



**Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon**
Borough Council

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

**ARMAGH APPLE ORCHARDS/CIDER
FARMS
VISITOR ENHANCEMENT CAPITAL
SCHEME**

APPLICANT GUIDANCE MANUAL

2020 - 2021

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to those applying for financial assistance under the Armagh Apple Orchards/Cider Farms Visitor Enhancement Capital Scheme 2020-2021 (the “Scheme”).

The primary aim of the Armagh Apple Orchards/Cider Farms Visitor Enhancement Scheme is to assist orchard/cider farm owners to develop and enhance existing visitor experiences that will appeal to international visitors and which will help to raise the profile of the destination.

The Schemes outcomes will:

- optimise the use of orchards/cideries within the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council area through sustainable business development. This will be achieved by strengthening the infrastructure to support rural tourism;
- encourage a greater number of overnight stays, increased visitor spend and repeat visits;
- develop the Apple Orchard/Cider Farms visitor experience which will play a key role in making this Borough a place of choice for international visitors, increase economic activity and;
- create employment opportunities and conditions for the further development of businesses.

This guidance manual details:

1. Guiding Principles;
2. Funding Scheme;
3. Process for making applications and;
4. How applications will be assessed.

Potential applicants should discuss their individual applications with the appointed Council Officer (see below) if they are unsure as to the eligibility of the project.

The first point of contact for queries is Rosemary Hughes by email to rosemary.hughes@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

1.1 Guiding Principles

The development of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council’s tourism product is important to the future economic growth of the district. While the area can boast a number of standout visitor attractions, research shows that tourism visits, spending and overnight stays underperform against the areas potential.

The *Integrated Tourism Development & Marketing Strategy & Action Plan 2017 - 2022* sets challenging targets for the development of the sector. Those targets are underpinned by a series of principles, which will guide the destination as it further develops its tourism economy:

Principles

- **Value:** The tourism offer will be developed on the basis of appealing to the higher spending independent traveller. In line with this, the primary focus will be on generating overnight stays;
- **Reflect Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland strategies:** The principle focus will be out-of-state visitor markets (i.e. from beyond Northern Ireland) and within

these markets, the key segment is the Culturally Curious. The key characteristics of the Culturally Curious segment are outlined as at Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Characteristics of the Culturally Curious Segment



- **Authentic, differentiated and innovative approach:** This will create iconic developments.
- **Sustainable development approach:** This will ensure the creation of a more viable sector.
- **Importance of pursuing accreditations:** To gain national and international recognition.
- **Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council commitment to the development of the area as a destination:** This can only be delivered through commitment by the public and private sector to growing the tourism economy.
- **Utilising the new Council powers:** To adopt a flexible, rapid and innovative approach to planning.
- **Investment:** The council recognises investment needs to be prioritised where there is potential for growth from out-of-state markets, whilst ensuring that the economic impacts are delivered across the Borough.
- **Building capacity and capability:** This will be across all stakeholders.

Priority initiatives will be those identified as being capable of assisting the destination to **stand out in a crowded market**. Initiatives should appeal to out-of-state travellers and reinforce the **Apple Orchards/Cider Farms product** as an International Visitor Experience through the curation of trails and tours.

2. What Financial Assistance Does Council Offer?

The Scheme has a limited budget and grants will be made through a competitive process.

It is anticipated that offers of grant aid will not exceed the Sterling (£) equivalent of €200,000 or 50% of total eligible spend whichever is the lesser. Grant award will be made to projects that meet the objectives of this Scheme and which fulfill the funding criteria.

For successful applicants up to 3 phase payments may be requested.

The key details of the Scheme are:

Scheme name	Armagh Apple Orchards/Cider Farm Visitor Enhancement Capital Scheme 2020-2021
Qualifying expenses	Capital works and associated professional fees only
Maximum Grant /Rate	Equivalent of €200,000 max or Up to 50% of eligible capital spend whichever is the lesser. Please note minimum project spend for this grant is £125,000
Project Delivery Period	All projects should be complete by 30 th September 2021.
Call Period	The call for applications will open at 9am on Thursday 13th February 2020 . Closing date for applications will be 12 noon Friday 17th April 2020 .

