

Dublin's Surprising Stories 2018

A Grants Scheme for
Improving Interpretation
and the Visitor Experience at
Operating Visitor Attractions



For Capital
Grants from
€50,000
up to
€200,000





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1. Introduction

About Fáilte Ireland

Established under the National Tourism Development Authority Act 2003, Fáilte Ireland's role is to guide and support sustainable growth in tourism earnings and employment. It provides 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, it also seeks 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.

The Dublin's Surprising Stories Grants Scheme is aligned to the Fáilte Ireland Tourism Development & Innovation Strategy - A Strategy for Investment 2016-2022. http://www.failteireland.ie/Failteireland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Business/6_Funding/FI-Tourism-Investment-Strategy-Final-07-06-16.pdf The Scheme provides grants between €50,000 and €200,000 for operating visitor attractions. The visitor attraction must have a minimum of 25,000 and a maximum of 600,000 visitors per annum with 20% being overseas visitors. This grant scheme is provided to qualifying attractions to enhance the interpretation and the visitor experience.

About the Dublin Region

The Dublin Region provides the visitor with an all encompassing visitor experience, vibrant city and surprising experiences. The compact characterful city is full of culture and heritage, with the sea and mountains easily accessible.

Dublin: Vibrant city life side-by-side with the natural outdoors

Fáilte Ireland's goal is to make Dublin a world class European destination by harnessing our living culture, of castles, cathedrals, cobbled streets and Georgian squares as well as characterful and lively pubs and cafés and award winning restaurants. This coupled with parklands and canal walks, wide sandy beaches, charming coastal villages and stunning views over the Dublin Mountains will contribute to the sustained economic growth and community wellbeing whilst valuing our heritage, history and environment. Fáilte Ireland has identified a number of strategic objectives and priorities for Dublin to create brilliant visitor experiences that will deliver long term economic benefits.



Figure 1: Dublin's Strategic Objectives & Priorities

Objectives	Priorities
<p>Deliver sustainable and engaging world class visitor experiences that make Dublin's living and historical culture accessible through the use of authentic stories as a differentiator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greatly improved interpretation • Revealing hidden gems that will provide the visitor with key memorable nuggets of information that are surprising and entertaining.
<p>Provide the visitor with interpretation in the first language of our visitor audience, i.e. in English, French, German, Spanish and Italian.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign language provision. • A minimum of 3 overseas languages offered within a visitor attraction.
<p>Increase the length of stay in Dublin and revenue generated. Encourage regional spread of visitors across Dublin and Ireland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase dwell time through enhanced interpretation, that will fully engage the visitor and increasing overall satisfaction levels of the visitor experience. • Encourage cross selling of visitor experiences in Dublin encouraging regional spread.
<p>Encourage overseas visitors in the off season and encourage them to extend their stay.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced interpretation that will ensure the visitor attraction appeals to a wider audience.
<p>Develop the capacity of Dublin's visitor attractions and also to contribute to the evening economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where applicable, extend opening hours by a minimum of 2 hours per week at visitor attractions during peak season – additional evening hours most desirable.

Project proposals under this Scheme should be aligned to the strategic objectives as per Figure 1 above and to Dublin's brand promise:

"Dublin living thrives side by side with the natural outdoors so you can constantly jump between completely unique, different and often unexpected experiences"

Aim of the Dublin's Surprising Stories Grants Scheme

The overall objective of this grants scheme is to improve the quality of interpretation at operating visitor attractions throughout Dublin. This will encourage the continuous development of visitor attractions, thereby enabling them to positively enhance the visitor experience and satisfaction levels, increase dwell time and improve capacity issues.

To develop brilliant visitor experiences, we need to improve our existing attractions and bring their stories to life with enhanced interpretation.

Interpretation builds meaningful relationships between places, communities and the people who visit them. It does this by focusing on the visitor and being rooted in the authentic first-hand experience of a place. Interpretation is engaging, entertaining and accessible. It creates powerful encounters and leaves memories that last a lifetime. For guidance on telling your story well and using interpretation to create an unforgettable visitor experience, see the Dublin's Surprising Stories Toolkit <http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Dublin/Toolkit.pdf> which accompanies this scheme.



