



GREAT Gateway Innovation Fund 2025

Grant Scheme Guidance for Applicants

July 2025

Introduction

With the support of the GREAT Britain and Northern Ireland Campaign, the Fund provides financial assistance to UK-registered **DDPs (England only)**, **LVEPs (England only)** or **Regional DMOs (only in Scotland and Wales)**, to deliver marketing activity in either **France** and/or **The United States**.

The Fund focuses marketing innovation by targeting a specific inbound gateway or region in Great Britain which has a direct port of passenger entry, then encouraging dispersal beyond that point.

The DDP, LVEP or DMO is required to inspire and rally a) the local industry, b) a secondary destination partner, c) a commercial partner with an airline, ferry or train service to unlock matched investment, to extend the marketing campaign and reach a bigger audience. Working in collaboration with these partners, applicants will need to develop an international consumer marketing campaign that showcases the very best of that region, encourages dispersal beyond, to an experience seeker audience motivating them to travel to Great Britain in 2025/26.

The aim is for the funded campaigns to be live in market between October 2025 and March 2026 encouraging travel in the shoulder season to support seasonal objectives.

The target audience are '*Experience Seekers*', who are the best prospect segment and who want to squeeze the most out of every second whilst on holiday. Willing to spend on travel and experiences, they are passionate about travel, they love discovering new, unique, exciting experiences that they can share with others. They want to get ahead of the curve and be seen as a trailblazer, seeking out immersive experiences that allow them to see, taste and discover unique activities, places and people.

Full details on the Experience-Seekers can be found <https://www.visitbritain.org/our-marketing-and-campaigns>

What is the scope and purpose of the Fund?

This Fund aims to continue to support industry in promoting inbound tourism to a specific British gateway destination and encourage dispersal beyond.

VisitBritain is looking to support either a DDP, LVEP or DMO to;

- Promote and market your gateway/region and beyond, to an international consumer audience in France and/or The United States.
- Deliver a fully integrated consumer facing marketing campaign (this could include third-party media buy, influencer programme etc.) between October 2025 and March 2026 (this will be based on when you are aiming to fill a gap in capacity).
- Align to VisitBritain's '*Starring GREAT Britain*', Film/TV campaign.
- The applicant must inspire and rally a) local industry to get involved, b) a secondary destination partner to support the dispersal message, and, c) a commercial partner to support bookings.

- The primary commercial booking partner must be either a transport carrier (airline, ferry or train operator) or an airport. If an airport, either the destination and/or the airport must be the lead party in terms of the campaign creative and messaging. For creative reasons, multiple airlines flying to the same destination cannot be featured in the campaign. Supporting partners can be made up of industry of your choice.

** The route must be an existing route, with a minimum of 4 weekly direct flights/ferries/trains etc.*

- Augment the gateway/region marketing campaign budget with additional cash co-financing contributions and monetised in kind financial contributions. For every £1 in grant funds, prospective applicants will be required to secure a further minimum of £2 made up of a minimum 50 pence in cash co-financing contributions and an additional 150 pence in the value of monetised in-kind contributions from participating from campaign partners. Cash co-financing contributions should be sourced from either private sector companies and/or local authorities but not from other central government departments' grant schemes.
- Provide post-campaign quantitative evaluation results from the executed marketing activities, including:
 - Volume and value of consumer bookings generated from incremental visitors;
 - Measurement of the dispersal from your access /gateway point (we appreciate this can be a challenge but are open to test/pilot approaches); and,
 - Post Campaign Media Report

What is the budget of this Fund?

The Fund is a competitive grant scheme and can operate from October 2025 to March 2026, with a total budget allocation of up to £400,000. The assumption is that £400,000 will be awarded to one or two applicants, subject to assessment.

Who can apply?

The Fund is open to the following types of businesses, defined as follows:

- An English **destination development partnership (DDP)**
- An English **local visitor economy partnership (LVEP)**
- A regional **destination management organisation (DMO)** based in either Scotland or Wales.
- Applicants must have a permanent place of business in either England, Scotland or Wales (i.e. a registered office in either of these jurisdictions at Companies House). Please note that the home offices of individual employees would not be considered valid business addresses and therefore would be ineligible to apply.