Applicants must demonstrate how their project meets the following programme outputs:

- a) provides managed visitor access to Apple Orchards/Cider Farms across the destination at least between the months of April and November (inclusive) annually for a minimum of 4 full days each week over this period;
- b) access should be available for both pre-booked groups and free independent travellers that have not pre-booked during the period set out at a) above.
- c) provides infrastructure that will allow for quality visitor experience(s) and event(s) to encourage immersive activities at the Apple Orchards/cider farms. Ideally, events will be hosted in collaboration with other artisan producers/businesses/organisations. As a minimum, these will comprise guided tours (self-guided and guided). An activity development plan which sets out proposals over the first year of operation is required to accompany the 3 year business plan;
- d) provides opportunities to increase the length of time visitors will dwell at the orchards/cideries and in the Borough to increase spending;

- e) where possible, provide opportunities for visitors to stay overnight in the Orchard/Cider Farm environment and;
- f) projects must be capable of attaining a minimum 4 star rating in the Tourism NI 'Visitor Attraction' or the 'Tourist Accommodation' grading Schemes. Early consultation with Tourism NI to ensure that the proposed project can meet this requirement is strongly advised, as the Council may consult Tourism NI in assessing funding applications submitted to this Scheme. The Quality Standards Team within Tourism NI can provide a point of contact 028 90 231 221.

We note that funding may be available, from time to time, from other sources. Invest NI may offer funding for Schemes that include tourist accommodation. Where alternate funding for your proposed project exists, you must pursue these opportunities prior to making an application to this Scheme.

3. Who Can Apply for Financial Assistance?

Applications will only be accepted from active, commercial orchards combined with commercial cider/juice businesses (most recent 3 years audited accounts are required to be submitted) that are located within the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough.

3.1 Council **will not** consider applications from Applicants that:

- are in breach of State Aid rules with regard to De Minimis funding, i.e. grants cannot be provided to a project under this Scheme if the business has received more than €200,000, inclusive of this grant request, in the last three years from public funding sources (see Appendix 10.1);
- discriminate against section 75 groupings (see Appendix 10.3);
- have not applied for planning permission (if required) by the Scheme application deadline of 17th April 2020;
- businesses which have been in deficit for last 2 financial years without a justifiable reason;
- are to be, or could be sold, within 12 months from the receipt of final payment of grant aid. Where an award under this Scheme has been offered and accepted, the full grant must be repaid to Council
- individuals;
- social enterprises and;

3.2. Council **will not** consider applications for projects/from organisations which:

- are located outside the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council area;
- have an eligible total capital spend of **less than £125,000** inclusive of professional fees
- are unable to provide most recent audited accounts from the previous 3 financial years
- do not meet the objectives of the Scheme
- are deemed not to appeal to out-of-state visitors;

- have already taken place or are already under way at the time of the funding application assessment;
- duplicate what already exists;
- which do not demonstrate collaboration with other tourist attraction/service/facility provider(s);
- are deemed to be commercially unsustainable;
- are of a party political nature;
- promote a particular religion or;
- are contrary to Council policy.

4. What Can You Apply For?

This is a Capital Scheme only. There is **no** funding towards revenue costs such as training, IT/e-business and marketing expenditure. The maximum level of financial assistance is 50% of total eligible capital costs up to a maximum of the **Sterling (£) equivalent of €200,000** of grant aid, the rate of which will be calculated on the day the Letter of Offer is issued using the European Bank rate. It is envisaged that a maximum of three Schemes will be supported. The Council however reserves the right to restrict a funding offer to certain elements of a project proposal.

It will **not** fund:

- land purchase or leasing
- costs incurred or any commitment to costs incurred prior to any offer of funding from Council (retrospective funding);
- non-project specific costs;
- costs representing poor value for money;
- items purchased outside of the Council procurement guidelines;
- recoverable VAT;
- an item which can be funded through another grant source;
- projects where contractors have already been appointed to undertake the work or;
- ongoing maintenance costs (e.g. painting) or consumables - i.e. goods used by individuals and businesses that must be replaced regularly because they wear out or are used up.