2. Legal and State Aid Basis

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. 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 General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) rules and the De Minimis Regulation.

GBER

GBER¹ is an EU measure that provides exemptions from the State aid rules in certain situations. Fáilte Ireland has identified the exemption that is relevant to project proposals under this Scheme as follows:

- Culture and Heritage Conservation and Consultancy Aid in the Context of Culture and Heritage Conservation

To fall within the GBER, its provisions must be complied with in all cases and in all respects in so far as they apply to State aid for a particular project². While Fáilte Ireland has a primary responsibility to comply with those requirements and other State aid rules, compliance also depends on the co-operation of applicants, including their adherence to these guidelines, their candour in making applications to us and ultimately, their compliance with any subsequent grant agreement, including the requirements under GBER.

De Minimis

Grants may also be provided under the De Minimis regulation. There is a ceiling of €200,000 for all De Minimis³ aid, regardless of the source, given to any one enterprise (including groups) over a 3 year period.

Please note that in order for Fáilte Ireland to maintain De Minimis records, all applicants must complete a De Minimis Declaration which is included in section 2.16 of the Application Form. Applicants are required to declare any other De Minimis aid received 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 already received, anticipated or that which may possibly be received with respect to the project. Note that a group of linked enterprises is

treated as a single undertaking for the purpose of the De Minimis Regulation. All entities which are controlled, on a legal or on a de facto basis, by the same entity should be considered as a single undertaking for the purpose of this Scheme.

It may be possible to provide grant aid via the GBER Culture and Heritage exemption to an entity which is not eligible for further aid under De Minimis, subject to cumulation rules. Ultimately, the State aid basis (GBER or De Minimis) for awarding individual grants under this Scheme will be decided by Fáilte Ireland.

These Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Fáilte Ireland State Aid Handbook, which provides more information on GBER and on the De Minimis funding conditions. Applicants should also be mindful of cumulation or 'double funding' rules, information on which is contained in Chapter 4 of the Handbook. The Handbook is available to download here: http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Business/6_Funding/Amended-Failte-Ireland-State-Aid-Handbook-07-03-2018.pdf

Separately, as a public body, Fáilte Ireland and its grantees are subject to the rules of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular 13/2014.

Lifetime of the Scheme

It is envisaged that all projects approved for grant aid under this Scheme will be completed by June 30, 2020 and that final grant claims will be submitted for completion.



1 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 ([LINK](#))

2 The exception is where for one or more reasons (such as the recipient not being regarded as engaging in economic activity with respect to the project) the State aid rules do not apply

3 Commission Regulation (EU) No. 1407/2013

3. Who can apply?

The Scheme is open to operating visitor attractions located within Dublin having annual visitor numbers in excess of 25,000 visitors and not exceeding 600,000 per annum. The following sectors can apply:

- Private Sector: companies and other legal entities and individuals
- Voluntary Organisations: Not-for-Profit Bodies, including Charities, trusts and companies limited by guarantee
- Public Sector bodies: Semi State Organisations and Local Authorities

Note: Fáilte Ireland Strategic Partners including Coillte, Office of Public Works (OPW), National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Waterways Ireland are not eligible to apply under this scheme.

In addition, the following projects are not eligible to apply:

- Projects that have been approved under the Grants Scheme for Large Tourism Projects 2016-2020
- Projects that have received grant aid from Fáilte Ireland under a previous scheme, but are not yet complete, or have not yet finalised the grant drawdown process



4. What financial support is available?

Grant Rates and Grant Amounts

- The maximum grant rate will not exceed 75% of eligible capital expenditure
- The grant rate offered may be less than what is requested by the applicant and awards are made at the full discretion of Fáilte Ireland

Figure 2: Contribution required to match fund the minimum and maximum grant amounts

	Grant Amount	Min. Matching Contribution Required
Minimum Grant	€50,000	€16,666
Maximum Grant	€200,000	€66,666

Grantees will also need to provide additional funding to meet the total costs of the project. The total cost of a project would include ineligible or non-capital costs such as training costs, marketing costs, etc.

