



# VisitScotland Growth Fund

Criteria, Conditions and Guidelines

# Introduction

---

VisitScotland's Growth Fund supports collaborative tourism marketing projects that focus on growth in the tourism sector.

The fund is a platform which supports groups in leveraging additional and focused marketing investment, stimulating collaboration within the industry, closer working with VisitScotland and achieving strategic alignment with the national Tourism 2020 strategy.

The work of the tourism industry is directed towards growing and developing Scotland's visitor economy in partnership with businesses and communities. The fund also presents applicants with the opportunity to support the four pillars set out in Scotland's Economic Strategy: internationalisation, investment, innovation and inclusive growth.

The VisitScotland Growth Fund through direct Grants helps businesses to build their digital capability, market and measure outputs and success more effectively. Working in partnership, means that we no longer market Scotland for Scotland; we market Scotland with Scotland.

Successful applications must demonstrate:

- Strong digital focus and creation of digital content
- Strong strategic alignment
- An innovative approach

- Effective partnerships and collaboration
- Achievable and measurable growth targets
- A sustainable approach
- Project viability and deliverability

Consumers are changing the way they look for information, by doing the majority of their trip planning and booking online. We need to make it as easy as possible for people to discover Scotland online, ensuring that we can be found when potential visitors are searching for holiday ideas, and at each stage of their decision on where to visit, where to stay or what to do, and that we showcase what we can offer with superb content. As an industry it is important we successfully develop our digital platforms to fully exploit this opportunity, and the VisitScotland Growth Fund fully supports this, by making digital activity a key focus for applicants to consider in their application.

Please read this document if you are considering applying as it will provide key information that may affect your application.

# Assessment Criteria

---

VisitScotland's Growth Fund is designed to support well planned, inspiring and collaborative marketing campaigns. Successful applications will meet the following objectives:

## **STRONG DIGITAL FOCUS AND CREATION OF DIGITAL CONTENT**

Creation of engaging and sharable digital content assets with a demonstration of how, through partnership working, they can be distributed to increase awareness, engagement and advocacy.



## **STRONG STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT**

Demonstrate alignment with Scotland's marketing strategy, centred around ensuring Scotland experiences can be found online and driving engagement with Scotland content [Discovery Strategy and seasonal content calendar](#). Where relevant, applications should align with the [Tourism 2020 Strategy](#) and regional or sector strategies.

## **AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH**

Fresh ideas and new approaches that will inspire customer engagement and additional visits. Putting content marketing at the heart of campaigns to inspire visitors and differentiate Scotland from our competition.

## **EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION**

Engagement with industry and partners within the wider visitor economy, demonstrating how businesses are coming together to help support and amplify your marketing campaign.

## **ACHIEVABLE AND MEASURABLE TARGETS**

Applications must demonstrate new marketing activity and approaches which will generate additional visitors to Scotland, visitor spend and awareness of Scotland as must-visit destination.

## CRITERIA, CONDITIONS AND GUIDELINES

### A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH

Groups are expected to take a strategic and long-term view in terms of their marketing planning and their own sustainability. Outcomes of your marketing campaign will help sustain and build marketing activity in future years, and will address periods, and locations, which have capacity to increase the number of visitors and occupancy levels. The legacy of content assets should be considered, ensuring they can be utilised after the campaign ends.

### PROJECT VIABILITY AND DELIVERABILITY

Applicants must provide evidence of:

- A clear strategic rationale and proposition for proposed activity
- Proven experience of project management, marketing and financial administration.
- Clear marketing activity plan, demonstrating value for money and easily measurable outputs, against agreed targets.
- A sound knowledge of target markets and of the channels best employed to target them.
- If successful, applicants will be required to provide a detailed budget and cash flow forecast over the period of your campaign.



# Applicant Group Eligibility

---

Groups applying for a grant through the Growth Fund Programme must meet the eligibility criteria set out below:

- Applications must be submitted by a legally constituted group. A collaborative approach must be demonstrated with a strong mix of businesses from different tourism sectors. All groups must either have; a registered bank account in the name of the Group, or a registered bank account in the name of the LEAD organisation – constitutionally authorised on behalf of the Group to manage said account.
- A bank account in the name of an individual will not be acceptable.
- Applications demonstrating a strong digital marketing focus will be prioritised.
- Groups must seek to work with their DMO to ensure the application demonstrates collaboration and strategic alignment at a regional level. Duplication of similar activity by groups within the same area will not be considered.
- A Group cannot have two growth fund grants running concurrently. The VisitScotland Growth Fund does not provide continuous grant funding to Groups. However, subsequent applications from Groups will be considered providing the application outlines the ability to develop marketing activities, and build on previous successful applications.
- We would expect your Marketing Plan to demonstrably cover a period of 2 – 5 years