Multiple applications are not eligible for projects relating to the same apple orchard/cider farm business.

4.1. Eligible costs

Although not exhaustive, the following are examples of **eligible spend**:

- new visitor facilities (reception / welcome area, signage, retail area, catering space, visitor accommodation);

- professional & legal fees associated with capital spend on the planned project;
- statutory fees. **Please note, no retrospective funding will be given;**
- renovation works (e.g. extensions, refurbishment, modernisation, conversion, ground improvement works, lighting, electrical rewiring, plumbing and heating works as required for the delivery of the project);
- non recoverable VAT and;
- purchase of fixtures and fittings, which are an integral part of the project.

If you are unsure, please contact us for guidance.

5. Essential Documentation Required

The following supporting documentation is required to be submitted with the application

a. Evidence of security of tenure - either

- i. proof of ownership of the land and, or, property where your proposed project will be developed. This could be in the form of either a copy of the property/land deeds or a letter confirming ownership from a solicitor or;
- ii. a copy of the lease with at least 10 years duration remaining with written permission from the landlord for the project to proceed.

b. Evidence of project costs by providing:

- i. one quotation for the work that the funding application relates to **or**;
- ii. one cost estimate if produced by an appropriately qualified Quantity Surveyor.

Please note if an offer of grant aid is made the successful candidate **must** follow the Council's procurement process which will be provided with the Letter of Offer.

c. Evidence in writing that all required statutory approvals are in place or have been applied for e.g. Planning Permission **or** evidence in writing from the statutory agency that statutory approvals are not required for the works being proposed in the application;

d. Evidence that the balance of funding is in place (i.e. the finance is secured to pay the balance of project costs). Match funding can be a loan, cash, contract payments or a mixture of the three.

- Cash - provide a bank statement clearly indicating the necessary level of funding.
- Loan - provide an agreed loan offer from a financial institution.
- Future contract payments (not extending beyond the duration of the Letter of Offer) – detail expected contract payments and dates along with the relevant contact and letter from the buyer confirming when

payment is due as well as a signed letter from the owner/applicant that the money will be ring fenced for the project.

- Please note applicants must be able to confirm that match funding is available at a minimum rate of at least 50% of total project costs as part of their application.
- e. A 3 year business plan including 3 year financial projections together with an activity development plan for the first full year of operation. **EVEN IF YOU ALREADY HAVE A BUSINESS PLAN PLEASE USE THE BUSINESS PLAN AND FINANCIAL TEMPLATES PROVIDED**

6. Completing and Submitting the Application Form

Guidance on how to respond to the specific questions is included at Appendix 10.5

It is recommended that you take the time to read the guidance offered.

6.1 The following are the important matters in relation to submitting your application:

- All applications **should** be submitted online. However, a hard copy of the application form can be requested by those who do not have access to a computer.
- The funding call will remain open until 12 noon on Friday 17th April 2020, after which no applications or materials (unless specifically requested by Council) will be accepted.

Please note: Incomplete applications, which do not include the necessary supporting material and/or applications received after the closing date will not be considered for evaluation.

7. Site Visit

Following the submission of the application and prior to the application assessment a **mandatory site visit** will be conducted by a Council Officer in order to clarify any outstanding issues.

If additional information is required and cannot be provided at site visit, you will be given **5 working days** from the date of the site visit to provide this. Failure to meet the time limit will lead to the automatic rejection of the Application.

8. Assessment Process

Assessment will be carried out using a standard assessment process:

Applications that pass the eligibility checks will be scored against the assessment criteria outlined below.

Criteria	Weighted Score Range
The need for the project	0 – 10
Fit with specific Scheme aims and objectives	0 – 10
State of readiness	0 – 15
Clear assessment of the target markets & segments and routes to market	0 – 10
Ability of applicant to deliver/experience	0 – 10
Commercial sustainability	0 – 25
Innovation – experience development/animation proposal	0 – 10
Collaborative working/potential long term impact	0 – 10

Applications scoring 70%+ will be ranked and recommended an award up to a maximum of 50% of the total eligible capital project costs or the Sterling (£) equivalent of up to €200,000 maximum, in line with De Minimis regulations. It is anticipated a maximum of three projects will be supported.