Note: Any offer of financial assistance by Fáilte Ireland is subject to re-prioritisation of our objectives and/or budgetary limitations. The Scheme is a discretionary scheme and will offer assistance only to those that will best assist Fáilte Ireland in meeting its statutory objectives in line with Government policy. It is also possible that those projects that are approved will receive less than their requested funding amounts or none at all in the event of re-prioritisation of objectives and/or budgetary limitations.



5. Is your project eligible to apply?

The following are the minimum eligibility criteria that will apply to this scheme:

- 1. Operating Visitor Attraction:** The project must be an operating visitor attraction, whose tourism visitor experience has been open to visitors prior to 1st January 2018.
- 2. Project Costs:** The project costs must relate to the provision or improvement of interpretation and foreign language provision. See Appendix 1.
- 3. Location of Project:** The project must be located within The Dublin Region brand area which is defined by the four local authority boundary areas of:
 - Dublin City
 - South Dublin
 - Fingal
 - Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown
- 4. Opening Times Requirement:** The visitor attraction must be currently open for a minimum of five days per week, including weekends, and nine months per year, or commit to this requirement after the project is completed.

In addition, it is a requirement of this scheme that the applicant commits to extending their daily opening hours by an additional two hours per week during peak season (1st June-31st August), following the completion of the project. These hours should be outside of core business hours with evening hours being most desirable. If attractions are already meeting the above in full there will be no further obligation to offer longer opening hours.
- 5. Minimum Visitor Numbers Threshold:** The visitor attraction must have a minimum of 25,000 and a maximum of 600,000 visitors per annum with at least 20% overseas visitors. This should be clearly demonstrated in the application. Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to seek verification of these visitor numbers at any stage in the application process.
- 6. State Aid Requirement:** The applicant must be fully compliant with State Aid rules with regard to General Block Exemption Regulations or de Minimis funding as relevant. (See Section 2).

- 7. Multi-Lingual Requirement:** All projects must contain some element of foreign language provision – a minimum of three overseas languages (other than English and Irish) or intend to have this requirement after the project has been completed.
- 8. Site ownership:** All applicants must (a) provide evidence of site ownership or lease to demonstrate a right to undertake the project at the site and (b) operate the project on the identified site for a minimum of five years subject to satisfying all Fáilte Ireland defined Terms and Conditions. (Operative Period as defined in Appendix Three). Your application will not be processed if this is not clearly demonstrated.
- 9. Match funding:** Evidence must be provided of match funding. Match funding must be in the form of a financial contribution for 25% of eligible capital costs which means the maximum grant rate allowable under this scheme is 75%. 'In kind' match funding (e.g. voluntary labour etc) will not be accepted under the terms of this scheme. 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.
- 10. Tax Clearance:** Please provide your Tax Reference Number. This number must be checked by Fáilte Ireland before your application is processed. If your Tax Reference 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 information provided with any grant application.

This is a focused, themed grant scheme to improve interpretation at operating visitor attractions.

The following project types are **ineligible** under this scheme:

- Any projects that have received a Stage One Pass under the Grants Scheme for Large Tourism Projects 2016-2020
- Accommodation and related facilities
- Driving routes
- Events
- Food and beverage facilities, e.g. cafés/tearooms/restaurants/public houses
- Motorised and non-motorised transport vehicles (including bikes, buses, boats etc). Exceptions may be made, at Fáilte Ireland's discretion, where a vehicle is integral to the experience and has a restricted transport range. (e.g. transport museum items)
- Projects located outside of the geographical limit of the Scheme
- Public realm, including public spaces, parks, playgrounds
- Public service blocks, amenity areas and related facilities or signage
- Retail facilities
- Theatres
- Visitor facilities (e.g. toilets, services, car parking access improvements where the primary purpose is to enable a site comply with regulations, etc)
- Visitor information provision (i.e. projects whose main focus is providing orientation information for visitors, tourism information points etc)
- Walks/Trails development including greenways, outdoor heritage trails, trail heads, trail furniture, orientation signage and interpretation signage
- Websites and Mobile Apps (Exceptions may be made where the digital media is part of the overall interpretation scheme. General information apps are ineligible).