# Eligible Campaign Activity

---

## ACTIVITY ELIGIBLE FOR SUPPORT

- ☑ Digital marketing activity that complements VisitScotland's 'Discovery Strategy' strategy.
- ☑ Marketing activity that focuses on generating additional visitors to a specific area or to engage with a specific activity or sector.
- ☑ Marketing activity designed to bring visitors from other parts of Scotland, the rest of the UK and International markets.

a) **For consumer campaigns**, marketing activity must have a primary focus on digital content creation, as the project must drive measurable outcomes. Groups will be encouraged to develop sharable content assets including video, imagery, e-books, itineraries, interactive maps, blog posts, campaign landing pages, infographics etc. For further ideas around content development as part of your campaign, please refer to the [VisitScotland Content Development Guide](#).

VisitScotland are particularly interested in receiving applications that have a strong focus on content creation that:

- is created for online use
- is high quality
- is sharable
- conforms to VisitScotland guidelines (to allow for promotion on our digital channels)

b) **For travel trade or business tourism campaigns**, digital content creation should be an element of the campaign activity but to a lesser extent than is required for a consumer marketing campaign.

The following marketing activity can be considered for all applications, as part of an integrated marketing campaign:

- ☑ Digital Activity – including paid social media, display advertising, PPC
- ☑ Content Creation – including video, photography, itineraries, blogs, ebooks
- ☑ Media Advertising – including radio and outdoor
- ☑ PR – including agency fees
- ☑ FAM Trips – including bloggers and influencers
- ☑ Design Fees – including development of campaign branding and landing page
- ☑ Events and Exhibitions – consumer or trade events if relevant to target audience
- ☑ Travel and Subs – only travel and B&B costs can be claimed for
- ☑ Project Management – including consultancy, campaign management and delivery. No more than 15% of total eligible activity costs
- ☑ Monitoring and Evaluation

## CRITERIA, CONDITIONS AND GUIDELINES

Marketing campaigns must be twelve months long with a further three months to complete monitoring and evaluation.

Campaigns are expected to commence no later than eight weeks after approval.



### ACTIVITY INELIGIBLE FOR SUPPORT

- Marketing that targets locals and visitors already in the area
- Core or repeated activity
- Business or product development such as business memberships, feasibility studies or research
- Website creation or development
- App development
- Capital costs and overheads, for example office or core staff costs, equipment, etc. Full time employees cannot claim for Project Management fees.
- The Growth Fund does not support standalone event marketing. Event Organisers who are seeking support to market local or regional events should contact [EventScotland](#) for further information.

The VisitScotland Growth Fund works closely with other public sector agencies to ensure alignment of Grant award scheme opportunities. [Digital Tourism Scotland](#) project, [Scottish Enterprise](#) and [Highlands and Islands](#) do not support consumer marketing, however may be able to provide guidance and support for other projects focused on growing the visitor economy. Your Growth Fund Manager can discuss this with you and signpost as appropriate.

## Support Grants

---

- Growth Fund Grant awards are available from £10,000 to a maximum of £40,000.
  - The Grant can provide Groups with up to 50% of approved marketing activity.
  - Applications with 50% match funding will be prioritised, however some flexibility, dependent upon conditions, may be considered if appropriate.
  - Applications that demonstrate a higher level of private sector match funding will be prioritised.
  - Applications will be scored on the campaign funding breakdown.
  - Match funding can include other public sector funds, however this must not be the majority of the matched funds provided by applicants.
  - In-kind support cannot be classed as match funding. However any in kind support secured against the campaign will be looked at favourably.
  - Groups will be limited to a maximum of £100,000, or 3 approved applications for Growth Fund support over a five year period (subject to grant availability).
  - Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have already secured the required match funding when making the application. This can be made up of both private and public sector funding.
  - No grants will be awarded retrospectively. Applicants must ensure no activity commences prior to the Grant agreement being signed.
- Please note, it is a **vital** requirement that all supporting documentation, including invoices and bank statements to support agreed campaign activity, must be kept in full. All successful applicants should expect to be audited, at one payment point, throughout the period of contract. At this audit point the group will be required to produce all requested supporting documentation to VisitScotland's Audit and Compliance team. Assistance to provide a quick response to these requests will enable us to process any Grant award payments due.

