

# PLATFORMS FOR GROWTH

A PROGRAMME FOR TOURISM INVESTMENT

2019 - 2022

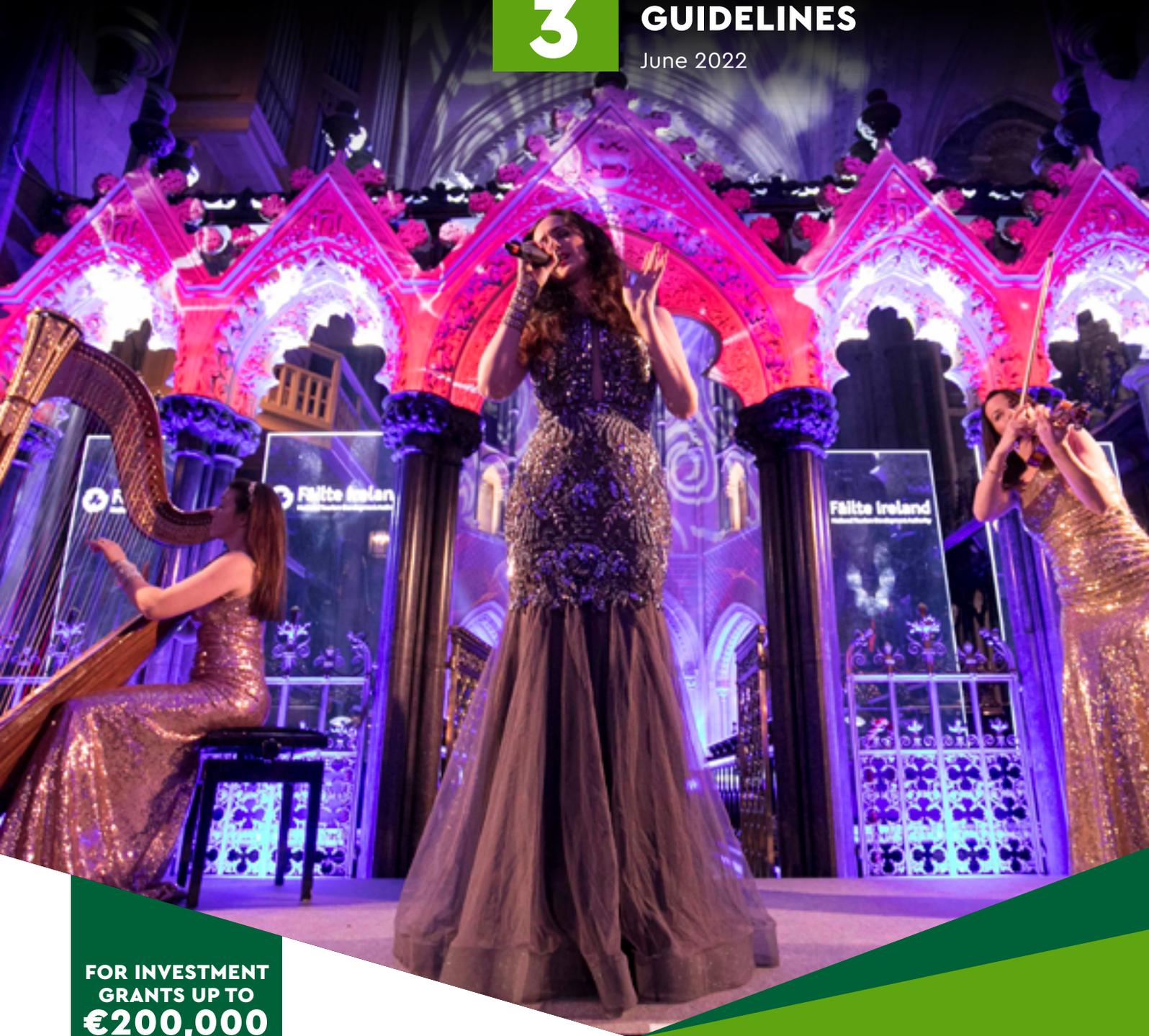
PLATFORM

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Gala Dinner Venues  
Investment Scheme

**GUIDELINES**

June 2022



FOR INVESTMENT  
GRANTS UP TO  
**€200,000**



Riailtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland

Tionscatal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
**2040**



## ABOUT FÁILTE IRELAND

Fáilte Ireland was established under the National Tourism Development Authority Act 2003. Our role is to guide and support sustainable growth in tourism earnings and employment. We provide consumer and competitor insights, mentoring, investment and trade supports across the business, event and leisure sectors, to help secure sales growth from targeted overseas and domestic market segments.

Working in partnership with tourism businesses, Local Government, State Agencies and Government Departments, we also seek to foster a competitive and innovative enterprise base, a sensitively managed natural and built environment within tourism communities and a public policy environment to meet the needs of visitors.

**Want to know more?**  
See our website: [www.failteireland.ie](http://www.failteireland.ie)

## SCHEME OVERVIEW

The lack of unique gala dinner venues of scale has long been an impediment to the growth of the international Business Events market to Ireland. The overall objective of this focused capital investment scheme is to facilitate the development of 'wow' gala dinner venues of scale in the environs of Ireland's premier Business Events hubs, i.e. Dublin, Cork, Kerry, the Shannon Region and Galway. Targeting the gap identified in this Business Events segment will ensure recovery and growth of revenue which is central to Fáilte Ireland's sustainable growth agenda.

### Main elements of the Scheme:

- The proposed venue, following development, must have capacity for a minimum of 350 diners banquet style in Dublin, or a minimum of 250 diners banquet style in the other four regional locations.
- The types of projects envisaged are for both **indoor** gala dinner venues (new builds/upgrades to existing buildings, including fit-out costs) and **outdoor** gala dinner venues (infrastructural works to develop an outdoor area for high-capacity stretch tents, purchase of stretch tents or temporary glass structures.).
- The Scheme is open to eligible private, public and voluntary sector applicants and will provide investment grants of up to a maximum of €200,000. Up to 100% of total eligible capital costs may be supported.

Proposals located outside of the Business Events hubs listed above are not eligible under this call. See illustrative map in Appendix 1 for more information.

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>PLATFORM: GALA DINNER VENUES</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>HOW THE SCHEME WORKS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>APPLICATION PROCESS</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>POST APPROVAL</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>LEGAL, STATE AID, AND TERMS OF INVESTMENT</b>	<b>18</b>

# CONTENTS

Appendix Contents	
APPENDIX 1 Geographical Extent of Scheme	20
APPENDIX 2 Supporting Sustainability	21
APPENDIX 3 Eligible Expenditure Ineligible Expenditure	22
APPENDIX 4 Infrastructure Works for an Outdoor Gala Dinner Venue Project	23
APPENDIX 5 Examples of temporary structures	26
APPENDIX 6 Ineligible Applicants	27
APPENDIX 7 Standard Indicative Terms and Conditions Attaching to the Investment Grant Agreement	28
APPENDIX 8 Investment Grant Claiming Process	30
APPENDIX 9 Purchase of Temporary Structures	31

All images used in this document are for illustrative purposes only.

# INTRODUCTION

1



Drummers at Event in Guinness Storehouse



Fáilte Ireland Event – St Patrick's Cathedral



## 1.1 WHAT IS THIS INVESTMENT PROGRAMME ALL ABOUT?

**Platforms for Growth is Fáilte Ireland's current four-year capital investment programme.<sup>1</sup> It is unlike any previous Fáilte Ireland programme in that it specifically targets product themes and types known as 'platforms', which have the greatest potential to grow tourism in Ireland and support Fáilte Ireland's strategic imperative of Building Brilliant Visitor Experiences.**

It is Fáilte Ireland's intention over the medium term, to base future investments in large scale capital projects, and complimentary smaller projects such as this Gala Dinner Venues Investment Scheme, on 'platforms'.

Fáilte Ireland has to date made available funding for large scale visitor attractions and outdoor recreation facilities via two platforms – Immersive Heritage and Cultural Attractions (2019), and Facility Centres for Water Sports Activities (2020).

We now introduce the third Platform under the Platforms for Growth programme, the Gala Dinner Venues Investment Scheme. This Scheme is operating under the De Minimis Regulation (see section 6.1 for further information in relation to the De Minimis Regulation).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Fáilte Ireland had committed to developing and delivering the Gala Dinner Venues investment scheme. We are now in a position to progress the scheme's implementation and the purpose of these guidelines is to provide an overview of the **Gala Dinner**

**Venues Investment Scheme.** For the purpose of this Scheme, a gala dinner venue is defined as a location that can accommodate an elaborate formal dining experience. It must be specifically directed at international Business Events, including but not limited to, association conferences, incentive trips and corporate meetings. The primary purpose of the gala dinner event is that of celebration, and it usually marks the pinnacle of the business event.

Under the Gala Dinner Venues Investment Scheme, Fáilte Ireland can support up to 100% of eligible project costs to a maximum grant of €200,000. Applicants are advised that the grant is not paid upfront or in advance; rather, Fáilte Ireland will reimburse eligible expenditure that has been incurred and paid by the grantee. Appendix 8 provides further information on the Investment Grant Claiming Process.

## 1.2 WHAT IS A PLATFORM?

Tourism is a complex and dynamic industry, and therefore requires a flexible and multi-faceted investment programme to meet the ever-changing needs of modern consumers. Fáilte Ireland's response to this environment is to ensure that we invest in a variety of aspects of the broader tourism experience. These different aspects are essentially 'platforms' upon which we can base our investments to ensure long-term growth.

Platforms should also drive innovation in tourism and ensure Ireland can compete as a compelling destination in the international marketplace. By focusing development on 'what the visitor wants', through these specific platforms, projects supported by this investment scheme have a high potential for success.

In addition to this, and as part of our *Platforms for Growth – a Programme for Tourism Investment 2019–2022*, Fáilte Ireland will work with successful applicants long after the capital investment has been made. This engagement may include direct and indirect business supports (other than financial supports) to promote and further the realisation of the project.