Applications scoring below 70% will be deemed unsuccessful and rejected.

Grant recommendations will be considered and ratified by elected members through the appropriate Council Committee process.

The assessment process will produce one of two outcomes:

Successful application – an application will be successful and may be issued with a Letter of Offer if it:

- meets the criteria of the Scheme and;
- reaches the pass score of 70%;
- all of the information requested during the application and subsequent site visit stages is provided and;
- the Scheme budget is available.

Rejected application - an application may be rejected in the instance of any or all of the following:

- fails to meet the criteria of the Scheme;
- has failed to reach the pass score of 70%;
- all of the information requested during the application stages has not been submitted or;
- the Scheme budget has been committed.

In such cases, a letter detailing the reasons for rejection will be issued and the applicant will be given the opportunity to appeal through the Review Process.

8.1 Review Process

Following the decision to reject an application, the Applicant will be informed in writing stating the reasons for the decision. The Applicant may make a written request to review the decision within 10 working days from the date of the rejection letter. The formal review will provide an independent process through which the applicant will have the opportunity to demonstrate in writing to the Review Panel that either:

- 1 the decision was wrong because the Council failed to take into account the information contained within the Application or took into account information that was not contained within the Application and/or;
- 2 there was a failure in adherence to procedures and guidance issued with the call for applications or systems that materially affected or could have materially affected the decision and/or;
- 3 that Officers involved in the assessment process had a clear conflict of interest and had failed to declare this in the appropriate manner.

Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered. It should also be noted that **no** additional supporting documentation will be permitted at this stage.

8.2. Grant offer

Applicants in receipt of a grant offer must agree to and formally accept the Council's Terms and Conditions of Grant Award within 28 calendar days of the Letter of Offer date. These terms and conditions are numerous but include an undertaking that:

- the Council's procurement processes will be followed when delivering the project. The Council's Procurement Team will be available to advise the successful applicants in this regard;
- all works must be carried out and supervised by suitably qualified professionals and this should be included in the costings for the project;
- the award will be appropriately acknowledged (Section 9) and;
- grant aid will not be paid until all appropriate statutory permissions have been granted e.g. Building Control.

Failure to accept and to adhere to the Terms and Conditions of an award will result in the Letter of Offer being withdrawn and any grant paid being repaid to the Council.

8.3 Stand still period & claw-back arrangements

Following assessment a "stand still" period of 6 calendar weeks **may** be instigated. This means that the funds **may** not be formally available to the Applicant during this period. The reason for the stand still period is to allow sufficient time for Council to consider any appeal application that may be raised by an unsuccessful applicant.

The Letter of Offer will also include "claw-back" arrangements. These will be invoked where a successful Applicant does not deliver or operate the project in line with the objectives of the Scheme and as set out in its Business Plan and, or, Letter of Offer or where the Applicant sells the business, or the project, to a 3rd party during a period of

10 years from the date of the final grant payment to the Applicant made under the Scheme. The claw-back is as set out in the Terms and Conditions of Grant Aid.

8.4 Procurement

Successful applicants must agree to Council's Terms and Conditions of Grant Award. These are numerous but include an undertaking that:

- All works will be carried out and supervised by suitably qualified professionals and;
- Council's procurement processes will be followed when delivering the project ie:

<i>Estimated Value</i>	<i>Process To Be Used</i>
Where estimated cost does not exceed £1,500	A minimum of 2 written competitive quotations required.
Where estimated cost is £1,501 - £7,500	A minimum of 3 written competitive quotations required.
Where estimated cost is £7,501 - £20,000	A minimum of 4 written competitive quotations required.
Where estimated cost is £20,001 - £30,000	A minimum of 4 selected tenders*
Where estimated cost exceeds £30,000	Public advertisement required

*A selected tender is a written quotation with a full suite of tender documentation.