### DE MINIMIS FUNDING

Growth Fund grant awards are classed as De Minimis state aid. There is a ceiling of €200,000 for all De Minimis aid, regardless of the source, given to any one enterprise (including groups) over a 3 year period.

## CRITERIA, CONDITIONS AND GUIDELINES

Growth Fund grant awards are made on the understanding that the award, combined with any other De Minimis aid received in the last 3 years (from any other publicly funded source), does not exceed the ceiling of **€200,000** for ALL De Minimis aid.

If you are unsure if you have previously received any De Minimis public funding you should check the letter you received when the funding was awarded, as all public bodies providing funding are required to highlight this. In order for VisitScotland to maintain our De Minimis records, applicants must complete a De Minimis declaration which is included within the Application Form.

### VAT

The applicant acknowledges that the VisitScotland Growth Fund grant award is not subject to VAT. Under no circumstances will the Grant Award be increased, should any VAT liability arise for the applicant group, and, for the avoidance of doubt, the grant award is inclusive of VAT, if any, payable thereon. It will be the responsibility of the applicant group to ensure that their treatment of VAT relative to the grant award is correct.



## Monitoring, Evaluation & Brand Recognition

---

One of the key requirements of the fund is to comprehensively monitor and evaluate your campaign, track its progress, understand what marketing activity has delivered the best results and what the direct and indirect impact of the campaign has made to your area or sector. It is fundamentally important that you gather evidence that monitors performance and demonstrates the impact of your campaign. You will need to describe how you will do this in your application form.

Monitoring and evaluation is very important for tourism groups, in terms of being able to further develop and learn from the activity undertaken. At the end of Agreement period, and as a condition of the final payment, you must submit a final evaluation report, reporting against agreed KPIs, and a full financial account reported against agreed budget.

As part of the monitoring and evaluation process, a number of groups will be selected to develop a full case study of the campaign.

Your Growth Fund Manager will provide a copy of the Growth Fund Campaign Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines and will support you through this process.

As part of the Growth Fund Agreement all supported campaigns are required to acknowledge VisitScotland's support through the use of branding logos and straplines, and in all PR undertaken as part of the campaign.

Where appropriate, groups will be expected to embrace and align with Scotland's themed years.

All logos, brand and PR guidelines will be provided to successful applicants.



## How to Apply

---

Growth Fund Panel dates are available from [visitscotland.org/growthfund](https://visitscotland.org/growthfund) so please visit the website for further information.

### PLEASE NOTE

Applicants must discuss their proposal with a member of the Growth Fund team prior to making a full application well in advance of the deadlines. Please contact the team at [growthfund@visitscotland.com](mailto:growthfund@visitscotland.com) to discuss your application, or complete the expression of interest form and we will get back to you.

To help with your preparation and planning, request an application form from the Growth Fund team at [growthfund@visitscotland.com](mailto:growthfund@visitscotland.com). You will be provided with a schedule of deadlines at on-line enquiry stage.

The application process takes approximately three months from initial enquiry through to consideration by the Growth Fund Panel.

VisitScotland aims to notify applicants of the outcome of their application within 14 working days of the Panel meeting.

Your Grant award, will be paid in instalments against an agreed payment schedule, in line with monitoring and evaluation requirements and subject to audit procedures as previously indicated. The final instalment will be made following the submission and approval of a satisfactory final monitoring and evaluation report.





Go to [visitscotland.org](https://visitscotland.org) to:

- Sign up to our industry newsletter the Tourism Insider
- Access a range of advice materials and toolkits
- See the latest tourism research and statistics
- Register for industry events

Follow our industry Twitter feed for the latest updates  
[@visitscotnews](https://twitter.com/visitscotnews) or connect with us through [linkedin.com/company/visitscotland](https://www.linkedin.com/company/visitscotland).

VisitScotland, Ocean Point One  
94 Ocean Drive, Edinburgh, EH6 6JH  
[businesscommunications@visitscotland.com](mailto:businesscommunications@visitscotland.com)

Image credits: VisitScotland/Kenny Lam, Discover Clackmannanshire/Damian Shields, Crieff Succeeds/Damian Shields, Wild About Argyll/Kieran Duncan

VisitScotland has taken all reasonable steps to confirm the information contained in the publication is correct. However, VisitScotland does not warrant or assume any legal liability for the accuracy of any information disclosed and accepts no responsibility for any errors or omissions.