In general terms, the *Gala Dinner Venues* platform relates to developing dinner venues of scale with the 'wow' factor, which will grow the value of Business Events to the economy

## 1.3 HOW WILL GROWTH BE ACHIEVED?

The International Business Events sector is one of the most lucrative tourism sectors and can play a pivotal role in creating additional revenue for a destination. Business Events not only avail of hotel rooms, but also book meeting space, dine on site and avail of entertainment and team building options. There is also the opportunity to showcase Ireland as a holiday destination and encourage business tourists to either extend their stay or return as leisure tourists with family and friends.

Ireland's Business Events hubs are centred in Dublin, Cork, Kerry, the The Shannon Region and Galway. These hubs are supported by the Regional Convention Bureaux who have members that offer a range of product that appeals to international meeting planners and services international Business Events. In terms of seasonal impact, business events typically take place mid-week (Monday-Thursday) and outside of the peak summer months.

**IN SUMMARY, TARGETING THE BUSINESS EVENTS SEGMENT AND ENSURING THAT WE CAN GROW REVENUE AHEAD OF VOLUME IS CENTRAL TO FÁILTE IRELAND'S SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY AND GROWTH AGENDA. INVESTING IN GALA DINNER VENUES OF SCALE IN OUR BUSINESS EVENTS HUBS HAS THE POTENTIAL TO DELIVER INCREASED TOURISM REVENUE FOR BOTH DUBLIN AND REGIONAL IRELAND.**

### POLICY CONTEXT

Underpinning this investment programme is a strong policy framework set out in the Government's *People, Place and Policy-Growing Tourism to 2025*, and associated *Tourism Action Plan 2019–2021*.

More information can be found [here](#)

Platforms for Growth is also aligned to Fáilte Ireland's Tourism Development and Innovation: A Strategy for Investment 2016–2022 and our corporate strategy.

More information can be found [here](#)

<sup>1</sup> The reference to 'investment' does not mean that in respect of this Scheme that Fáilte Ireland is offering to take any equity or other interest (excepting such security as may be required) or is soliciting any such approval. In this context 'investment' is an agreement to grant funding subject to the conditions of this Scheme and the terms of any offer or agreement arising thereafter.

# PLATFORM: GALA DINNER VENUES

## 2



### 2.1 VALUE OF BUSINESS EVENTS TO ECONOMY

**Business Events delivers significant economic returns for Ireland. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Business Events had been one of the fastest growing segments of the Irish tourism industry, contributing more than €716 million annually to the economy and supporting up to 20,000 jobs. It accounted for 15% of overseas tourism spend in Ireland and was one of the highest yield sectors in tourism. Each Business Events delegate is worth an average of €1,600 per visit – almost three times that of a leisure tourist.**

Whilst COVID-19 has decimated the Business Events sector, we know that there is huge pent-up demand to return to face-to-face engagement. With the lifting of restrictions, an unprecedented level of enquiries has been, and continues to be received for 2022 and beyond. Prior to the pandemic, it would have been unheard of to get a 1,000+ person conference enquiry for the current year. 2022 is now looking likely to be an extremely busy year for international Business Events.

Post Covid-19, city centres will face very significant challenges. There will be fewer office workers in the cities as some employees will continue to work from home a few days each week. Similarly, general corporate travel will be reduced significantly and partially replaced with virtual meetings, particularly one day fly in and out meetings. On balance, city centre tourism and hospitality businesses will be even more reliant on promotable Business Events (Meetings, Incentive, Conferences & Events). Conference delegates will become much more important to fill the gaps left by the day-to-day corporate traveller.

Research indicates that Business Events stakeholders still need and want to meet in person. Fáilte Ireland recently developed a Business Events Roadmap for Recovery and Growth to ensure the conversion of a pipeline that currently stands at in excess of €1bn for events out to 2032.

### 2.2 HOW FÁILTE IRELAND DRIVES BUSINESS EVENTS

Fáilte Ireland's Business Tourism & Events team works to develop a pipeline of business tourism opportunities for Ireland and provides a full range of practical and financial supports to help industry win those opportunities.

The team works under the Meet In Ireland brand overseas to develop Ireland's full potential as a Business Events destination. With an international remit, our focus is to encourage and support both Irish and International businesses to host their international association conferences, corporate meetings and incentive trips<sup>2</sup> in Ireland.

Fáilte Ireland provides an extensive range of supports and services to the International Business Events industry in Ireland that includes, but is not limited to:

- **Generating business opportunities**
- **Providing subvention and funding and practical support to aid conversion**
- **Advisory services**
- **Business and financial supports**
- **Education and training.**

In addition, Fáilte Ireland subsidises industry attendance at international sales events and platforms to enable industry to meet face-to-face with international meeting planners and organisers to generate their own business opportunities.

Typically each year, Fáilte Ireland hosts international meeting planners on familiarisation trips which showcase the best of Ireland's Business Events product and supports industry stakeholders to host international meeting planners themselves on educational visits.

Fáilte Ireland has a dedicated Business Events website which is Ireland's shop window for meeting planners. To find out more, visit [www.meetinireland.com](http://www.meetinireland.com)

### 2.3 WHY GALA DINNER VENUES?

The gala dinner plays a very important role at conferences, incentive trips and large corporate meetings.<sup>3</sup> It usually takes place away from the conference venue and is a highlight in the event proceedings.

Analysis by Fáilte Ireland clearly demonstrates that the lack of off-site<sup>4</sup> gala dinner venues of scale is having a detrimental impact on the growth and attractiveness of Ireland's Business Events sector.

Over a 5-year period from 2014–2019 it was estimated that Ireland lost €100m worth of Business Events due to the lack of gala dinner venues of scale in Ireland, but it is almost impossible to estimate the value of business lost where planners never even considered Ireland due to the perception that Ireland can only deliver small events.

It is estimated that €90m worth of incremental Business Events could be delivered for Ireland over a 5-year period by investing in the development of gala dinner venues through this Scheme. This figure, based on Fáilte Ireland research, is the average conference delegate value spend of a total of €1,600, while in the destination.

The potential impact of Fáilte Ireland supporting the development of venues with the 'wow' factor to host gala dinners is outlined in Table 1 below.

The potential return on the investment to Irish tourism is therefore significant. However, there will be a certain saturation point at which any additional gala dinner venues will not add overall value capacity – supply outweighing demand. Accordingly, Fáilte Ireland is limiting the number of venues for development under this Platform to a maximum of seven, located in the following business events hubs, Dublin, Cork, Kerry, The Shannon Region and Galway. (See maps in Appendix 1).

**Table 1:** The below outcome is based on a moderate annual usage of venues – 6 per annum in Dublin and 5 per annum in the Regional Business Hubs. The number of venues outlined and the specific locations is for the purpose of illustration only to determine potential outcomes.

Potential Economic Value of Investment in Gala Dinner Venues					
	Minimum Capacity Banquet Style	No. of Events per Annum	Average Delegate Value	Annual Impact €	5 Year Impact €
<b>Dublin:</b> Three Additional Venues	350	18	€1,600 per visit	€10m	€50m
<b>Regional Business Hubs:</b> Four Additional Venues	250	20	€1,600 per visit	€8m	€40m
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>€18m</b>	<b>€90m</b>

<sup>3</sup> For purposes of this Scheme, this is Fáilte Ireland's generic approach to what might be a 'gala dinner event' but it is subject to the conditions of this Scheme and it should not be taken or assumed to be the approach that may be followed as to the substantive (or other) requirements of any further scheme.

<sup>4</sup> 'Off-site' refers to gala dinner venues that are located away from the conference centre or delegate accommodation.

## 2.4 INTERNATIONALLY COMPELLING: WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE 'WOW' FACTOR?

Gala dinner events are held to celebrate, reward or engage an audience. Venues for such events can vary depending on the requirements, and while previously most gala dinners were staged in function or event venues designed to accommodate large numbers, there is an increasing demand for such venues to go beyond the ballroom.

Overall, it is vital that these venues have what would be considered the 'wow' factor. This is where the venue offers instant appeal to an international audience, somewhere out of the ordinary that will impress and excite the guests. A venue's iconic location, historical or cultural attributes along with the venue's authenticity and uniqueness can all contribute to the celebration element. The 'wow' factor must be evident from the moment the guests arrive and throughout the event experience.

While logistics such as the ease of coach set-down and the welcome afforded to guests, a suitable reception space with sufficient capacity, and the effortlessness with which guests can move between the different spaces all contribute to the saleability of a gala dinner venue, it's that uniqueness of the venue that can't be experienced elsewhere that is the major selling point.

For the proposed site to have the 'wow' factor, the room or structure where the event takes place should invigorate and excite those present and complement the surroundings in which it is situated, while also having a sense of Ireland's rich culture and of course being accessible to all. The distinctive atmosphere of the venue will offer a

positive sensory experience for the audience and create lasting memories. Venues with an interesting story or history can have strong appeal. These are the kinds of venues that present a real sense of place for guests. The unique venue could be, but is not limited to, one of the following:

- **Iconic and grand historical building or estate home**
- **A visitor attraction of international appeal**
- **Buildings of outstanding or award-winning architectural design**
- **Coastal or rural setting with spectacular and picturesque views**
- **Unspoiled warehouse showing character and rawness with high ceilings, wide-open space, big windows, and textural details**
- **Charming and quaint barn style venue**
- **A venue following a specific unique theme, e.g., festival theme.**

The wider experience both pre- and post-dinner is also an essential component. These additional experiences can vary considerably, but could involve activities such as lighting shows or firework displays, behind-the-scenes tours, and traditional Irish music and dance performances etc.

Ultimately, the 'wow' factor – that primary feature that impresses or excites someone greatly – is the key ingredient that elevates the gala dinner venue and creates a night of awe, enjoyment and most importantly a memorable experience for guests, and that in turn enables Ireland to compete strongly as a destination for Business Events. A Gala dinner is often seen as the pinnacle of a Business Events trip and therefore having a 'wow' factor is a must.