Failure to adhere to the Terms and Conditions of an award will result in the Letter of Offer being withdrawn.

9. Acknowledging a Grant Award

Successful applicants must acknowledge the support of the Armagh Apple Orchards/Cider Farms Visitor Enhancement Capital Scheme by including the Council logo on all promotional material (both print and non-print) and on any plaques erected. The logo in its various forms and logo usage guidelines are available upon request from:

Armagh Office:

Caitriona Rafferty Tel: 028 3752 9698

Email: caitriona.rafferty@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

Banbridge Office:

Sharon Harrison Tel: 028 4066 0619

Email: sharon.harrison@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

Craigavon Office:

Hugh Carey Tel: 028 3831 2443

Email: hugh.carey@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

If running an official opening you must invite the Lord Mayor to attend. Occasionally you may be asked to attend a photo call/launch event.

Failure to acknowledge funding in this way may result in the award being withdrawn, which in turn may affect future applications.

10. Appendices

10.1 State Aid Regulations

The Armagh Orchards/Cider Farms Visitor Enhancement Capital Scheme is operated as De Minimis state aid. Grants provided under this Scheme are granted in accordance with the criteria set out below and provided that the applicant qualifies to make the grant based on the De Minimis Regulation (Commission Regulation (EU) No. 1407/2013). 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 three-year period.

Grant awards made under this Scheme are approved on condition that the grant combined with any other De Minimis aid (from a public source) received during a rolling three year fiscal period does not exceed the ceiling of €200,000 for all De Minimis aid. The period of three fiscal years shall be determined by reference to the fiscal years used by the undertaking. A group of linked enterprises is treated as a single undertaking for the purpose of the De Minimis Regulations.

Grantees are required to disclose all De Minimis funding awarded in the application form. Applicants should declare all public support already received, anticipated or that might possibly be received with respect to the project.

10.2 Council Tourism Priorities

Council's Integrated Tourism Development & Marketing Strategy & Action Plan 2017 – 2022

Any financial assistance provided by Council must further the delivery of Council's ***Integrated Tourism Development & Marketing Strategy & Action Plan 2017 – 2022*** and be consistent with its contents. The document sets out a comprehensive vision, mission and values for the area and for Council.

The strategy highlights include:

Tourism vision: to be a market leading cultural tourism destination in Ireland by 2022

The Strategy and Action Plan prioritise a range of initiatives and actions by allocating them into Tiers. There are six key interventions that will be implemented under the Tier 1 Strategic Priorities:

- establish Armagh City as the centrepiece of the destination;
- develop the Apple Orchards/Cider into an International Visitor Experience;
- actively pursue appropriate accommodation development opportunities with the private sector;
- invest in gateway projects of scale at the FE McWilliam Gallery & Studio;
- package visitor experiences based on the destination's unique stories; and
- focus the destination's events programme.

So far as its economic development strategy is concerned, Council's number one priority is to grow the local economy and the agri-food sector is a priority growth sector within that Strategy. Developing the Apple Orchards/Cider into an International Visitor Experience fits within that objective (hence its Tier 1 status within the Integrated Tourism Development & Marketing Strategy & Action Plan), and the funding Scheme underpinning the development of Orchards Cideries will also help to secure a legacy from the Council's recently introduced Food Heartland initiative which seeks to promote and showcase the abundance of specialist artisan food & drink producers to locals and to visitors. While cider production is one of the Borough's leading agri-food products, the wide array of artisan producers in the area and the local users of those products create the opportunity for collaboration, which is why this Scheme expects a collaborative element.

The real benefit of tourism to the local economy is in attracting overnight visitors to the destination. The council area performs poorly in this regard and this is due in part, to the range and quality of the accommodation offer in all categories. The overall supply of visitor accommodation is one of the lowest of all LGDs in Northern Ireland and unless this is addressed, it will have a serious impact on the destination's ability to grow as a tourist destination and on its contribution to the local economy.

