GREAT Gateway Innovation Fund

Grant Scheme Guidance for Applicants

September 2022
Introduction

With the support of the GREAT Britain and Northern Ireland Campaign\(^1\) ("the GREAT Campaign" or "GREAT"), the Gateway Innovation Fund ("the Fund") aims to provide financial assistance by way of a cash grant to a UK-registered Destination Management Organisation (DMO), UK-based tourism supplier or transport carrier in order to deliver marketing activity in either France, Germany, Spain, member-states of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) (namely, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia or United Arab Emirates (UAE)) or The United States. The Fund seeks to drive marketing innovation by focusing on a specific inbound gateway or region in either England, Scotland or Wales which has a direct port of passenger entry, whether an airport, a seaport or fixed rail link, to Britain from one of the GREAT overseas markets listed above.

The Fund is a new pilot programme for UK-based operators and DMO's with proven experience of working in international markets. Working in collaboration with local industry in the chosen gateway destination or region, prospective applicants will need to develop an international consumer marketing campaign (or activation) that showcases the very best of that region to a buzz-seeker audience motivating them to travel in 2023.

Buzz-seekers are outgoing, adventurous and experience-driven. They lead an active lifestyle and are naturally curious about the world, keeping up with a variety of news sources and travel interest publications. They seek out novelty, exciting and luxury experiences but also appreciate rest, relaxing and re-charging, meaning they are highly influential in their social circles. Younger buzz-seekers are likely not yet to be parents but those aged in their 30s and 40s are likely to have young children – although they may not always bring them on the trip, they are not always inspired by typical ‘family friendly’ activities. Social media is a key point of influence and plays a very important role in brand discovery. Buzz-seekers also expect brands to be eco-friendly and help them improve their knowledge and image.

Full details on the Buzz-seeker can be found [https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/buzzseeker_pen_portrait_-_global_accessible.pdf](https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/buzzseeker_pen_portrait_-_global_accessible.pdf)

What is the scope and purpose of the Fund?

The Fund addresses post-pandemic recovery and aims to enable eligible DMOs, UK-based tourism suppliers or transport carriers to harness the latest VisitBritain consumer research to develop and promote inbound tourism to a specific British gateway destination or region for international visitors from any of the five stated GREAT markets. The Fund is looking for eligible applicants to deliver a promotional campaign focused on a Britain region/gateway and to support the recovery of the tourism sector in line with HM Government’s Tourism Recovery Plan\(^2\) published in June 2021.

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1 See [https://www.greatcampaign.com/](https://www.greatcampaign.com/)
In summary, VisitBritain is looking to support either a DMO, UK-based tourism supplier or transport carrier able to:

- Promote and market your gateway/region experiences to an international consumer audience in any of the five stated GREAT markets.

- Deliver a fully integrated consumer facing marketing campaign or activation (this could include third-party media buy, an event in an international market, influencer programme etc.) to promote the relevant gateway/region to consumers in one of the five GREAT markets stated above.

- The applicant must inspire and rally local industry to get involved, plan and deliver this campaign on behalf of the gateway destination or region;

- 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 66 pence in cash co-financing contributions and an additional 134 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 central government departments’ schemes.

- Provide post-campaign quantitative evaluation results from the executed marketing activities, in particular showing the actual value (monetary GBP equivalent) and volume (number) of consumer bookings generated from incremental visitors to the gateway destination or region in 2023.

**What is the budget of this Fund?**

The Fund is a competitive grant scheme and will operate from 1 November 2022 to 31 May 2023 with a total budget allocation of up to £750,000. We expect that successful applicants will deliver marketing activities during the key consumer booking period from January to May 2023.

**Who can apply? -**

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

- **A destination management organisation (DMO)** based in either England, Scotland or Wales. This category includes local authority tourism services departments.

- **UK based tourism supplier** is any tourism business that offers services or experiences that are offered primarily to international leisure visitors in the destination, such as tourist accommodation providers, tour operators and experience providers.