## Is this scheme for you?

### BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

This is a fantastic opportunity for you to develop a world class venue, with Fáilte Ireland's support and investment, that will host gala dinners and much more. Through this support and investment, you will be in a position to tap into the very lucrative international Business Events market.

Business Events Gala Dinners tend to take place mid-week and off-peak, freeing it up for other purposes at weekends and during the busy summer months. As a venue owner, you can decide whether to simply sell the venue space and appoint third party suppliers to provide all other services or to provide some of those services yourself. By outsourcing does not necessarily mean loss of income. By simply recommending or giving exclusivity to a supplier you will be able to earn commission on the fees that they charge. So, whether you provide the food, beverage, furniture hire, AV, entertainment etc. or outsource it all, you will still be generating a revenue source.

Most Business Events Gala Dinners are organised by a professional event management company on behalf of the end client, so you won't necessarily have to worry about coordinating the various elements either.

There are a lot of variables when deciding what you can charge for the venue/ space hire. You will need to take into consideration where you are located; proximity to conferencing space of scale, the 'wow' factor, whether its exclusive or non-exclusive venue hire, the time of the year and the day of the week and a lot more. However, on average, historic buildings and visitor attractions with large open spaces suitable for this purpose hire their space only at approximately €5,000 at a time. Additional income can be generated if there is a need for additional set up and breakdown days and other ancillary costs.

### COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY

Location	Average Cost of Outdoor Venue Hire	Average cost of Indoor Venue Hire
Dublin region	*€6,000	*€10,000
Galway, Kerry, Cork and The Shannon Regions	*€5,000	*€3,500

\*Price varies on the venue appeal, time of year and day of the week of the event. Please note that the estimated costs of venue hire were captured in 2019

In addition to the venue hire there are several commissionable revenue opportunities that should also be considered:

- 1. Venue insurance:** Commission of approximately 10% can be made on any additional insurance required to be paid by the hirer or event organizer.
- 2. Stretch tent/ Temporary structure hire:** A further 10% commission can be earned on the temporary structure hired for the event.
- 3. Catering:** You may appoint a single caterer or panel of caterers to provide all food and beverage requirements. You can earn up to 15% in commission.
- 4. Ancillary services:** Similarly, a 10% commission is payable on AV, Décor, table set up, crockery, linens, entertainment, security and all ancillary services.
- 5. Time:** For temporary structures there may be additional days required for set up and breakdown and a venue proprietor can charge an additional rate per day for this purpose.

### OPERATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Fáilte Ireland may help you access those seeking gala dinner venues by introducing you to Ireland's approved Destination Management Companies (DMCs) and Professional Conference Organisers (PCOs), who may act as intermediaries between you and the international Business Events buyer. They will be a very important source of business for you and can also manage all the event logistics on the ground including tent hire, furniture, décor, audio visual, entertainment, food and beverage and so much more.

Once the facility is ready to operate, Fáilte Ireland may, at its absolute discretion and without any liability, use its reasonable endeavours to provide operational assistance to successful applicants, which may include the following:

- **Assist you with promoting your venue overseas.**
- **Offer supports to ensure an understanding of routes to market and meeting the needs of the international Business Events buyer.**
- **Allocation of a Fáilte Ireland Key account manager.**
- **Inclusion in buyer educational visits, event site visits, as part of bid proposals.**

All successful applications are required to become a member of your local Regional Convention Bureau who are responsible for promoting their partners and their area to international Business Event buyers.

# HOW THE SCHEME WORKS

## 3



### 3.1 OBJECTIVE OF THE SCHEME

**The overall objective of the Scheme is to grow the number of off-site gala dinner venues of scale with the required capacity, that are accessible from Ireland's premier Business Events hubs and that have the 'wow' factor. These are envisaged to be out-of-the-ordinary venues at spectacular locations.**

This investment in gala dinner venues is intended to ensure:

- **The high expectations of Business Events tourists are maintained and exceeded**
- **Dublin and Regional Ireland remain competitive within the international Business Events sector to support recovery and growth of the sector through increased volume and value of Business Events, associated employment and exchequer returns**
- **Contribute to the spread of economic and social benefits of Business Events Industry to Regional Ireland**
- **Contribute to extending the season through increased volume and value of Business Events outside peak times**

- **Recognition of the contribution and value that Ireland's natural environment and built heritage make in attracting international and domestic tourists, and to ensure these assets are managed sustainably. See Appendix 2 for more information on how Fáilte Ireland is driving sustainability values in Ireland's Business Events sector.**

Fáilte Ireland may support up to seven venues in the five Business Events hubs. We may support the development of gala dinner venues in both Dublin city and its environs. Fáilte Ireland notes that this is an indicative number of gala dinner venues and this will be dependent on applications received. Applicants should note the Application Qualifying Criteria at Section 3.5.

This Scheme will operate on a competitive process and only projects which meet the objectives of the Scheme will be considered for an investment grant. Therefore, it is not guaranteed that there will be a project funded in each Business Events hub area.

### 3.2 WHAT KIND OF PROJECTS ARE WE LOOKING TO FUND?

In practical terms, it is envisaged that the type of project required to enable the development of gala dinner venues, including pre-dinner reception spaces that meet the above objectives, will fall into the categories below:

- **Indoor Venues:** 'Bricks and mortar' projects such as construction of a new building, or a retrofit, upgrade or extension to an existing building. Project elements could include construction, refurbishment, fit-out, upgrading/installation of catering facilities, utility installations, and toilets and washroom facilities etc
- **Outdoor Venues:** Projects designed to develop a suitable outdoor area which can be used for temporary structures that can hold a gala dinner event – specifically ultra-high-end stretch tents or glass structures. Funding would support the purchase of the temporary structure. It would also support the necessary infrastructure works such as the provision of services (e.g. water, drainage, power, telecommunications), clearing and levelling of sites, anchor points for stretch tents, access improvements, etc.
- **Combined Indoor and Outdoor Venues:** Projects that comprise a combination of indoor and outdoor spaces that are either temporary and/or permanent. Project elements could include a combination of the works listed above.

More detailed information on eligible costs is contained in Appendix 3 and a sample project is also provided in Appendix 4.<sup>5</sup>

**Note:** Typically, for corporate gala dinner events, these temporary structures are hired by the event management company as part of their service and erected by a tent rental service provider. Food and beverage, furniture, AV and entertainment are also usually provided by contractors and procured through the event management company. Therefore, site owners are not required to purchase the stretch tents or glass structures. However, the purchase of the structure is an eligible cost and would allow for a greater return on investment, eliminating the erection and dismantling costs per rental.

See Figure 1 for more information on temporary structures in the context of this scheme.

**Figure 1:** Definition of Temporary Structures for the purposes of this Scheme.

#### HOW WE DEFINE TEMPORARY STRUCTURES FOR GALA DINNER VENUES

When erected at locations of special interest, creative temporary structures are considered attractive and viable options for hosting gala dinner events that meet market demands. For the purpose of this Scheme, these are defined as **ultra-high end stretch tents** which can be erected as and when required on various surface types (see Appendix 5 for examples). The stretch tent can be fixed into walls, into the ground or over the ground. Marquees/gazebos/shelters/pavilions do not meet the standard needed to host gala dinner events.

The stretch tents must meet the minimum capacity requirements of the Scheme, i.e. 350 guests banqueting style (675 square metres) for projects located in Dublin and 250 guests banqueting style (525 square metres) in the four regional locations. Provision will also be required to facilitate a pre-dinner reception and entertainment, staging and a dance floor.

If located in a green field site with iconic views, glass walls will be required to bring the outside in and make use of the views. A stretch tent can also be located in a courtyard area or be attached to part of a building of special interest.

In addition to stretch tents, state-of-the-art **temporary glass structures** also meet international standards for corporate gala dinner events.

Applicants should note that irrespective of whether it is a tensile structure or a glass structure, the site area required is considerable. There should be a minimum of a 6-metre perimeter surrounding the event structure and all associate temporary structures as relevant (i.e. temporary kitchens, cold rooms, toilets, generators, storage, waste disposal etc). Furthermore, the site must have sufficient egress and ingress for emergency services and for evacuation. It is recommended that access points are at least 5 metres wide, and that the surface/ ground must be in suitable condition (or track matting in place) to support emergency vehicles. There should be ample and appropriate Fire Assembly points.

<sup>5</sup> Underwriting the success of a project is at the risk of the applicant and the acceptance of any particular project does not involve any validation, representation, or warranty of any kind from Fáilte Ireland as to this.

### 3.3 WHAT FUNDING IS AVAILABLE?

Investment grant rates and grant amounts:

- **Maximum investment grant amount available to each applicant is €200,000, subject to the State Aid Rules on De Minimis funding and the cumulation of aid**
- **The investment grant is not paid upfront or in advance; rather, Fáilte Ireland will reimburse eligible expenditure that is incurred and paid by the grantee**
- **Up to 100% of the eligible capital costs may be supported under this Scheme**
- **The investment grant rate offered may be less than that requested by the applicant and is at the full discretion of Fáilte Ireland. There is absolutely no obligation on Fáilte Ireland to fund any project at all or to any extent whether requested or otherwise**
- **Ultimately, the amount of funding available per project is subject to the relevant State Aid rules and whether or not the applicant is an undertaking in respect of the project<sup>6</sup> (see Section 6 for more information on State Aid), as well as budget availability.**

**Note:** Any offer of financial assistance by Fáilte Ireland is subject to re-prioritisation of objectives and/or budgeting limitations. The Scheme is a discretionary scheme and will offer assistance only to those that will aid Fáilte Ireland in meeting its statutory objectives in line with Government policy. It is possible that those projects that are approved will receive less than their requested amounts or none at all in the event of re-prioritisation and/or amended budgetary objectives or funding constraints/unanticipated short-falls or claw back of funding that has been earmarked for and/or allocated to Fáilte Ireland.

### 3.4 WHO CAN APPLY?

Funding applications will be accepted from a wide range of applicants, including the public, private and voluntary sectors as defined in the following table (Table 2), subject to the exclusion of ineligible entities and applicants as set out in Appendix 6. Fáilte Ireland reserves the right, among other things, to require that an intended potential beneficiary takes a specified legal form.