Particular accommodation needs have been identified as including the development of a 4 star boutique hotel in Armagh City in a building of historic significance (i.e. Gaol, Archbishop's Palace, Courthouse etc.), the provision of licensed guest inn accommodation in Armagh City and the surrounding rural orchard hinterlands, high quality B&B and Guesthouse accommodation in Armagh City (ideally, also in buildings of heritage merit), budget hotel accommodation near Banbridge on the main A1 economic corridor between Dublin and Belfast and an upmarket hotel with conference facilities at Craigavon to support the needs of the global companies located there. Proposals are also being developed for Gosford Forest Park to make provision for 5 star log cabin accommodation as part of a wider redevelopment and update at the Park, while consideration will be given to country house style accommodation at the Manor House, Loughgall should this become available as part of the Loughgall Country Park masterplan proposals.

Beyond these, the Council will work in conjunction with developers of other Schemes, particularly where such Schemes reflect the needs of international travellers, and add to the stock of higher end, unique, accommodation.

The funding available under this Scheme creates the opportunity to incorporate accommodation within any project proposal. Depending on the nature of that element of any project proposed, funding may also be available from Invest NI.

10.3 Section 75

Section 75 lists the nine categories for which due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity must be paid, namely between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without.

10.4 Supporting Documents Checklist

The following documents should be supplied at the application stage. They can be supplied by uploading directly as part of the submission of your application form. This is done by clicking the 'Upload' button on the Documents page of the application website.

Essential Documents

In order to qualify as a full application the following must be submitted/uploaded with your application.

<u>Documentation</u>	√
Evidence of security of tenure, either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of ownership • Evidence of lease for at least 10 years duration & permission from landlord to proceed. 	
Evidence of potential project costs either : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one quotation for the work that the funding application relates to; or <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one cost estimate if produced by an appropriately qualified Quantity Surveyor. 	
State of Readiness - Evidence in writing that planning approvals have either been <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • applied for • are in place • are not required 	
Evidence that match funding (loan agreement/cash/future contract payments) - evidenced by a letter from the lending institution, bank statement/letter(s) from buyer(s).	
Most recent 3 years audited annual accounts	
Completed De Minimis Declaration (to be completed as part of the online application).	
Business Plan and associated Financial Templates (3 years) using the templated provided	
1 year Activity Development Plan	

10.5 Completing the Application Form

This section offers help regarding the type of information we are looking for when answering specific questions. It is designed to help you - so reading it and referring to it when completing the application form is likely to improve your chances of securing funding.

In general, please note the following:

- answer each question as fully as possible and do not be reluctant to repeat part of an answer given in response to one question, when answering another question if the answer is relevant and;
- assume that the Council Officer assessing your Application knows nothing about your project or your organisation.

Section 1 – Business Details

Please complete the name of your business and the registered business address.

Section 2 – Applicant Details

Please ensure the person contact details included within your Application are accurate (name, email, phone number) as this will be the only person we will contact regarding your application.

Section 3 – Project Detail & Assessment Criteria

Brief Description of the project or activity for which funding is being sought.

You should provide sufficient detail to enable the assessment panel to understand what your project is about and what you will do.

Where will your project be delivered?

Please tell us the name of the venue or site and address (including postcode) where you will deliver your project; and if the venue or site is owned or leased?

Assessment Criteria

Your application will be assessed/scored using the following criteria.

Criteria	Score Range	Weighting	Total Maximum Score
The need for the project	0 – 5	2	10
Fit with specific Scheme aims and	0 – 5	2	10
State of readiness	0 – 5	3	15
Clear assessment of the target markets & segments and routes to market	0 – 5	2	10
Ability of applicant to deliver/experience	0 – 5	2	10
Commercial sustainability	0 – 5	5	25
Innovation – experience	0 – 5	2	10
Collaborative working/potential long term	0 – 5	2	10
		Total	100

Identified Need for the project

The need for the project (score 0-5, weight by 2)