- **A transport carrier** whether an airline, a ferry company or a railway tunnel operator.
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 apply:

- Overseas-based Tour Operators
- 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 one of the five GREAT overseas markets in 2023.

Applicants must secure the commitment from one (1) booking partner that sells travel to/for Britain and a minimum of one (1) supporting partner from local industry. Applications are encouraged from those potential applicants who can secure two (2) or more industry partners.

The grant funding must support a detailed marketing plan for the promotion of the gateway/region that involves marketing activity taking place during the key consumer booking period in the first half of 2023.

Britain-based DMOs, UK based tourism supplier or transport carriers which meet the qualifying eligibility criteria can apply for a cash grant ranging from £175,000 to £250,000. 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 between two and four 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 £150,000.

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3 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.
How will the grant be paid?

The cash grant can only be paid into a UK bank account and will be made in the following separate payment instalments:

- Instalment 1 - an initial payment of 20% of the grant will be paid following the e-signing of the grant funding agreement, not later than 31 December 2022.
- Instalment 2 – if you commence your marketing campaign in either February or March 2023, then a second payment of 30% of the grant will be paid before 31 March 2023.
- Instalment 3 – upon receipt of details of your actual, eligible marketing campaign expenditure for the entire period up to 31 May 2023, a third payment of 60% of the grant (or 30% if the conditions above in ‘Instalment 2’ apply) will be paid before 30 June 2023.
- Instalment 4 – successful applicants will be required to submit a report containing information on how the marketing activity has performed with data on the actual number and value of bookings up to 28 July 2023. Upon receipt of this report, the final 10% of the grant award based on the total final actual project costs reported at Instalment 3 Stage will be paid to the applicant.

Your forecast financial expenditure profile will be discussed at successful applicants’ project set-up meetings. We aim to release grant funds promptly modelled to your forecast expenditure profile: for instance, if you complete your marketing campaign earlier than 31 May 2023, then you can submit details of your total actual expenditure sooner.

What are the eligibility criteria?

Applicants must meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

1. **Must be a Britain-based DMO, UK based tourism supplier or transportation carrier.** 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 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 2018 to 2021) of working in any of the relevant five GREAT overseas markets, as evidenced by previous marketing plans.** For clarity the market selection in your application can be a market you have not worked in before, but you must show you have experience in another international market.

4. **Applicants must demonstrate that they will be able to secure cash co-financing contributions from industry partners in order 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 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 £200,000, then the grant recipient (lead partner) would need to ‘match’ that amount with at least one-third in additional cash (i.e. £133,000) and two-thirds in the value of marketing in-kind contributions (i.e. (£267,000).

By marketing in kind we mean any channels you can access for ‘free’ that will reach the buzz-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. You 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.

5. Additional weighting will be given to applicants who can exceed 2:1 ‘match’ ratio described above in Point 4.

6. Must align to VisitBritain marketing strategy, including;
   b. Must align with the VB Great Britain brand story (modern, dynamic, diverse Britain) and use of GREAT logo.
   c. Must feature product aligned to the priority themes in our storytelling framework

7. The Applicant 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 fund staff salaries, contractors’ fees or business overheads.

8. The Applicant must be able to show that it has the financial reserves to call upon and is not at risk of business failure and closure.

9. The Applicant must have a demonstrable track record of working with the proposed partners. 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.

10. Applicants must commit to working with the VisitBritain local teams in relevant markets in order to ensure that their actual marketing plans can complement the wider Britain marketing message in 2023.

11. 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.

12. 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, Germany, Spain, GCC and The United States as a means of driving forward tourism recovery in 2023.

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 event/s to have in-market
- 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 entering into spending commitments with the third party.
- PR, social media, events 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.

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.** Applicants must demonstrate in their application how their proposed plan will meet this objective if the application is successful. Your draft marketing plan, outlined in your application, must include the following information:

- Plan objective – how will this activity drive incremental consideration to visit?
• Description of proposed activity and associated plans, including example imagery and key messages. *For applicants in England only* – consider how this Fund could capitalise and take forward the legacy of earlier product and itinerary development projects supported by the Discover England Fund.