**Table 2:** Who can apply

<b>Private Sector</b>	Companies and other legal entities and individuals
<b>Voluntary Organisations</b>	Not-for-profit bodies, including charities, trusts and companies limited by guarantee
<b>Public Sector bodies</b>	Bodies established to operate facilities on behalf of the public sector including commercial and non-commercial semi-state bodies and local authorities

### 3.5 APPLICATION QUALIFYING CRITERIA

This section sets out the scheme's application eligibility and qualifying criteria. Applicants should refer to Section 4 for further details on the criteria and requirements to be met at each stage of the application process.

#### 3.5.1 VENUE CRITERIA

- **Location:** The focus is on the established Business Events destinations served by the five Regional Conference Bureaux, i.e. Dublin, Cork, Kerry, The Shannon Region and Galway. Therefore, to be eligible to apply, the proposed venues must be located a comfortable distance from these urban centres. Fáilte Ireland has determined that distance to be a maximum of 35km (rounded to the nearest km), from the urban centres as follows:

**Table 3:** Urban Centre Points within the Business Events Hubs

Business Events Hub	Urban Centre Point
<b>Dublin</b>	General Post Office, O'Connell Street, Dublin 1, D01 F5P2
<b>Cork</b>	General Post Office, Oliver Plunkett Street, Cork, T12 FP71
<b>Kerry</b>	Killarney Post Office, New Street, Killarney, V93 KC42
<b>The Shannon Region</b>	General Post Office, Lower Cecil Street, Limerick, V94 AP83
<b>Galway</b>	Galway Post Office, 3 Eglinton Street, Galway, H91 E2X2

Eligibility will be determined by Fáilte Ireland through verification of the distance between the project address's Eircode and the Eircode of the urban centre point using Google Maps. See Section 4.1, Minimum Eligibility Criteria for more information.

An illustrative map of the eligible areas is provided in Appendix 1.

- **Capacity:** The proposed venue, following development, must have capacity for a minimum of 350 diners banquet style in Dublin, or 250 in the other four Regional Convention Bureaux locations, in addition to adequate space for staging, kitchens, service areas etc. If your project has a separate space for the pre-dinner reception, that space needs to have capacity for 250 persons standing (or 350 persons standing for Dublin-based projects). If your project envisages a single space where the pre-dinner reception takes place in the same room as the gala dinner itself, the room needs to be of sufficient size to cater for both parts of the event.

In order to comfortably manage the capacity requirement above, the minimum area required is as follows:

**Table 4:** Project size requirements for indoor venues

INDOOR VENUES:		
	Dublin Projects (350 capacity)	Projects outside of Dublin (250 capacity)
<b>Separate Reception Space</b>	300 square metres	200 square metres
<b>Banquet/Main Dining Area</b>	440 square metres	350 square metres
<b>Combined: Pre-dinner reception and main banquet in the same room</b>	700 square metres	520 square metres

**Table 5:** Project size requirements for outdoor venues (including perimeter spacing)

OUTDOOR VENUES:		
	Dublin Projects (350 capacity)	Projects outside of Dublin (250 capacity)
<b>Minimum requirement for the temporary structure</b>	675 square metres	525 square metres
<b>Total minimum outdoor area required (including support structures, 6m perimeter etc)</b>	2,625 square metres	1,952 square metres

- **Infrastructure:** The proposed site, following development, must have suitable access for groups i.e. adequate road access suitable for a coach, sufficient space for coach set-down and/or parking. The proposed site, following development, must have adequate catering and toilet facilities to cater for the large groups sizes required of this Scheme.

#### 3.5.2 OPERATIONAL CRITERIA

The following information sets out the operational criteria that successful applicants must meet (not an exhaustive list):

- **Availability:** All venues must be contractable, commissionable<sup>7</sup> and available to host gala dinners for corporate events a minimum of 24 days per year following completion of the project.
  - › The requirement includes ensuring the venue is available for a corporate booking for a minimum of four days per week (Monday to Thursday), from January to November. Availability must be spread out across the year with a minimum availability for 2 events within any period of one month as specified by Fáilte Ireland. Usage of tents may not be possible under adverse weather conditions and this will be taken into consideration.
  - › Advance booking: The venue must be bookable at least 2 years in advance. If the venue has not been booked for a business event, dates will be released to the supplier to sell for other purposes 6 months in advance.
  - › Set up times: In addition, projects for outdoor venues must ensure that the site is available

<sup>6</sup> Generally speaking, an undertaking is an entity, however structured from a legal perspective, that engages in an economic activity. It should be noted that Fáilte Ireland intends to treat all applicants under this scheme as undertakings unless an applicant provides satisfactory evidence that it is not an undertaking.

<sup>7</sup> It must be possible for an agent (e.g. Destination Management Company, Professional Conference Organiser, other intermediary/buyer) to receive a fee for booking the venue.

for a minimum of 1 day for set up of the temporary structure prior to event and minimum of 1 day post event to dismantle.

- › Capacity to manage multiple events on the same night without compromising the guest experience. Grantees will be required to set out how they can manage multiple and/or competing events in their Operations Plan.

The above stipulations will form part of the terms and conditions contained in the Investment Grant Agreement and will be monitored by Fáilte Ireland.

- **Operating Period:** The venue must be in operation and available as a gala dinner venue for Business Events for a minimum of 5 years from the first day the venue is available to book after the project is completed.
- **Accessibility:** The venue should be fully accessible for all end-clients including those with mobility challenges, and at a minimum comply with statutory requirements.
- **Sustainability:** Environmental sustainability measures undertaken in the development of a gala dinner venue are recommended and desired by Fáilte Ireland as part of this Scheme and eligible costs are fundable. The venue should deliver events complying with best practice environmental sustainability measures (please see Appendix 2).
- **Regional Convention Bureaux:** Grantees will be required to become a partner of the Regional Convention Bureau located in their area. See [www.meetinireland.com/regional-convention-bureaux](http://www.meetinireland.com/regional-convention-bureaux) for more information on the RCB in your area.

### 3.5.3 LEGAL AND FINANCIAL CRITERIA

- **State Aid Requirement:** The applicant must be fully compliant with State Aid Rules with regard to De Minimis funding (See Section 6).
- **Right to Undertake the Project at the Project Site:** Evidence must be provided to demonstrate the applicant's right to undertake (build/operate) the project at the project site for the Operative Period of 5 years. This can take the form of evidence of either (i) site ownership or lease agreement, or (ii) a letter from a solicitor confirming that you have the legal right to undertake the project at the site. Your application will not be processed if this is not clearly demonstrated.

- **Match Funding:** Evidence must be provided of match funding for all project costs over and above the total amount of the investment grant which may be offered by Fáilte Ireland.

Evidence of match funding can be provided either by (i) a letter from your accountant/auditor confirming that you have sufficient match funding from own resources or (ii) a Bank Facility Letter i.e. evidence of the availability of borrowings if you are borrowing to provide match-funding. Your application will not be processed if this is not clearly demonstrated.

Subject to State Aid rules (which includes all implementing measures), particularly in relation to the cumulation of aid, Fáilte Ireland will accept match funding for eligible projects under this Platform that originates from other public sources or grant schemes (e.g. the LEADER Programme, Heritage Council etc).

- **Tax Clearance:** Please provide your Tax Clearance Number. This number will be checked by Fáilte Ireland before your application is processed. If your Tax Clearance Number is invalid, has expired or has been rescinded, Fáilte Ireland will not evaluate your project.

Please note that Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to seek verification of any information provided or to raise new or further inquiries arising out of or in connection with any application, the underlying project, or its sponsors.

### INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

The following project types are ineligible under this Scheme:

- **Projects located outside of the geographical confines of the Scheme (see Appendix 1)**
- **Sites with unapproved accommodation**
- **Traditional hotel ballrooms or function rooms, or associated services and facilities**
- **Conference centres**
- **Sporting venues and facilities, including stadiums and golf courses**
- **Stand-alone food and beverage facilities i.e. cafés, tearooms, restaurants, public houses**
- **Community and leisure centres**
- **Cinemas**

Please see Appendix 3 for a list of ineligible expenditure.

Fáilte Ireland Event – Powerscourt Centre

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Fáilte Ireland Event – Royal Hospital Kilmainham



### 4.1 STAGE 1: MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

**The purpose of this stage is to determine if the applicant and/or project is eligible for consideration in accordance with the Scheme guidelines, based on the information provided. The eligibility criteria for applicants are set out in Section 3.4 and Appendix 6.**

The first step is to complete a simple Minimum Eligibility Criteria Form via the Fáilte Ireland Trade Portal, [here](#). This Form invites you to submit a short description of your proposed project along with some supporting information, which will then be reviewed by Fáilte Ireland to determine eligibility to the Scheme, in the first instance.

Applicants must submit their Eircode which will be used to determine if the site is within the required 35km of the urban centre point (see Table 3). Eligibility of the project location will be determined by Fáilte Ireland through verification of the distance between the project address's Eircode and the Eircode of the urban centre point using Google Maps. National roads must be utilised insofar as is practicable.

The eligibility assessment will be conducted on the information provided via the Trade Portal Minimum Eligibility Criteria Form only. Fáilte Ireland will endeavour to process the Forms as quickly as

possible, typically within 5 working days. Any applicant or project that is clearly ineligible for investment grant funding will be advised of this and will not proceed any further. Fáilte Ireland's decision is final.

If your project proposal is deemed eligible, information on proceeding to the next stage of the process will be issued to you via email.

Please note that proceeding to Stage 2 does not in itself confer final eligibility on the project or applicant. Depending on the information provided at subsequent Stages, the project or applicant may still be deemed to be ineligible for funding later in the process.