- **Need for the project** – You are required to conduct a needs/gap analysis of the current provision of visitor facilities, interpretation storytelling and animation at your orchards/cider farm. A solution will then be required to address these gaps in the experience. A high score will only be achieved if there is a clear analysis of need for the proposed project and an understanding of how this will be addressed. Some aspects to consider include:
 - People
 - Story/Originality
 - Experience
- This section should include:
 - What is the specific market need and what is the evidence from Tourism Ireland, Tourism NI, Council Corporate and Tourism Strategy, other relevant strategies and your customer feedback to support the need?
 - Why existing provision does not meet the market need (this may be covered in the above but should also consider whether there are other similar facilities in the area) and what gap your project will address? Outline how duplication with other facilities will be avoided.
 - What is the need for specific capital works (structural need) and how does this respond to the market need?
 - What are the benefits to the economy including the tourism economy of the Borough and beyond?
- Evidence may include:
 - Are there published statistics which show a need?
 - Have you carried out a survey or is there anecdotal evidence from existing or potential new customers?
 - Are you oversubscribed and is there a waiting list or can you expand your capacity through this project?
 - Have you had a condition report produced?
- You should detail as much evidence as possible and be specific. Quote numbers where possible and highlight why existing provision does not address the current and future anticipated need.

Fit with specific Scheme aims and outputs

- **Specific programme outputs** (score 0-5, weight by 2) – a maximum score should only be achieved where the applicant has articulated well:
 - Detail how the project meets the Scheme aims and outputs.
 - appropriate output indicators – e.g. days open, tour slots provided, ancillary events, experiential activities, extended dwell time and spend etc.
 - appropriate targets – these must be specific outcomes.
 - how the investment might support existing or result in new jobs.
 - how achievement of Scheme outputs will be monitored and measured

To give a high score, assessors must be convinced the project being applied for can deliver against the Scheme aims and outputs identified.

State of Readiness

- **Specific programme outputs** (score 0-5, weight by 3) – a maximum score should only be achieved where the applicant has secured all required planning approvals or where clear evidence has been presented that such approvals are not required, according to the following:

State of Readiness	Score
Full Planning approval in place or No statutory approvals required	5
Outline Planning approval in place	3
Planning permission applied for	1
Planning permission not applied for	0

Clear assessment of the target markets & segments and routes to market

Clear assessment of the target markets and segments and routes to market (score 0-5, weight by 2)

- **Target markets and segments** – a maximum score should only be achieved where the applicant has articulated **well**:
 - Clear outline of target markets and segments;
 - Strategy for targeting markets and segments including pricing;
 - Action Plan for targeting markets and segments.

Deliverability/Experience

Ability of applicant to deliver/Experience (score 0-5, weight by 2)

- **Ability of applicant to deliver** – a high score should only be achieved if the applicant has clearly demonstrated a strong ability to deliver the project through:
 - their own experience/skills and qualifications; and/or
 - skills/experience they are buying in;
 - having sufficient, qualified employee resource to manage the Scheme once live. A staffing structure should be supplied together with an outline of the relevant experience of these staff.

Commercial sustainability

Commercial sustainability (score 0-5, weight by 5). You must complete the business plan and associated financial templates to include the following information:

- 3 previous years accounts – explaining any loss or anomalies
- baseline figures must relate to current, relevant business
- **detailed robust assumptions** for all income and cost categories
- financial template provided completed in full with realistic detailed figures

The amount requested for this grant must not exceed €200,000/Sterling (£) equivalent. You cannot request more than 50% in any line under 'Amount requested from Council'.

In your business plan you must detail all the costs of your project/activity and how much funding you are applying to us for in the following format:

	ITEM OR ACTIVITY (e.g. capital works, professional fees)	TOTAL COST OF ITEM/ACTIVITY	YOUR CONTRIBUTION	AMOUNT REQUESTED FROM COUNCIL
1.				
2.				
3.				

Evidence of project costs must be provided at time of application - this must be either a quotation or a cost estimation provided by a qualified Quantity Surveyor.

You can only request 50% from us. You must detail where the balance of funding will come from (i.e. Own resources, a loan etc.)

	SOURCE	AMOUNT	SECURED Y/N
1.			
2.			
3.			

Innovation – Activity Development Plan.

Provision of an activity development plan detailing aspects of innovation and clear animation associated with the Scheme (Score 0-5, weight by 2).

