

Kick Start Support Programme

(Phase 2) - 2022/2023



**TOURISM
NORTHERN
IRELAND**

tourismni.com/kickstart2



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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.

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.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Tourism NI developed a suite of industry supports and initiatives designed to support the Northern Ireland tourism industry to rebuild, recover and compete. One of these supports, the Covid Recovery Kick Start Programme 2021-22, was a revenue-based mentoring and business planning programme which provided external independent support to existing tourism businesses to implement recovery action plans across four key business areas.

Whilst consumer concerns around Covid-19 diminish, significant levels of concern prevail regarding the impact of rising energy costs alongside operating costs, the ongoing skill issues and the continued adverse impact of consumers' falling disposable income. Tourism is operating in a very challenging global MACRO environment. Whilst the tourism industry has reported a generally positive year-

to-date performance for 2022, there still remains cautious optimism for the year and into 2023.

Consumers' financial mood will continue to be impacted by economic uncertainties, as prices rise faster than wages, and spiralling fuel costs are more acutely felt than ever. Despite these challenges, the desire to travel is still strong with many consumers keen to make up for lost time. Value for money and visitor experience will be even more important drivers for 2023. The current situation is resulting in an increasing number of vulnerable but previously viable businesses. To this end Tourism NI has launched Phase 2 of the Kick Start Programme which aims to provide access, for successful applicants, to expert mentoring across 4 key areas to support a sustainable recovery.

Potential applicants interested in applying for support under this Kick Start (Phase 2) Programme are encouraged to contact Tourism NI in relation to any queries on the content of these guidelines via the contact us form on <https://tourismni.com/contact-us>



2. Programme Aim

The Kick Start (Phase 2) Programme is a Business Improvement and Implementation Support Programme which will provide expert independent support directly to eligible businesses.

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Tourism businesses are today faced with a myriad of issues such as Covid-19 recovery, spiralling costs, a reduced labour and skills pool and a cost of living crisis. The Kick Start (Phase 2) Programme aims to provide eligible 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. This programme targets previously viable but now vulnerable tourism businesses to allow them to access support to best position their business in what is likely to be a very competitive market place over the next 3 years.

The programme comprises of 2 strands of applicants whose route to apply under the programme will vary in expression of interest regard only. Applicants will identify to which strand they align, prior to completing an expression of interest. The strands are as follows:

Strand 1

Route for Applicants in receipt of Kick Start (Phase 1) Letter of Offer

Strand 2

Route for all tourism businesses operating in Northern Ireland

The programme is scheduled to run until the end of March 2023.

3. Programme Objectives

The Kick Start (Phase 2) Programme will support tourism businesses to address the following areas:

•Financial/Business •Model Restructuring •Digital Innovation & Productivity
•Recruitment & Talent Development •Sustainability

	Financial/Business Model Restructuring	Digital Innovation & Productivity
Objectives	To allow tourism businesses to examine and review their existing financial / 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, helping to safeguard and create jobs.
Examples of eligible activities (**please note other eligible actions may be considered and supported through the programme)	<p>Work with an independent industry expert to;</p> <p>Introduce a Cloud Based accounting system</p> <p>Establish a board pack / chairing meeting to professional management structure / Governance</p> <p>Succession Planning Options</p> <p>Formal budgeting with KPIs</p> <p>Review of business structure and protection of assets</p> <p>Restructuring options analysis to safeguard business</p> <p>To rebuild a viable business model</p> <p>To advise on how to restructure your debt</p> <p>To ensure your management information is sufficient for monitoring purposes</p>	<p>Work with an independent industry expert to;</p> <p>Examine and map current processes, to identify the activities which create customer value and those that do not</p> <p>Build internal capability to innovate and take on some projects that will increase customer value, through improved efficiency and better customer service</p> <p>Support your business to invest in the implementation of new or improved service delivery or organisation process to increase competitiveness</p> <p>Identify operational efficiencies that can be delivered through new technologies</p> <p>Implement new business models or value propositions</p> <p>Plans could consider technologies such as cloud computing, mobile apps, location-based services, geo-tag technology, virtual reality, augmented reality, and social networking services – offering the tourism industry new ways to attract and engage visitors</p> <p>Provide enhanced digital accessibility</p>

Recruitment & Talent Development	Sustainability
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.
<p>Work with an independent industry expert to;</p> <p>Conduct skills gap and training needs analysis</p> <p>Consider options for coaching & mentoring in leadership & management development / change management</p> <p>Provide a skills analysis and development plans</p> <p>Plan workforce management</p> <p>Consider plans for employee engagement, welfare, and wellbeing</p>	<p>Work with an independent industry expert to;</p> <p>Undertake a sustainability review and develop a sustainability plan - develop a 'Green Leader' within each business</p> <p>Support your business in working towards the achievement of a 3rd party environmental certification (GTSC or a similar globally recognised accreditation) programme which incorporates an EMS policy, green procurement and bespoke action plans</p> <p>For businesses that have already achieved a recognised accreditation, develop appropriate messaging and content across communication channels to promote sustainability credentials</p> <p>Training and mentoring - bespoke training and upskilling of board members / staff etc or creation of staff training assets for company training software</p>



4. What assistance can I expect?

Tourism NI will provide, through the Kick Start (Phase 2) Programme, fully funded, bespoke business improvement and implementation plans in one or more of the four key areas of the programme.

Applicants should be cognisant of the restraints of budget and although an application can be made for assistance across all four programme areas, eligible businesses will be asked to prioritise programme areas during the application process. Should Tourism NI receive applications for financial assistance that exceeds budget available, consideration for assistance will be made in order of priority area, as identified by the applicant in the application form.