The closing date for submitting or resubmitting the Minimum Eligibility Criteria Form is 4 weeks following the opening of the Scheme. Any Form received by Fáilte Ireland after the deadline for submission will not be considered. Please refer to

the Gala Dinner Venues investment scheme page on the Fáilte Ireland website for further information - <https://www.failteireland.ie/gala-dinner-venue-scheme>

## 4.2 STAGE 2: APPLICATION FORM

At Stage 2, you are asked to describe your project in detail in the Application Form provided. Applicants are reminded that all projects approved under this Scheme must adhere to public procurement legislation and applicable guidelines and the Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF).<sup>8</sup>

**Part A** of the form is concerned with the 'wow' factor, and the potential to deliver a spectacular gala dinner experience as set out in Section 2.

**Part B** of the form requires you to provide further details on the project including capacity, room configuration, existing facilities etc. Applicants are also required to outline the tangible actions they will take to ensure the venue will operate to the highest standards of sustainability. Please see Appendix 2 for more information on how Fáilte Ireland is supporting sustainability in the MICE tourism sector.

Applicants must upload images as specified in the form. Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to validate the images provided. In addition, we will require information on how you intend to meet basic compliance requirements, including evidence of match funding for the project, and proof that you have the legal right to undertake the project and operate at the project site for the duration of the Operative Period.

The Stage 2 Application Form will be available to eligible applicants only, so in order to receive this you must first have successfully completed Stage 1 (the Minimum Eligibility Criteria). Please refer to the Gala Dinner Venues investment scheme page on the Fáilte Ireland website for further information - <https://www.failteireland.ie/gala-dinner-venue-scheme>.

All applications at Stage 2 must be completed online through the Fáilte Ireland Trade Portal. Only application forms submitted in this way will be accepted and evaluated.

Before you submit your application, please ensure that:

- All sections of the form have been fully completed
- You have uploaded the correct images, supporting documents and files required

Incomplete applications and applications received after the closing date will not be considered for evaluation.

### 4.2.1 EVALUATION

Eligible completed applications will be evaluated on a competitive basis, taking into account the objectives and priorities of the Gala Dinner Venues Investment Scheme, and in accordance with Fáilte Ireland's strategic priorities. We will use our tourism industry expertise and evaluation tools as required to ensure a fair and robust assessment. Note that as the objective is to invest in venues in each Business Events hub, applications are therefore competing with each other within the relevant zones as defined in Appendix 1.

The evaluation will be undertaken in three phases.

- **Phase 1:** The first phase will assess the extent of the 'wow' factor as detailed in Part A of the Application Form<sup>9</sup>. This is the primary focus of the evaluation and the key differentiator in this competitive process. Project applications which do not, in the opinion of Fáilte Ireland, have the capability to meet the international standard for provision of an exceptional gala dinner experience, will not proceed to Phase 2 of the evaluation.
- **Phase 2:** The second phase of the evaluation will assess the information in Part B of the form. The result of the assessment at Phase 1 of the evaluation will be carried into Phase 2. To maximise the investment, for projects which have progressed to Phase 2, priority will be afforded to project applications which have the potential to provide a world-class gala dinner experience and:
  - › Can demonstrate capacity over and above the minimum requirement
  - › Can demonstrate flexible room configuration, including separate reception and banqueting spaces

- › Are located in closest proximity to city or town centres

Please note at Phase 2, due to their greater saleability year-round, project proposals for indoor gala dinner venues will take preference over project proposals for outdoor gala dinner venues.

Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to request applicants to present their proposals as part of the evaluation process.

#### • Phase 3 – Technical Assessment

Only those projects which best meet the objectives of the Scheme will be invited to proceed to this phase of the evaluation. Before a project can be recommended for funding, a site visit will be arranged to ensure that the proposed works will deliver a gala dinner venue with the 'wow' factor. This assessment will include an independent review of the costs to ensure value for money, and to ensure that the project can be delivered as described in the application. All grant-aided works must be necessary and relevant to the project.

At the end of this stage, projects will be recommended to the Fáilte Ireland Board for approval. Fáilte Ireland will determine, at its absolute discretion, the amount of the investment grant offered at this stage, which will be based on the indicative eligible expenditure provided in the application form, and will be subject to State Aid rules and budget availability.

Approved projects will receive an Investment Grant Agreement. This document will form the basis of the contract between Fáilte Ireland and the grantee, and contains all terms and conditions related to the offer of funding. See Appendix 7 for indicative terms and conditions. The applicant must enter into and comply with the Investment Grant Agreement before investment grant monies are paid.

Fáilte Ireland's decision at the end of Phase 3 is final, and no correspondence will be entered into.

## 4.3 STAGE 3: COMPLIANCE

During this phase, projects which are approved in principle must submit the following supporting documents to provide Fáilte Ireland with assurances that the proposed project can be delivered, as per the application:

- An outline Business Plan for the new gala dinner venue facility to include:
  - › An outline Marketing Strategy & Sales Plan
  - › An outline Operations Plan

These above documents can be prepared/ submitted as stand-alone documents or as an addendum to your current business/marketing/ operational plans. These documents should be prepared at a high level setting out your primary proposals under each aspect. Fáilte Ireland does not expect applicants to commission such works with consultants/advisors, although where an applicant retains or has ready access to such advisors as part of its normal business practice, these should be used where possible.

- Projected Cashflow and Profit & Loss Accounts for the next 5 years
- Company Accounts for the last 3 years
- Company Constitution
- Further evidence of the right to undertake the project at the site (if required)
- Other additional documents that may be requested by Fáilte Ireland or which the applicant already possesses that support the application

In the event that an applicant cannot fulfil these obligations and/or provide all of the required submissions and supporting documentation/ evidence to the satisfaction of Fáilte Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, at its absolute discretion, may decide not to approve an award of funding.

## 4.4 STAGE 4: PROJECT DELIVERY

The project now moves to the delivery stage. See Section 5 for further details on the project delivery phase.



<sup>8</sup> Applicants should bear in mind that in the preparation of its application it should not (in connection with it or prior to its submission) have entered into any commitment or arrangements that would, for example, oblige it (either formally or informally) to any particular supplier, including, in any way as would frustrate or potentially jeopardise the fulfilment by it of any obligations that Fáilte Ireland is likely to impose in relation to State aid and/or procurement compliance. With respect to the latter, applicants should note that Fáilte Ireland has a general policy in favour of competitive tendering (whether or not the potential beneficiary is a public or private entity) – in line with Government policy – and that is the case whether or not this is required, for example, under the European Union's public procurement regime.

<sup>9</sup> Fáilte Ireland would point out that in many respects, the determination of the 'wow' factor is to some degree a subjective matter but it will seek to make assessment of the potential of projects having regard to its sectoral knowledge, experience, and other relevant criteria in line with the terms of this Scheme.

# POST APPROVAL

5



Sheil Entertainment Agency/Odyssey International - location: Adare Manor

## 5.1 PROJECT DELIVERY

**A Project Officer from Fáilte Ireland will be assigned to assist the grantees after the project is approved to help guide and cultivate the project:<sup>10</sup>**

- **Public Procurement**
- **Detailed Design**
- **Detailed Cost Plan**
- **Planning permission and other statutory consents, as relevant. Planning permission may be required for both the development works and the commercial operation of the venue. Grantees must engage with their local authority as early as possible to ensure compliance with planning regulations**
- **Environmental Assessments (if required)**
- **Construction/delivery of the capital works.**

**During the development and delivery phases:**

1. Projects should proceed in line with the Capital Works Management Framework.
2. EU and National public procurement procedures must be followed with regard to the expenditure proposed in relation to the project.

The Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF), which has been devised by the Government, sets out a common approach and common language for procurement and project management of capital projects. The CWMF will apply to building works including related services, such as the Design Team consultants. In addition to this, Office of Public Procurement (OGP) Guidelines should be followed in terms of the procurement of any general 'Goods and Services' that might be

required for the project (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c23f5-public-procurement-guidelines-for-goods-and-services/>)

The Platforms for Growth process is aligned with the CWMF and approved projects must adhere to the Framework and all relevant public procurement guidelines through all stages of the development. For more information on Public Procurement, please see <https://ogp.gov.ie/>.

### PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

We would strongly advise applicants who retain external consultants or designers to assist with their applications, to tender out all contracts in relation to the project in line with public procurement rules. Eligible applicants should also consider their procurement strategy early on in the process and establish the relevant procurement categories (i) Supplies (Goods), (ii) Services, or (iii) Works, and the associated cost estimates with each. By following the public procurement rules at all stages, applicants will avoid any procurement issues affecting the investment grant claim in the Development or Delivery Phases.

In order to achieve the best possible outcomes for the project Fáilte Ireland may also provide external experts to work with the successful applicants, supporting them during this phase (e.g. public procurement expertise).

All projects must be fully delivered within 30 months from the date of an award of investment funding, to the satisfaction of Fáilte Ireland. It will not be possible to extend the delivery period.

Applicants will be required to have the necessary reserves/working capital to ensure that the proposed project can be delivered in accordance with a Grant Agreement. Applicants are reminded that Fáilte Ireland can only reimburse eligible expenditure that has been incurred and paid by the grantee (see Appendix 8 for further information on the Investment Grant Claiming Process). There are no exceptions to this requirement.