• Product content (i.e. accommodation, attractions, experiences, itineraries)

• Industry partners (besides hotel chains and key attractions, which transport carriers have routes, whether by air, sea or fixed rail, to your local port of entry?)

• 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”).

• Details on how you will report back on likely campaign performance; partners’ sales/bookings (value and volume)

**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.

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<th>Assessment Criteria</th>
<th>Max. Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>A. Market Alignment</td>
<td>25 points</td>
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The aim of the marketing campaign is to increase consideration of relevant gateway destination or region within Britain in the chosen GREAT overseas market and drive consumer bookings.

• Please detail the current transport routes, whether by air, sea or fixed rail, and current/future capacity levels from those routes into your gateway/ region from your chosen GREAT market.

• Please detail relevant accommodation product and known capacity levels for your gateway destination / region.

• Please detail how your gateway/region fulfils the needs and aspirations of the buzz-seeker audience in that market.
### Assessment Criteria

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<th>B. Industry Partnerships</th>
<th>Max. Points</th>
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- Please detail the industry partners with whom you propose to work, why they are relevant for the proposed marketing activity and what additional value and expertise they can bring to the campaign. This could include their reach to the audience, alignment to the brand, range of product/experiences they offer etc.

- Please demonstrate the commitment you have secured from those partners. You need to detail the split of cash and MIK value (including what that MIK looks like e.g. EDM’s, outdoor ad space, accommodation/experiences for influencer travel etc) and how this will be used within your marketing plans.

- Additional weighing will be given to those who exceed 2:1 ‘match’ ratio whether via cash additional co-financing contributions and/or monetised in-kind contributions (MIK) and secure the involvement of two or more industry partners.

### Assessment Criteria

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<th>C. Marketing Plans, Creative and Content</th>
<th>Max. Points</th>
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<td>25 points</td>
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- Please outline your proposed marketing plan demonstrating how your gateway/region will be promoted by a mix of different activities, such as paid media, events, 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.

VisitBritain’s marketing campaign in 2023 will aim to change perceptions to have people see Britain as a welcoming, dynamic and diverse destination, alive with spirit that needs to be enjoyed today, not “one day” as part of the Government’s GREAT Britain campaign, which invites consumers to “See things differently”. The campaign will focus on city plus, supporting those areas hardest hit by a lack of inbound tourism over the past two years.

- Please detail how you would align your creative and messaging with the VB brand framework

- Please detail how you would position your content/product to VB storytelling framework.
VisitBritain measures return on investment (ROI) via our brand tracker with a target ratio of 10:1. This means for every £1 invested in this campaign, we are looking to generate £10 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)
- Media performance on campaign activity
- Measurement via VB Brand-Tracker will be required and managed via VisitBritain
- You will be required to work with an evaluation agency appointment by VisitBritain to measure results

Timeline for Call for Applications

Eligible applicants should complete an application form available to download and send it along with the supporting documentation to InnovationGatewayFund@visitbritain.org

The timeline for this call for applications is set out below:
Grant Claim Form evidencing and seeking reimbursement of actual, eligible expenditure incurred on the project | 31 March and/or 31 May 2023
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Interim post-completion report evidencing the marketing enquiries evaluation | Summer 2023
Final post-completion report detailing the actual number and value (£) of bookings made | Summer 2023

Applications must be emailed to InnovationGatewayFund@visitbritain.org to arrive no later than **11:59hrs on Thursday, 13 October 2022** in order to be considered for funding. Any applications received after this time will not be considered. 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.

**Accessibility, Freedom of Information and Terms & Conditions**

If you are successful, we shall send your draft Grant Funding Agreement to review and then discuss it with you in a grant set-up and contracting meeting lasting 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 via our Procurement Team a finalised version of the Grant Funding Agreement for e-signing in order to accept the terms and conditions before the first grant instalment can be paid.

