

## 3. Support for Rural Tourism

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### National Measures

Support for tourism business start-up and business development projects that develop high quality visitor products and services that link tourism providers, extend the tourism season and encourage visitors to stay.

### Who can apply?

- New or existing micro or small business (this includes farm businesses diversifying into tourism activities)
- A community group that wants to invest in a small scale infrastructure to support and develop tourism
- A group of rural tourist businesses working together to develop clusters of activity
- Local authorities and administrations
- Public-private partnerships
- Non-Governmental organisations (NGOs)
- Organisation in charge of tourist and recreational development, for example a destination organisation (that is, an organisation whose role is to promote tourism in a particular location or area.)

### Grant limits

The maximum grant rate is:

- up to 40% of a project's eligible costs for commercial projects and the grant amount is limited to €200,000
- Up to 80% for non-profit making investments that have a wider benefit for the local tourist economy (e.g. events and festivals) and where there is some income to offset costs but no maximum grant amount.
- Up to 100% for projects that have a benefit in terms of value added to the wider local tourist economy where there is no income, such as paths, cycle paths, signage and interpretation boards for paths and trails, visitor information centres.

### Eligible areas of support include

- Developing high quality visitor products and services that encourage tourists to stay longer, link tourism providers together and extend the tourism season
- Developing quality accommodation where there are clearly defined wider benefits to the local tourism economy and where activities do not displace existing accommodation
- Supporting tourism activities/niche products linked to quality local food, culture, heritage and rural crafts/assets such as heritage events and festivals promoting local culture
- Supporting shops, catering services – restaurants and cafes where there are wider benefits to the local tourism economy
- Developing access infrastructure to help people connect to the natural environment such as paths and cycle-ways
- Supporting tourism information centres and associated visitor information;
- Developing and associated marketing and signposting of culture, leisure, heritage, visitor activities or attractions

- Supporting events and festivals
- Developing innovative technology that enhances collaboration between businesses and provides information to attract visitors

### Costs could include

- Construction, acquisition (including leasing) or improvement to immovable property
- General costs linked to facilitating investments such as architect, engineer, consultation fees, but these cannot add up to more than 15% of the project's eligible costs
- Marketing and promotion where these are part of a larger project
- Capital costs involved in supporting events and festivals (for example equipment hire, marquee hire, marketing development costs)
- Short term salaries associated with the project development of events and festivals
- Intangible investments including, acquisition or development of computer software and acquisition of patents, licences, copyrights, trademarks.

### Ineligible costs in addition to the general costs

- computers, software and printers used for the general running of the business, such as processing orders and accounts.
- moveable fittings such as soft furnishing, beds, tables, chairs, curtains, television and audio equipment, crockery, cutlery, small kitchen equipment;
- tourism brown signs and motorway signage.
- landscaping – unless it is part of 'making good' for an application for a major attraction or accommodation expansion. In which case, only the landscaping contractor's fees would be eligible, not plants, seeds, turf or trees.
- projects to meet statutory requirements for disabled access, fire regulations or emergency exits, unless the costs of providing access, exit and complying with regulations forms part of the normal costs for a major expansion project.
- Salaries and overheads of applicant or staff employed to run events and festivals.