### Operational Phase

Fáilte Ireland's dedicated Business Events Team provides an extensive range of services to the Business Events industry in Ireland that includes, but is not limited to, marketing support, advisory services, business and financial supports, education and training. The Team will guide and support you during the operational phase<sup>11</sup> To grow international Business Events, you will need to sell your product to international Business Events buyers. We will work with you and use our reasonable endeavours to assist you to ensure that:

- **Intermediaries including Destination Management Companies (DMCs) and Professional Conference Organisers (PCOs) are fully aware of your products and services. These companies are constantly in-market selling Ireland and subsequently developing programmes for clients, and therefore they are an invaluable source of potential business**

- **Your online listings are up to date and fit for purpose. Key channels include [www.meetinireland.com](http://www.meetinireland.com), the Fáilte Ireland Trade Portal, Regional Convention Bureaux websites and event booking platforms such as Cvent**
- **Ensure that you become familiar with all Fáilte Ireland supports, both practical and financial**
- **Attend, where appropriate, Fáilte Ireland's sales platforms both international and domestic**

Grantees under this Scheme are required to become a partner of the local Regional Conference Bureau (RCB) for their area. There are many benefits to this including:

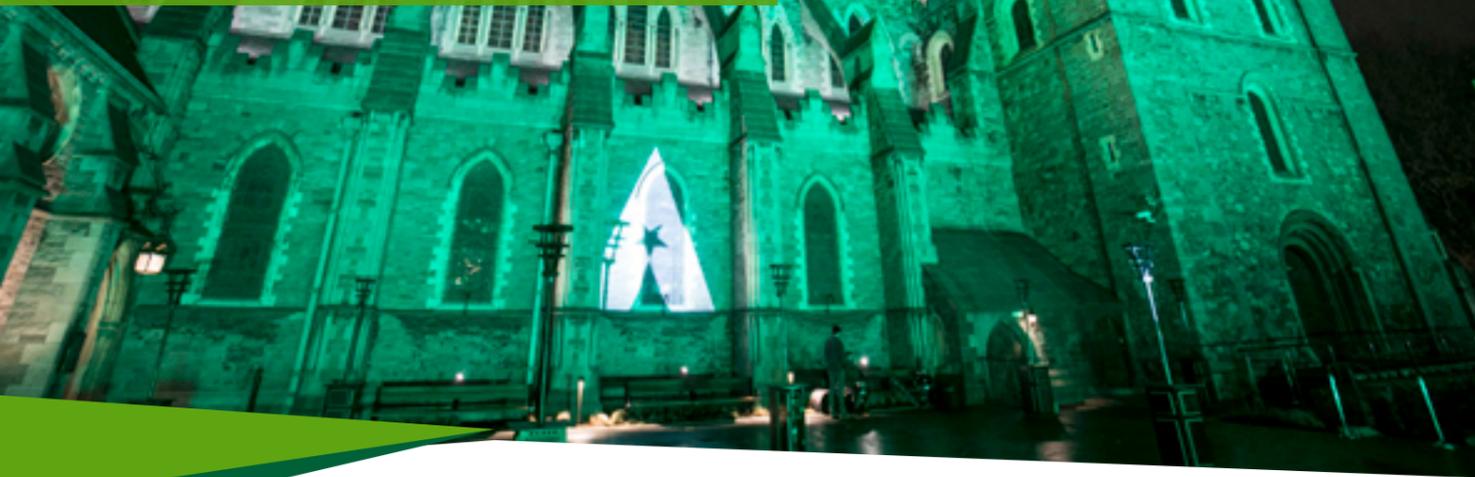
- **RCBs will represent you at key international trade shows**
- **Providing you with educational and networking opportunities to help grow your business**
- **Making appropriate and relevant introductions to DMCs and PCOs**

If successful, in accordance with the terms of the executed Investment Grant Agreement, Fáilte Ireland will work in conjunction with you and use its reasonable endeavours to help you attract new Business Event opportunities for your tourism business, maximise the potential of Fáilte Ireland's investment in your project, and contribute to the long-term growth of Business Events industry in Ireland.

<sup>10</sup> While the Project Officer will provide assistance and guidance, the responsibility for the design and delivery of the project rests solely with the grantee and Fáilte Ireland accepts no responsibility or liability in this respect.

<sup>11</sup> Note that any assistance provided by Fáilte Ireland is provided on a 'without liability or obligation only' basis in line with the terms of any award funding that is made.

# LEGAL, STATE AID, AND TERMS OF INVESTMENT



## 6.1 LEGAL, STATE AID, AND TERMS OF INVESTMENT

**Fáilte Ireland is the grant-aiding Authority for this Scheme. The Irish legal basis of the Scheme is the National Tourism Development Authority Act 2003. Investment grants are provided in accordance with the criteria set out in these Guidelines, subject to EU State Aid law. This Scheme is operating under the European Commission Regulation on De Minimis Regulation.<sup>12</sup>**

### DE MINIMIS

Investment grants may be provided under the De Minimis Regulation. Small amounts of State aid, up to €200,000 in any three-year period to any one enterprise, are regarded as too small to significantly affect trade or competition in the common market. Such amounts are regarded as falling outside the category of State aid that is banned by the EC Treaty and can be awarded without notification to or clearance by the European Commission. As such, there is a ceiling of €200,000 for all De Minimis aid, regardless of the source, given to any one enterprise (including groups) over a 3-year period.

In order for Fáilte Ireland to maintain De Minimis records, all applicants must complete a De Minimis Declaration which is included in section 2.6 of the Application Form. Applicants are required to

declare any other State aid, including De Minimis aid to which they became legally entitled and to which the De Minimis Regulation(s) apply during the previous two fiscal years and the current fiscal year. Applicants should declare all public support including, but not limited to, grants, aid and subsidy schemes already received, anticipated or that which may possibly be received by the entity. It should be noted that a false declaration by a company resulting in the threshold of €200,000 being exceeded could later give rise to the aid being recovered with interest. Note that a group of linked enterprises are likely to be treated as a single undertaking for the purpose of the De Minimis Regulation.<sup>13</sup> Updated De Minimis Declarations may be required prior to the drawdown of any funding.

Where grant funding is to be provided subject to terms, Fáilte Ireland will inform the undertaking in

writing of the prospective amount of the aid expressed as a gross grant equivalent and of its De Minimis character, making express reference to the De Minimis Regulation

### LIFETIME OF THE SCHEME

Platforms for Growth is a multi-annual investment grant programme which is envisaged to remain in operation until 2022. For updates on the Programme refer to the website <https://www.failteireland.ie/Identify-Available-Funding/Platform-for-growth.aspx>

### PUBLIC SPENDING CODE

All public bodies, including Fáilte Ireland, who are in receipt of public funding, are obliged to comply with the requirements of the Public Spending Code to ensure best value is achieved from state resources. Fáilte Ireland and its investment grantees are also subject to the rules of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular 13/2014. For more information see <https://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/per/2014/13.pdf>

### DISCLAIMER

While this information is provided for information purposes only, no duty of care arises as to whether funding is or is not State aid, is exempted or not, or is otherwise unlawful or not under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Under no circumstances whatsoever should Fáilte Ireland be regarded as representing or warranting (including by way of any implied term) that any particular funding is lawful under the State aid rules. Moreover, Fáilte Ireland does not accept any liability for loss of any kind that is claimed to be suffered by any applicant or any interested party by reason of the treatment of particular funding under State aid law and any attendant processes including recovery or claw-back.

### TERMS OF INVESTMENT

In accordance with Section 8 of the National Tourism Development Authority Act 2003, the National Tourism Development Authority ('Fáilte Ireland') and otherwise Fáilte Ireland has discretion to provide investment in the form of grants to such projects as it considers appropriate. There is no guarantee of funding for applications that achieve the minimum eligibility requirements. At all times during this process, Fáilte Ireland has complete discretion not to award an investment grant. In addition, Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to restrict

a funding offer to certain elements of a project proposal only.

The potential impact of the project on existing tourism businesses in the locality may be assessed. Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to exercise its discretion not to award a grant or to withdraw a grant at any stage in the process if, in the opinion of Fáilte Ireland, the project could significantly displace existing tourism businesses or operators.

### INVESTMENT GRANT AGREEMENT

Following approval by Fáilte Ireland, successful applicants will receive an Investment Grant Agreement. This document will form the basis of the contract between Fáilte Ireland and the project promoter. The Investment Grant Agreement will contain all terms and conditions related to the offer of funding.

The standard terms and conditions attaching to an offer of an investment grant are set out in Appendix 7.

It should be noted that the Investment Grant Agreement will identify specified timelines for completion. If the applicant fails to deliver as specified, Fáilte Ireland reserves the right (at our absolute discretion) to:

- decommit the full project, or
- continue with the project but if the applicant fails to achieve the due date for completion of the project, Fáilte Ireland will reduce the value of our overall investment grant by up to 5% (on the basis of a reduction of 0.5% for every month overdue when Fáilte Ireland deem the reasons for delay not to be satisfactory)<sup>14</sup>.

### PERFORMANCE MONITORING

During the course of the Operative Period as defined in Appendix 7, projects that receive an investment grant must deliver on the terms of the investment conditions approved by Fáilte Ireland. Grantees must provide monthly updates and year end reports on the progress of the project during the development and delivery stages of the project. The grantee will file annual financial statements with Fáilte Ireland and also, if requested, more frequent management accounts, visitor and facility usage details etc. The grantee must also co-operate with monitoring checks and reviews during the Operative Period. The grantee must comply with on-going requirements of Fáilte Ireland during the development of the project and during the Operative Period.

<sup>12</sup> Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 as amended by Commission Regulation (EU) 2020/972.

<sup>13</sup> Article 2(2) of the De Minimis Regulation defines a 'Single undertaking' as including, for the purposes of the De Minimis Regulation, all enterprises having at least one of the following relationships with each other:

(a) one enterprise has a majority of the shareholders' or members' voting rights in another enterprise;

(b) one enterprise has the right to appoint or remove a majority of the members of the administrative, management or supervisory body of another enterprise;

(c) one enterprise has the right to exercise a dominant influence over another enterprise pursuant to a contract entered into with that enterprise or to a provision in its memorandum or articles of association; and

(d) one enterprise, which is a shareholder in or member of another enterprise, controls alone, pursuant to an agreement with other shareholders in or members of that enterprise, a majority of shareholders' or members' voting rights in that enterprise.