For the sake of clarity, the following types of companies and organisations are ineligible for financial support from this Fund and so cannot apply¹:

- Destination Management Organisations in England not accredited as Local Visitor Economy Partnerships.
- National UK Tourist Boards
- Overseas-based Travel Agent Consortia
- Sole traders
- Industry bodies
- Membership organisations representing solely a sectional interest-group within the tourism and hospitality industries, such as hotelier associations and attraction groupings.

What type of funding is available? How much can organisations apply for?

Eligible applicants can apply for a cash grant as a part-contribution towards the cost of delivering an inbound gateway tourism marketing campaign targeting consumers in France and/or USA in 2025/26.

DDPs, LVEPs and DMOs, which meet the qualifying eligibility criteria can apply for a cash grant of up to £400,000. Those applying to target France, the minimum & maximum you can apply for is £100,000. For the USA, a minimum of £100,000 to a maximum of £400,000. The final campaign budget will be higher when partners' cash co-financing contributions and monetised marketing in-kind contributions are included.

VisitBritain expects to make one or two grant awards. Competition for funding is likely to be high as this grant scheme is open to eligible applicants across the three 'home' nations of Great Britain. In the event of the Fund being over-subscribed, we reserve the right to award a lower amount than that requested by the applicant, but with a minimum floor of £100,000.

What are the eligibility criteria?

Applicants must meet **all** of the following eligibility criteria:

1. Must be either an English DDP or LVEP or Scottish or Welsh DMO. Applicants must have a permanent place of business in Great Britain (i.e. registered office address with Companies House). Please note that the home offices of individual employees would not be considered a valid business address in Britain.
2. Be legally incorporated as a company limited by shares or guarantee (unless the applicant is a local authority or UK public sector body).
3. The eligible applicant must market/promote/sell the specified gateway/region and must demonstrate recent experience (namely, over the period from 2023-2025) of working in any overseas markets, as evidenced by previous marketing plans.

¹ If any applications are in fact received from this ineligible set, they will be identified at the initial checks stage and will not go forward for assessment and scoring.

4. Applicants must demonstrate that they will be able to secure cash co-financing contributions from industry partners to increase the overall campaign budget as well as monetised marketing-in-kind contributions in the form of consumer channels to reach the target audience. The cash co-financing contributions should be paid into the campaign budget held by the applicant. The sought-after ratio is 2 (partners): 1 (VisitBritain). To help explain the point, here is an example. If VisitBritain were to provide a cash grant of £100,000, then the grant recipient (lead partner) would need to 'match' that amount with at least one-quarter in additional cash (i.e. £50,000) and three-quarters in the value of marketing in-kind contributions (i.e. £150,000). The 2:1 match ratio is the minimum requirement, but applicants can exceed this.

Marketing in kind refers to any channels you can access for 'free' that will reach the experience-seeker audience. Such examples might include advertising space on partner websites, emails to targeted databases, out of home advertising in key locations, access to partner media channels etc. Applicants will be required to state what the expected reach and value is. VisitBritain reserve the right to review this with a media agency to assess value.

The 2:1 match ratio is the minimum requirement, but applicants can exceed this.

5. Must align to VisitBritain marketing strategy, including;
- Target experience- seeker audience <https://www.visitbritain.org/our-marketing-and-campaigns>
 - Must align with the VB Great Britain brand story (modern, dynamic, diverse Britain) and use of GREAT logo. [GREAT BrandBook updated 1.2E](#)
 - Must feature product aligned to the priority buckets of trails & adventure, innovative tastes and cultural powerhouse.
 - VisitBritain have a focus on TV/Film, '*Starring GREAT Britain*', which launched in January 2025. We would ask that within your activity plans product/experiences/content links back to this theme. Your Call to Action should include '*Visit the Star of the Show*'. See [Starring GREAT Britain narrative](#) document for more information.
6. Applicants must be able to show that it has the available people resources to deliver the activity funded by the grant. The grant cannot be used to support staff salaries, contractors' fees or business overheads and consequently it must be wholly spent on buying campaign media.
7. The applicant organisation must be able to show that it has the financial reserves to call upon and is not at risk of business failure and closure.
8. The Applicant must have a demonstrable track record of working with an international transport partner. Your application will need to be accompanied by (a) letter(s) of

commitment from the industry partners to the proposed marketing activity, along with confirmation of the matched value should your application be successful.