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) which sets out publicly the expectations placed on grant recipients, in terms of ethical and professional behaviour.

**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 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](https://www.visitbritain.org/privacy-policy-terms-use-cookies-and-foi)

**Subsidy Control**

**Confirmation of subsidies received**

This Fund forms part of the British Tourist Authority trading as VisitBritain’s COVID-19 recovery programme. Any grant awarded under this Fund will be made subject to the (new post-EU) subsidy control rules. The subsidy is granted under Article 364(3) of the UK/EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement, to respond to a national or global economic emergency. The grant award will be made under similar terms to the COVID-19 scheme in operation before 1 January 2021 and additional information will be provided to successful applicants in the grant funding agreement (award letter) and the terms and conditions.

You may need to declare any amount received from this Fund to any other aid-awarding body which requests information from you on how much aid you have received. You must retain the grant funding agreement for four years (i.e. until 31 March 2026) from the letter it was issued and produce it on any request from the UK public authorities.

A subsidy may be granted to economic undertakings (SME undertaking (i.e. an undertaking with 50 or more employees and 10 million euros or more of annual turnover and/or annual financial balance sheet) / Large economic undertaking (i.e. an undertaking that has 250 or more employees and 50 million euros or more of annual turnover and/or 43 million euro annual financial balance sheet ) that were not in difficulty, but faced difficulties or entered into difficulty thereafter as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. The subsidy is in addition to any aid that you may have received under the De Minimis regulation allowing aid of up to 325,000 Special Drawing Rights (SDR) to any one organisation over a three-year fiscal period (i.e. your current fiscal year and the previous two fiscal years).

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5 Special Drawing Rights (SDR) are a form international money, created by the International Monetary Fund, and defined as a weighted average of various convertible currencies. The current exchange rate from SDR to GBP (£ Sterling) may be found here: [https://www.imf.org/external/np/fini/data/rms_five.aspx](https://www.imf.org/external/np/fini/data/rms_five.aspx)
If you are a small and micro enterprise (i.e. an economic undertaking with less than 50 employees and less than €10 million of annual turnover and/or balance sheet) you may be granted aid even if you would fall under the category of undertaking in difficulty on 31 December 2019, provided that you are not subject to collective insolvency procedure under English law and that you have not received rescue aid (which has not been repaid) or restructuring aid (and are still subject to a restructuring plan).

**Undertakings in Difficulty Assessment**

In your application, if you are an SME or Large undertaking, as defined above, you will need to declare that on 31 December 2019, you did not meet any of the criteria to be considered an undertaking in difficulty.

‘Undertaking in difficulty’ means an undertaking in respect of which at least one of the following circumstances occurs:

a) In the case of a limited liability company (other than an SME that has been in existence for less than three years or, for the purposes of eligibility for risk finance aid, an SME within 7 years from its first commercial sale that qualifies for risk finance investments following due diligence by the selected financial intermediary), where more than half of its subscribed share capital has disappeared as a result of accumulated losses. This is the case when deduction of accumulated losses from reserves (and all other elements generally considered as part of the own funds of the company) leads to a negative cumulative amount that exceeds half of the subscribed share capital.

b) In the case of a company where at least some members have unlimited liability for the debt of the company (other than an SME that has been in existence for less than three years or, for the purposes of eligibility for risk finance aid, an SME within 7 (seven) years from its first commercial sale that qualifies for risk finance investments following due diligence by the selected financial intermediary), where more than half of its capital as shown in the company accounts has disappeared as a result of accumulated losses.

c) Where the undertaking is subject to collective insolvency proceedings or fulfills the criteria under its domestic law for being placed in collective insolvency proceedings at the request of its creditors.

d) Where the undertaking has received rescue aid and has not yet reimbursed the loan or terminated the guarantee or has received restructuring aid and is still subject to a restructuring plan.

**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.