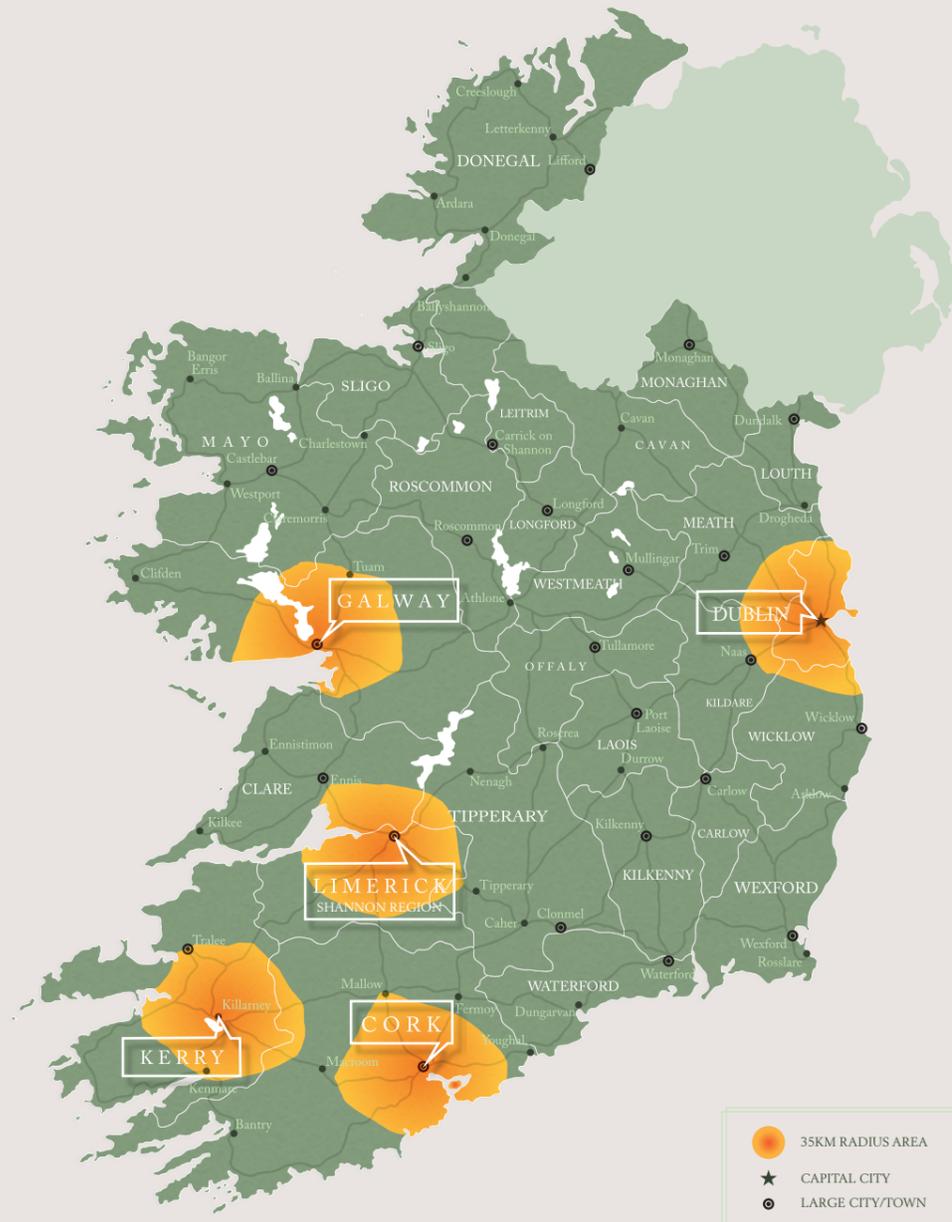
Enterprises having any of the relationships referred to in points (a) to (d) of the first subparagraph through one or more other enterprises shall also be considered to be a single undertaking.

<sup>14</sup> Applicants are reminded that the Investment Grant is at all times reimbursed in arrears based on vouched paid expenditure in proportion to the rate of investment to overall investment of eligible costs.

# APPENDIX 1

## GEOGRAPHICAL EXTENT OF SCHEME

**Figure 2:** Map depicting the five designated Business Events Hubs.



**Note:** This map is for illustrative purposes only.

Eligibility will be determined by Fáilte Ireland through verification that the distance between the project address's Eircode and the Eircode of the urban centre point (see Table 3) is within 35km, rounded to the nearest km. See Section 3.5 Application Qualifying Criteria and Section 4.1 Minimum Eligibility Criteria for further information.

# APPENDIX 2

## SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY

It has never been more important that the safeguarding and successful growth of Ireland's tourism sector is based on a sustainable and balanced approach. Environmental protection, economic competitiveness, community and visitor awareness and involvement, all play a part in successfully achieving and benefiting from this approach.

Driving this sustainable agenda at an international and national level are the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** where promoting and achieving a sustainable tourism industry form important targets in successfully achieving these goals.

In line with achieving international and national goals and principles the tourism sector (authorities, agencies, the industry and all other key stakeholders) should adopt the **VICE (Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment) Model for Sustainable Tourism** in all of our activities and outputs at all levels.

The Business Events sector in Ireland has already been making strides in sustainability, with Dublin entering the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDSI) back in 2017, followed by Cork, Kerry, the Shannon Region and Galway in 2018. Understanding the need to have sustainability at its core, Ireland was recognised with an award for the Most Improved Destination in the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDSI) in October 2019 providing recognition for Ireland and our efforts over a few short years to push our Business Events industry to act more sustainably.

As Fáilte Ireland progresses the sustainable actions of the tourism industry and its champions to our international clients, we are encouraging local suppliers to commit to the principles of sustainability and to tell the story of their sustainable actions.

We will require all successful applicants to implement and adhere to and promote sustainability best practice in the operation of their gala dinner venue. Applicants will be required to set out their proposals to this requirement in their outline Operations Plan that will be submitted at Stage 3 (Compliance) of the application process. This will include, but is not limited to the following (not an exhaustive list):

- **Energy consumption**
- **Food waste**
- **Recycling and waste disposal**
- **Reduction in single use plastics**
- **Sourcing of food and other supplies**
- **Promotion of green practices to customers**

Many of our key venues have achieved certification as green venues and that is an example that we encourage, pushing the same high standard across other venues especially new developments.

In addition to the above, we will require all successful applicants to attend and/or participate in relevant Fáilte Ireland business support initiatives or programmes pertaining to sustainability.

## APPENDIX 3

### ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE

Only eligible capital expenditure elements of projects can be grant-aided under this programme.

Expenditure, to be eligible for investment grant assistance, must have the following general characteristics:

- It must be relevant and appropriate to the project being grant-aided
- It must be additional, i.e. it would not have been incurred without the existence of the grant-aided project
- It must be actually incurred and paid, and be evidenced by invoices, payment records, bank statement and other appropriate documentation

Applicants who are applying for outdoor venue projects should note that eligible capital expenditure can include the following:

- Power Units
- Land Drainage
- Foul Drainage
- Surface Drainage
- Water services
- Works to facilitate provision of telecoms and data services such as fibre-optic cabling
- Access Roads
- Parking
- Tree Removal
- Bog Matting
- Enabling infrastructure to facilitate the temporary structure e.g. toilets, kitchens etc
- Professional fees
- Purchase of a temporary structure (e.g. stretch tent, glass structure, or structures intended to serve as temporary toilets/ kitchens etc.)

See Appendix 4 for a sample outline cost table for infrastructure works that will support a high-end stretch tent as a gala dinner venue.

See Appendix 9 for further information on purchasing Temporary Structures.

### INELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE

The following expenditure is ineligible in all cases:

- Accommodation facilities and related facilities
- Depreciation
- Expenditure derived from estimates or valuations and not supported by actual payment documentation
- Expenditure incurred after the completion date as stated in the Investment Grant Agreement
- Expenditure incurred and/or paid before date of approval by Fáilte Ireland of the project
- Financing costs (including bank interest and charges)
- Fines, penalty payments, legal costs, audit fees, insurances
- Loose fittings, furniture etc., unless deemed necessary and relevant to the visitor experience
- Marketing, including start-up market
- Motorised and non-motorised transport vehicles (including bicycles, buses, boats, ferries etc). Exceptions may be made, at Fáilte Ireland's discretion, where a vehicle is integral but not the main part of the attraction, has a restricted transport range and is not being used as a means of transport. (e.g. transport museum items)
- Operational costs
- Purchase of land and buildings
- Recoverable Value Added Tax (VAT)
- Repairs, maintenance and replacement expenses
- Retail facilities
- Staff costs, salaries and wages
- Training costs
- Unpaid expenditure

**Note:** In addition to the above, a full list of ineligible project types is also included in Section 3.5.

## APPENDIX 4

### INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS FOR AN OUTDOOR GALA DINNER VENUE PROJECT

To provide guidance on what could potentially constitute the elements of an **eligible** project, the following cost estimate is a **sample of indicative eligible costs** for a typical "greenfield" infrastructure project for provision of a stretch tent of the required capacity (not an exclusive or exhaustive illustration of project elements pertaining to this type of project).

It should be noted that this illustrative example **does not include any ineligible project costs** that may be in addition to the eligible costs presented in the example. Applicant project proposals should include all eligible and ineligible costs associated with the project.

It should also be noted that this illustrative example does not include VAT as this is an ineligible project cost. Where the applicant is in a position to recover VAT, the cost estimates must be expressed net of recoverable VAT. Where the applicant cannot recover VAT from the Revenue, you must attach a confirmation letter from your accountant/auditor.

- It is reiterated that Fáilte Ireland can support 100% of eligible projects costs up to a maximum of €200,000 (see Sections 1.1, 3.3 and 5.1).