9. Applicants must commit to working with the VisitBritain local teams in relevant markets to ensure that their actual marketing plans can complement the wider Britain marketing message in 2025/26.
10. All applications must have a UK bank account in the name of the applicant which must be a corporate legal entity. A bank account in the name of an individual will not be acceptable.
11. Confirmation that the business was NOT in financial difficulty before 31 December 2019. Please see the Subsidy Control section in this guidance document for further information about the legal basis on which this grant-funding is being offered.

What types of marketing activity will Fund cover?

Eligible applicants can apply for grant-funding to support the cost of marketing tourism activities in the target markets of France and/or The United States as a means of driving tourism 2025/26.

The Fund will support sales and marketing activities and include activities, such as:

- Media buy with a third-party media owner (you will need access to a media agency).
- Development and delivery of an influencer trip or activation from relevant market
- B2B2C communication activities through third party tour operators and travel agencies.
- Other third-party marketing costs may be considered at the discretion of VisitBritain (i.e. third-party bespoke email development or targeted data purchase) but approval must be obtained prior to making expenditure commitments with the third party.
- PR, social media or any agency fees, production of new content/assets etc or any other added costs should not exceed 30% of the total cash budget.

Ineligible activities that the Fund cannot support, include *inter alia*:

- Business or product development such as business memberships, feasibility studies, research or business engagement activities.
- Business or product development activity business to business, i.e. events, trade shows, sales missions / calls.
- B2B familiarisation trips (B2C trips are allowed, for e.g. Influencer trips)
- New App development.
- Website development and/or upgrades.
- Capital costs and fixed business overheads, i.e. office and core staff costs, equipment, motor vehicle leasing contracts.
- Some B2B options may be considered if this value sits within your MIK proposal and does not exceed £50,000. This eligibility will be reviewed as part of the evaluation process.

Payments to any partners to promote the itineraries or content on their own channels (i.e. website, social media, email etc.) are also ineligible areas of expenditure.

If you have any queries about the potential eligibility of expenditure items within your budget when completing your application form, then please email InnovationGatewayFund@visitbritain.org

What should an applicant's detailed marketing plan include?

The primary objective of this activity is to drive incremental consideration and international spend to your proposed gateway/region, and beyond. Applicants must demonstrate in their application how their proposed plan will meet this objective if the application is successful. Your proposed marketing plan, outlined in your application, must include the following information:

- Plan objective – how will this activity drive incremental consideration to visit, and dispersal beyond your gateway/access point
- Description of proposed activity and associated plans, including;
 - Link back to Film/TV (i.e. Starring GREAT Britain) example imagery and key messages
 - How you propose weaving in a dispersal message. From a consumer's point of view where you would recommend to visit beyond the gateway depending on where you are traveling from. For example, France may be a short break, therefore it's exploring those destinations closer by. US staying longer, might be 5 nights, plus 3 elsewhere.
- Product content (i.e. accommodation, attractions, experiences, itineraries)
- Industry/ destination partners and the roles they play
- Targeting – geographical (do you have specific ports of entry from your proposed overseas market/s?)
- Marketing activity channels (i.e. proposed media partners, social media, PR etc.)
- Full breakdown of the total project budget in terms of the amount of the cash grant requested, industry partners' cash co-financing contributions and monetised in-kind contribution ("income side") along with a corresponding breakdown as to how this budget will be spent on eligible project activities ("expenditure side").
- Provide post-campaign quantitative evaluation results from the executed marketing activities, including;
 - Volume and value of consumer bookings generated from incremental visitors
 - Measurement of the dispersal from your access /gateway point (we appreciate this can be a challenge but are open to test/pilot approaches)
 - Post Campaign Media Report

Assessment Criteria

Applicants will be expected to develop and deliver an appropriate inbound gateway marketing plan to be implemented in market with relevant industry partners. You are advised to pay close attention to the scoring framework and weighting for each individual assessment criterion as this directly relates to how your application will be assessed. The successful applications will be selected via this standardised points-based system.