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

At the clinic, all businesses will undertake a free independent 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. Applicants should be assured that all financial information contained within the report will be treated in confidence.

The aim of the clinic is to identify if Tourism NI can support your business within one or more of the 4

programme areas. If it is concluded that Tourism NI can support your business through this programme, you will be forwarded a link to complete an online application form. During this application process you will be requested to prioritise areas of required support.

Applicants aligned with Strand 1 who successfully proceeded through the Kick Start Phase 1 programme and are in receipt of a Letter of Offer under the Phase 1 programme, will be identified through the Expression of Interest process.

Eligible Strand 1 applicants should indicate on their application form any activities that were previously actioned through the expert mentoring received in Kick Start Phase 1 and whether further support in these areas is required.

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 that apply.

5. Eligibility

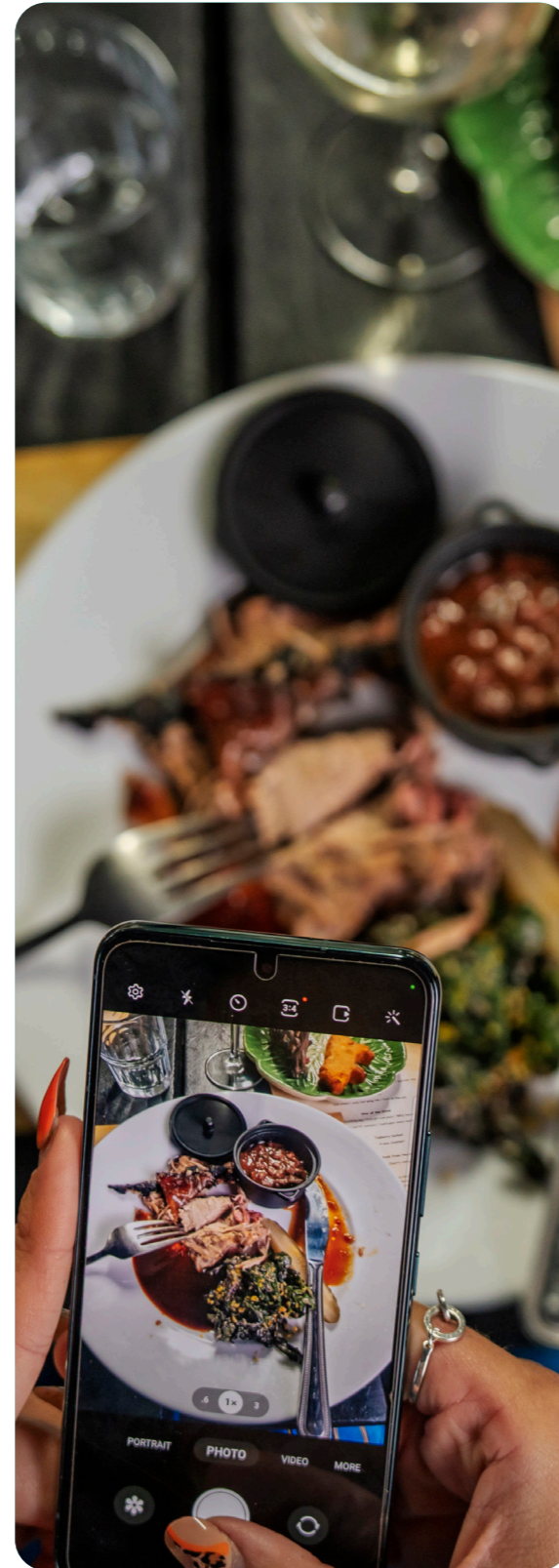
Which businesses can apply?

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

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

- **Local Authority or Destination Management Organisations**
- **Sports Clubs**
- **Business Start-Ups**
- **Visitor Information Centres**
- **Shops, Restaurants, Bars, Cafes 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 2022**
- **Operational Thresholds:** You (as a business) should have been operational on or before 01 September 2020
- **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 £50k per annum

Applicants must be able to deliver the project as defined in the Letter of Offer before the end of March 2023

7. How can I apply?

This is an online application process – the various stages of the process are set out below

Stage 1. Expression of Interest (EoI)

You should first check your eligibility for the programme by reading these guidelines. Eligibility requirements will vary from programme to programme, and you must fit the eligibility criteria for this Kick Start Phase 2 Programme, as defined at Sections 5 and 6 above.

The programme will open at 3.00pm on Monday 21 November 2022.

You must complete an online expression of interest form. Applicants that align with Strand 1 (ie successful applicants of Kick Start Phase 1 that remain eligible to apply under Kick Start Phase 2) should complete the form 'KS22_S1' using your existing username and password via the following link <https://tni.flexigrant.com>

Applicants that align with Strand 2 should complete the form 'KS22_S2'. EoI forms can be accessed via the following link <https://tni.flexigrant.com>

After logging in, please select the "Application Portal" tab at the top of the screen and select "Start" to being 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/contact-us/>

The closing date for receipt of Expression of Interest Forms is 3.00pm on Monday 28th November 2022.

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 which have satisfied the eligibility criteria will be invited to attend a business diagnostic clinic with an independent 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. Applicants should be assured that all financial information contained within the report will be treated in confidence.

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 the 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

Applicants who successfully progress from Stage 2 will be forwarded a link to complete an online application form. During this application process you will be requested to prioritise areas of required support.

Successful applicants who progress from Stage 2 will be assigned an independent 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 (Phase 2) Programme must be completed by March 2023.



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/ukeu-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

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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>

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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