**Table 6:**

Construction – Roads, Paths and Pavings	
-Site Preparation (tree removal, excavations)	€4,000
-Filling and Tarmac to access road	€10,000
-Temporary ground protection for vehicular traffic to access the site (plastic track mats 550 m2)	€46,000
-Soft landscaping – reinstatements of lawn and paths	€5,000
Construction – Site Services	
-Land drain to discharge surface water into pond	€17,000
-Watermain + connection	€11,000
-Combination manhole / mini-pillar to provide services	€32,000
-Telecommunications ducts + connection to Eir chamber	€10,000
Preliminaries @ 15%	€20,000
<b>Sub Total Construction Cost (excl. VAT)</b>	<b>€155,000</b>
Fees – Professional Fees @ 15%	€23,000
- Surveys etc. Allowance	€20,000
<b>Sub-Total Fees (excl. VAT)</b>	<b>€43,000</b>
Contingency – 10%	€20,000
<b>Total Project Cost (excl. VAT)</b>	<b>€218,000</b>



# APPENDIX 5

## EXAMPLES OF TEMPORARY STRUCTURES



# APPENDIX 6

## INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- Applicants that have received grant aid from Fáilte Ireland under a previous scheme, but have not yet finalised the grant drawdown process to the satisfaction of Fáilte Ireland
- Applicants that are not tax compliant are not eligible and applicants will be required to demonstrate evidence of tax compliance
- Applicants that are not in a position to establish that they either (a) own the project site or (b) have the right to undertake the proposed project on the identified site, and sustain that right throughout the operative period of the project
- Applicants that are not the organisation or individual through which all grant-aided expenditure on the project will be made. (i.e. Entities that are not the grantee of the aid)
- Applicants that have been in breach of a material provision of a previous grant agreement. For these purposes, the applicant shall be deemed to include:
  - (i) any other enterprise so in breach that was previously in receipt of funding and which either as of the date of the previous grant agreement or as of the date of an application under this Scheme formed or forms part of a 'single undertaking' (within the meaning of Article 2 (2) of Commission Regulation No. 1407/2013, as amended) with or in relation to the current applicant; and
  - (ii) any person who is or was a director, officer, shareholder (with a shareholding of at least 10%) or interest holder (being in the nature of any right to at least 10% of any profits) of or in any enterprise that is or was so in breach, or of any other enterprise, which with or in respect of the former, forms part of a 'single enterprise' in accordance with (i) and which was so in breach.
- Aid to undertakings in difficulty, details of which are set out in the GBER<sup>15</sup>
- Applicants must not be subject to collective insolvency procedure under Irish law, meaning:
  - (i) No receiver or receiver and manager has been appointed over all or any of the assets of the company.
  - (ii) No petition seeking the winding up of the company has been presented.
  - (iii) No order has been made winding up the company on any grounds.
  - (iv) No resolution has been passed by the members to wind up the company on an insolvent basis.
  - (v) No petition seeking the appointment of an examiner to the company has been presented.
  - (vi) No statutory demand has issued against the company pursuant to section 570 of the Companies Act 2014; and
  - (vii) No informal or formal compromise or scheme of arrangement has been entered into with any creditors of the company.
- Aid in favour of an undertaking which is subject to an outstanding recovery order following a previous European Commission decision declaring an aid illegal and incompatible with the internal market

<sup>15</sup> The General Block Exemption Regulation. Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Article 107 and 108 of the Treaty, as amended.

# APPENDIX 7

## STANDARD INDICATIVE TERMS AND CONDITIONS ATTACHING TO THE INVESTMENT GRANT AGREEMENT

Successful applicants will receive an Investment Grant Agreement, which will form the basis of the contract between Fáilte Ireland and the grantee. This will set out the terms and conditions of the Investment Grant and will cover various elements including but not limited to, the following requirements:

- **Grant Purpose**
- **State Aid Compliance**
- **Commencement of Work**
- **Project Management Obligations**
- **Publicity and Marketing**
- **Performance Monitoring**
- **Public Procurement**
- **Retention of records**
- **Visitor use**
- **Termination**
- **Repayment / Disposal**
- **Freedom of Information**
- **Data Protection and GDPR Compliance**
- **'Children First' legislation**
- **Drawdown of the Investment Grant**

Fáilte Ireland is not bound to propose an Investment Grant Agreement that reflects, in all respects, these Guidelines.

Applicants should note the following in particular:

### COMPLETION OF WORK

The date by which work must be completed, the particular conditions in relation to industry standards and meeting with statutory and local authority requirements, will be specified in the Investment Grant Agreement.

### OPERATIVE PERIOD

The Operative Period of the grant-aided project is five years and the project must operate as a gala dinner venue for this period. The operative period commences from the first date of availability of the venue after the project is completed. Fáilte Ireland

must be notified in writing of this date.

### MONITORING & UPDATES

The grantee must provide monthly updates and year end reports on the progress of the project during the development and delivery stages of the project. The grantee will file annual financial statements with Fáilte Ireland and also, if requested, more frequent management accounts, visitor and facility usage details etc. The grantee must also co-operate with monitoring checks and reviews during the Operative Period. The grantee must comply with on-going requirements of Fáilte Ireland during the development of the project and during the Operative Period.

### RETENTION OF RECORDS

Grantees must comply with all conditions in relation to the retention of records, as per the Investment Grant Agreement which extends also to Contractors and Sub-Contractors engaged in the development. All relevant records must be made available upon request for examination by authorised officials of Fáilte Ireland, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, other relevant Government Departments and the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Fáilte Ireland staff and/or its consultants must have access to the Project at all reasonable times, for the purposes of inspection, during the Operative Period.

### REPAYMENT / DISPOSAL

The investment grant is repayable if the project ceases to be operated as agreed during the Operative Period. Fáilte Ireland will require the immediate repayment of the investment grant if any of the conditions of the investment grant agreement are not complied with, including any misrepresentation of other State support or any failure to exercise elementary diligence such as would threaten or preclude the applicability of the De Minimis exemption.

# APPENDIX 7

### SALES AND MARKETING

It is essential that the capital development be supported by sales and marketing activity for the project. It is a requirement that the grantee implements the sales and marketing plan provided during the compliance stage of the process.

### PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

The grantee shall comply with EU and National public procurement law and associated procedures, the core principles of which are that procurement policy and practice should be accountable, competitive, fair and transparent, non-discriminatory, provide for equality of treatment and be conducted with probity and integrity. In particular, the grantee must comply with the "Public Procurement Guidelines – Competitive Process", available at [www.etenders.gov.ie](http://www.etenders.gov.ie) and all other applicable regulations, statutory instruments and EU Directives.

### FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Applicants should note that under the Freedom of Information Act, 2014, information provided by them in their application may be liable to be disclosed. Applicants are asked to consider if any of the information supplied by them in their application should not be disclosed because of its confidentiality or commercial sensitivity. If applicants consider that certain information should **not** be disclosed due to confidentiality or commercial sensitivity, they must clearly identify such information and specify the reasons why it is confidential or commercially sensitive. Any information not identified as confidential or commercially sensitive is liable to be released in response to a Freedom of Information request without further notice to the applicant. Fáilte Ireland will, where possible, consult with applicants about information identified as confidential or commercially sensitive information, before making a decision on a request received under the Freedom of Information Act subject to compliance with its obligations under the Act.

### DATA PROTECTION AND GDPR COMPLIANCE

Applicants must comply with their obligations under Data Protection Legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation (EU 2016/679 (GDPR) and the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018) with regard to any personal information supplied as part of their application. For details of how Fáilte Ireland will process personal data (including any sensitive personal data) provided as part of the application for the purpose of the administration of the Programme please see Fáilte Ireland's Privacy Policy available at <http://failteireland.ie/Footer/Privacy-Policy.aspx>

### CHILDREN FIRST ACT

Applicants should note that anyone applying for funding from Fáilte Ireland must be compliant with the requirements of the Children First Act, 2015.

## APPENDIX 8

### INVESTMENT GRANT CLAIMING PROCESS

Payments will only be made to the body specified as the grantee in the Investment Grant Agreement and will be based on expenditure incurred and paid by the grantee. The process for claiming drawdown of the investment grant will be set out in the Investment Grant Agreement and will require various documentation to be prepared and submitted. Further details on the process will be made available to successful applicants after funding has been approved.

It is important to note for cashflow purposes that payment is in arrears based on paid certified expenditure.

Expenditure paid by a third party, unless reimbursed by the grantee, will not be grant-aided. Grantees must have current tax clearance from Revenue at the time of any claim and payment. Fáilte Ireland will carry out verification checks on the claim and on the project delivery before passing the claim for payment.

Grantees will be required, at time of investment grant claim, to certify that the project has not been approved for additional grant-aid from any other source, or for accelerated capital allowances under any tax scheme (other than as previously notified to Fáilte Ireland).

The timing of investment grant payments is subject to Fáilte Ireland being in receipt of sufficient Exchequer funding to meet the payments. In the event of any unavailability, reprioritisation (including by Fáilte Ireland) or delays in such funds, there will be no liability on the part of Fáilte Ireland or the Exchequer to make good any shortfall experienced.

## APPENDIX 9

### PURCHASE OF TEMPORARY STRUCTURE

Please note that this list is not exhaustive. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all relevant planning, insurance and health and safety conditions are always adhered to.

- The structure / materials must be of a standard suitable for Gala Dinner Events and maintained in pristine condition for the duration of the agreed stipulated operation period
- The structure / materials must be stored and protected in an environmentally controlled location to ensure that the structure does not suffer from any deterioration
- The structure / materials must be maintained to the highest standard for the operation period stipulated by Fáilte Ireland
- Structural and fire compliance inspections must be carried out and signed off by competent Engineers on the structure / materials in advance of every event being hosted in the structure
- Full risk assessment and method statements including but not limited to the location of underground services to be adhered to all times in terms of the erection and dis-mantling of the structure
- All other requirements outlined in the Minimum Eligibility Criteria must be adhered to for the stipulated operation period
- The structure must be fully insured permanently for the stipulated operation period (not just for the duration of events)
- Adequate insurances to cover the erection and dismantling of the structure in addition to all appropriate insurances (including public liability and employer's liability) for each event
- At a minimum, compliance with all current Fire, Electrical and Disability access Building Regulations, Standards and certification requirements are to be implemented
- Fully compliant in terms of BCAR (Building Control Amendment Regulations), Fire Certification and DAC (Disability Access Certification) as any structure on-site for a period extending beyond 28 days is subject to all of these approvals and certifications
- Emergency Lighting design and installation in compliance with IS 3217:2013+A1:2017
- Fire Detection and alarm design and installation in compliance with IS 3218:2013+A1:2019
- Regular inspections from a Structural Engineer to ensure weather and other environmental conditions have not affected the structure.

Fáilte Ireland reserve the right to verify the quality of any temporary structure included in the application.



WANT TO KNOW MORE? SEE OUR WEBSITE:

[www.failteireland.ie](http://www.failteireland.ie)



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