A maximum score should only be achieved where the applicant has articulated well:

- a clearly considered and scheduled activity plan for the first year of operation;
- a plan that maximises use of the new capital facilities;
- a plan that illustrates innovation and shows understanding of what appeals to discerning international visitors and how this will be practically delivered;
- a plan that is deliverable from a human and financial perspective.

An activity development plan should outline how visitors should experience your space, what they will see and do when they arrive, during the visit and when they leave. It is an opportunity to review what you currently offer visitors in terms of experience and quality and a look at what opportunities for enhancing the visitor experience could be available on a year round basis.

Collaborative working

Cross selling and cross-promotion are core to the strategic development of Council's Tourism Strategy. The benefits of these are clear – improved dwell time and increased visitor spend in the area. Stories can link places and by cross promoting we are supporting a unified and coherent destination by clustering with nearby tourism businesses and supporting each other.

You should demonstrate clear evidence of increased collaborative working with the tourism and hospitality and across the economic sectors (score 0-5, weight by 2).

A maximum score should only be achieved where the applicant has demonstrated an excellent response to:

- Identifying other places/experiences/businesses within and outside the Borough, if appropriate, you will cross promote after the project is completed.
- Specifying how you will cross-sell/cross-promote these linked experiences.
- Evidencing that the collaboration is deliverable.
- Identifying the benefits of the collaboration to the project and to the wider tourism destination.

Generic Scoring Guidance		
Analysis of Answer	Description	Score
Excellent response that meets the requirements. Indicates an excellent response with no obvious weaknesses.	Excellent	5
A good response that meets the requirements. Demonstrates good understanding.	Very Good	4
Meets requirements. The response generally meets the requirements, but lacks sufficient detail to warrant a higher mark.	Good	3
A response with reservations. Lacks convincing detail. Medium risk that the Scheme objectives will not be met.	Poor	2
An unacceptable response with serious reservations. Limited detail. High risk that the Scheme objectives will not be met.	Very Poor	1

Generic Scoring Guidance		
Analysis of Answer	Description	Score
The applicant failed to address the question.	Did not answer question	0

Section 4 – Any Other Information

Please provide any additional information that you feel is relevant to your application

While Council is under no obligation to use the information provided in this section, and it is unlikely to form part of the scoring of applications, you may wish to provide additional information to explain or clarify any issue raised above. This is also an opportunity to explain anything that does not fit easily into any of the boxes in Section 2 of the application form.

In particular, if you have applied to another funder for the same costs you are applying to us for, then you must detail this information in this section.

Document/Evidence Checklist

You must upload the documents outlined on the checklist.

Given the maximum level of support which may be offered under this Scheme, we require a business plan and completed financial projects in support of your application (templates provided). Where your Application is successful, a Letter of Offer will be issued to you and will form the basis of the contract between the Council and the successful applicant. The Letter of Offer will also contain all terms and conditions related to the offer of funding.

Section 5 – Declaration

This is important and you should read very carefully before you sign. Online applicants will be asked to agree the declaration.

11. Post Approval

11.1 Project Delivery Team

If your project is approved for grant funding, you will be offered a grant amount based on the indicative eligible costs that you presented in the application form.

Following receipt of a Letter of Offer, you will be required to procure your project following council procurement guidelines (see section 8.4).

Please note if the actual costs exceed anticipated costs the Letter of Offer **may** be reviewed, however funding will not exceed €200,000 (or 50% of eligible costs). Likewise, if the actual costs are lower than the anticipated costs the grant offer may be reduced.

11.2 Project Implementation

A Council Officer will monitor the implementation of the project in accordance with the finalised design.

11.3 Grant Claiming Process

Grant payments will only be made to the body specified as the grantee and will be based on eligible expenditure incurred and paid by the grantee. Expenditure paid by a third party, unless reimbursed by the Grantee, will not be grant-aided. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council will carry out verification checks on the claim and on the project delivery before passing the claim for payment.

Stage payments can be requested. The timing of these grant payments will be agreed prior to works beginning on site.