tourism NI will seek evidence of these operational thresholds.
- **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 minimum turnover levels of between £50,000 and £99,999 in one of the last three years up to 31 March 2021. Tourism NI will require a copy of statutory accounts proving turnover to be uploaded with your application.
- **Business Viability:** You must be able to confirm that the business was a viable business prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tourism NI will request supporting information at the application stage to provide further assurance in relation to this.
- **UK-wide Industry Standard:** Your business must be registered with the UK-wide industry standard 'We're Good to Go'.



5. How Can I Apply

An on-line application process will open at 3.00 pm on 8 November 2021. Applicants are encouraged to submit their applications as soon as possible but no later than 3.00 pm on 22 November 2021. Details of how to apply are set on page 7.



5.1. Stage 1

Application

1. You should first check your eligibility for the programme by reading these guidelines.
2. If you are eligible, please complete an online application form in full. This can be found at tni.flexigrant.com
3. Please note, if you have previously used Tourism NI's Flexigrant system you should use your existing username and password to apply. If you are a new user, please register to gain access to the form.
4. After logging in to the system, please select the "Application Portal" tab at the top of the screen and select "Start" to begin the application form.
5. If you have any issues or questions when completing the application form, please contact the Programme Team via the contact form, which can be found at tourismni.com/recovery
6. As part of the application, in order to prove that your business meets the eligible criteria, you must submit:
 - A set of statutory accounts from the previous 3 years which demonstrate an annual turnover of between £50,000 and £ 99,999.
 - Three years bank statements demonstrating annual turnover if statutory accounts are not

available.

- Your 'Discover Northern Ireland' listing address.
 - A copy of your 'We're Good to Go' certificate.
 - A copy of your signed application form.
7. When your application is complete, don't forget to press the 'submit' button before 3pm on 22 November 2021.

What happens next?

Once your application has been reviewed, it will be checked to ensure that it meets the minimum eligibility requirements. Those applicants that do not will be directed to other support available at tourismni.com/ted

The programme is limited in terms of budget and all eligible and completed applications will be treated on a first-come first-served basis. Tourism NI reserves the right to review eligibility in light of any further information or assessment at this stage. Tourism NI reserves the right to close the scheme in advance of 3pm on 22 November 2021 if demand exceeds the budget available. Tourism NI reserves the right to maintain a reserve list of projects should more budget become available.

Following our assessment, all applicants will be informed of the outcome by email.

5.2. Stage 2: Letter of Offer and Project Delivery

All successful applicants will be assigned an advisor to agree the scope of the work. Once this scope is completed to the satisfaction of Tourism NI, a formal Letter of Offer will be issued with the agreed scope of work.

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. The Letter of Offer will also require applicants to complete the plan no later than 11 March 2022. A declaration confirming completion of the plan needs to be returned to Tourism NI by 11 March 2022.

Once you have signed the Letter of Offer, you can then begin to develop the plan with your assigned advisor.

Following the implementation of the project, Tourism NI will contact you to get feedback on the impact that the project has had. All applicants will be required to comply with this and all other conditions of the Letter of Offer.



6. 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://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/982648/TS_8.2021_UK_EU_EAEC_Trade_and_Cooperation_Agreement.pdf

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.

Tourism NI
Linum Chambers,
Bedford Square, Belfast, BT2 7ES
Contact us at tourismni.com/recovery



It is the responsibility of the Board of Tourism NI to ensure that these guidelines are adhered to. Tourism NI may amend the programme and its guidelines at any time during the period of the programme.

These programme 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.