Assessment Criteria	Max. Points
A. Gateway Capacity Gap	25 points

The aim of the marketing campaign is to increase consideration of relevant gateway destination or region and disperse beyond, in the chosen GREAT overseas market and drive consumer bookings.

- Please detail the route and partner you wish to focus on, whether by air, sea or fixed rail from the Int'l gateway to the British gateway point, and the rationale to support this.
- To understand where capacity exists, please detail by month, the average volume of flights on that route, the loads factors inbound to the UK and what/where the capacity gap is you are aiming to fulfil.
- Please detail how your gateway/region fulfils the needs and aspirations of the Experience-Seeker audience in that market.

**The route must be an existing route, with a minimum of 4 weekly direct flights/ferries/trains etc*

Assessment Criteria	Max. Points
B. Industry Partnerships	25 points

- Please detail the industry partners with whom you propose to work, why they are relevant and the expertise they contribute to the proposed marketing activity. This must include:
 - a. Your commercial partner
 - b. Destination partner/s (supporting your dispersal message)
 - c. Broader industry partners
- Please demonstrate the commitment you have secured from your partners. You need to detail the split of third-party cash and MIK value (including what that MIK looks for e.g. media value, owned channel value which reaches Int'l audience, free of charge experiences for PR, production etc) and how this will be used within your marketing plans.
- Additional weighing will be given to those who exceed the cash match ratio

Assessment Criteria	Max. Points
C. Marketing Plans, Creative and Content	25 points

- Please outline your proposed marketing plan demonstrating how your gateway/region will be promoted by a mix of different activities, such as paid media, influencer trips etc. Your marketing plan should demonstrate how the target audience will be reached effectively. We would like to see the use of new and innovative media partners, consumer channels or creative delivery. Specific areas to address are:
 - How you propose weaving in a dispersal message

- How your creative and messaging with align with VB brand guidelines and Starring GREAT Britain.

Assessment Criteria	Max. Points
D. Objectives and Measurement	20 points

VisitBritain measures return on investment (ROI) via our brand tracker with a target ratio of 13:1. This means for every £1 invested in this campaign, we are looking to generate £13 back into the UK economy. VisitBritain will be responsible for managing this evaluation process.

In addition, your application should include reasonable forecasts for the following campaign metrics:

- Number of searches per partner within campaign period (plus two months following the end of campaign). Please detail expected results
- Number of bookings per partner within campaign period (plus two months following the end of campaign). Please detail expected results
- Year-on-year comparison for bookings within campaign period, based on last normal trading year pre-pandemic (plus two months following the end of campaign)
- Average of length of stay of bookers within campaign period if this applies (plus two months following the end of campaign)
- How are you proposing your measurement of the dispersal from your access /gateway point to that destination (we appreciate this may be a challenge but are open to test/pilot approaches)

NB the following will be required from the successful partner once planning/delivery is completed

- Media performance on campaign activity
- Measurement via VB Brand-Tracker will be required and managed via VisitBritain

Assessment Criteria	Max. Points
E. Resourcing and Expertise	5 points

- Please describe how you will mobilise this proposal if your application is successful and the staff resources you have available.

Timeline for Call for Applications

Eligible applicants should register on the www.grants.visitbritain.org and applications are submitted via the new Grants Portal.

The indicative timeline for this call for applications is set out below:

Key Stage	Date
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Prospectus available for the GREAT Gateway Innovation Fund 2025 on VisitBritain.org.	w/c 14 July 2025
Application goes live and opportunity is also advertised externally on Find a Grant on gov.uk. Applicants must sign up/register on the VisitBritain Grants Portal	From w/c 21 July 2025
Information / Q&A calls to take place with prospective applicants	w/c 14 July 2025 w/c 28 July 2025
Applicants can access the formal application via VisitBritain Grants Portal . Submission and claims will also take place within the Grants Portal .	From w/c 21 July 2025
Deadline for completed applications with supporting letters of commitment	Mid-day (UK time) on 21 Aug 2025
VisitBritain review and assessment of applications	Between 26 Aug and 5 Sept 2025
Indicative date when applicants will be informed about the decision reached by the Awards Panel	w/c 8 Sept
Grant award set-up and contracting meeting held by video call (up to 45 minutes) with each successful applicant.	From w/c 8 Sept 2025
Grant funding agreement issued for e-signing and exchange after video calls with each successful applicant.	From w/c 15 Sept 2025
Details of the proposed grant awards will be posted on the UK Subsidies Database ² when the grant funding agreement has been e-signed by both parties. The 30-day standstill period will then commence during which time a third party may launch a challenge and/or seek further information on the proposed grant. Campaign planning can continue during this period, but the grant award will remain provisional.	
Interim post-completion report evidencing the marketing enquiries evaluation	6 weeks from live date
Final post-completion report detailing the actual number and value (£) of bookings made	30 May 2026

Completed applications must be submitted via the grant's portal by **mid-day (UK time) on 21 August 2025**. Any applications received after this time will be disregarded. Applications will not be assessed on a first come first served basis but rather against the eligibility and scoring assessment criteria.

If the Fund is over-subscribed by applications that meet both the eligibility and the assessment criteria, those applications will be ranked by VisitBritain and the applications achieving the highest overall scores will be awarded funding. Consequently, we advise applicants to pay close attention to the scoring framework indicating those questions which are scored and the maximum number of points available under each of them.

Decisions on which applications to fund will be made by an Awards Panel, subject to the outcome of appropriate due diligence checks into the prospective grant recipients.

² See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/view-subsidies-awarded-by-uk-government>

Accessibility, Freedom of Information, and Terms and Conditions

Successful grant applicants will receive a draft Grant Funding Agreement to review prior to the grant set-up and contracting meeting that will last about 45 minutes held by video call. This is your opportunity to meet members of the Commercial Partnerships and Grants Management Teams and ask any questions you may have. After this meeting, you will then receive from the Procurement Team a finalised version of the Grant Funding Agreement for e-signing by DocuSign.

If you receive grant funding from this Fund and it is subsequently determined that you have provided false or inaccurate information as part of your application, or fail to meet the reporting requirements detailed in your Grant Funding Agreement, VisitBritain will seek to recover, with costs, all sums awarded to you from this Fund.

British Tourist Authority trading as VisitBritain is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and may be obliged to release information about your grant information or grant award in response to any questions received. Information on all grant awards will be uploaded to the Government Grants Information System, a database managed by Cabinet Office which is published annually to aid openness and transparency.

Code of Conduct for Grant Recipients

Grant making is an essential component in the tools available to VisitBritain to deliver our policy objectives. Grants are awarded to external organisations to assist us with the development of the British tourism industry, thereby supporting local economic development and helping UK tourism exports. This is why it is essential to ensure that grants are administered efficiently and effectively providing value for the UK tax-payer.

Prospective applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with the [‘Code of Conduct for Recipients of Government General Grants’ \(Cabinet Office, November 2018\)](#)³ which sets out publicly the expectations placed on grant recipients, in terms of ethical and professional behaviour. [\(Accessible version available.\)](#)

Data Protection

VisitBritain will use the data provided by You in the application form and supporting documentation to assess your application for grant funding, contact you regarding your application and for grant management purposes. Information provided by applicants as part of the process and/or the supporting documentation may be verified against other information sources

³ See

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/771152/2019-01-15_Code_of_Conduct_for_Grant_Recipients_v.1.01.pdf

held by other public sector bodies for verification purposes and reporting. For further information, please see <https://www.visitbritain.org/privacy-policy-terms-use-cookies-and-foi>

Subsidy Control

BTA is managing this Fund as a subsidy scheme. In line with Section 33 of the Subsidy Control Act 2022, subsidy awards under published schemes exceeding £100,000 must be uploaded to the UK Subsidies Database to aid transparency and this is the approach that BTA intends to follow. If no third party successfully challenges the proposed grant award during the 30-day standstill period, or seeks further information on the award, then it will become unconditional after this period this Fund forms

Further Information and Queries

If you have any queries about this grant-funding opportunity, please send an email to InnovationGatewayFund@visitbritain.org and a member of the Commercial Partnerships Team will contact you.