Please see Appendix One for a list of eligible and ineligible expenditure.



6. The Application

6.1 How to Apply

There are two main steps to be taken in making an application for funding under this Scheme:

Step 1: Application Form

In order to receive an application form, you will need to register interest in the Scheme by filling out a short questionnaire via the Fáilte Ireland website. See <http://www.failteireland.ie/dublinssurprisingstories>. This questionnaire invites you to submit a short description of your project which will then be reviewed by Fáilte Ireland to determine its eligibility.

Any applicant or project that is clearly ineligible for funding will be informed of this and will not receive an application form. Otherwise, a link to the application form will be emailed to you. Please note that the receipt of an application form does not in itself confer eligibility of the project or the applicant. Depending on the information provided in the application form, the project or applicant may still be deemed to be ineligible for funding.

The closing date for registration of interest is 7 days before the Scheme closing date. Please refer to the Scheme webpage on the Fáilte Ireland website for information on deadlines.

Step 2: Completing the Application Form

All applications to this grant scheme must be completed online through the Fáilte Ireland Trade Portal. Only application forms submitted online to Fáilte Ireland 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 supporting documents required. At this stage in the application process, the following documents are required:
 - (i) Evidence of match funding for the project (financial contribution only)
 - (ii) Evidence of the right to undertake the project at site identified.

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

The online application form consists of 6 sections:

Section 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant Details • Tax Reference Number
Section 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Details and Scheme Eligibility
Section 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map out the Visitor Experience • Gap Analysis of the Visitor Experience • Research underpinning your proposal • Proposed Solution to address the gaps/deficiencies identified • Cross selling • Current and Projected Increase in Visitor Numbers
Section 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget • Indicative Costs • Source of match funding (cash contribution only)
Section 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory Supporting documents
Section 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Declarations

In Section 3 of the application form, you are required to conduct a needs/gap analysis of the current visitor experience and interpretation at your attraction. How to conduct this gap analysis is outlined in more detail in section 6.2 below. An outline solution will then be required to address the gaps that have been identified in the experience. This is not required to be a fully detailed and designed proposal but rather an outline of how you propose to address these gaps. Sufficient detail will be required however, to enable you to provide indicative costs for the proposed solution.

The proposed solution must support the aims and objectives of the Scheme as set out in Section 1 of these Guidelines. Information is also required on how the project will cross-sell and cross-promote the Dublin Region and other sites. Furthermore, the project must result in an increase in visitor numbers to the attraction and the region. These projected visitor numbers are required when completing the application form.

The information provided in Section 3 must underpin the rationale for the project and the impact it will have on the visitor experience at your site and more broadly, the impact on tourism in the Dublin Region.

Timelines

Please refer to the Fáilte Ireland website <http://www.failteireland.ie/dublinssurprisingstories> for details on the closing date for submitting an application under the Dublin's Surprising Stories Grant Scheme 2018.

6.2 Filling out the Application Form

This section provides information to guide you in completing Section 3 of the application form.

The primary requirement in the application form (section 3) is to conduct a gap analysis to identify gaps and deficiencies in how your visitor attraction currently tells its story to visitors, and then outline a solution which will address the identified gaps.

Fáilte Ireland has produced a guide, Dublin's Surprising Stories Toolkit, to accompany this Scheme. This guide provides detailed information on how to use interpretation to develop best in-class visitor experiences that support the Dublin brand proposition. It is essential reading for applicants who wish to submit a project proposal under this Scheme.

Note: As part of the application process, it is not a requirement at this point to engage with professional consultants to assist with the completion of the application form as we are only seeking a broad outline of your project. However, professional consultants/experts in areas such as interpretation and animation will be required to design the detail of your project if a grant is approved.

Describe the Current Visitor Experience

Begin this process by articulating your central interpretive theme or "Big Idea". It should answer in a few short sentences the question, "what is the experience about?" from the visitors' perspective.

Next, put yourself in the shoes of your visitors and map out their journey at your site. The visitor journey actually begins when they decide to visit your site and ends at the "post-visit" stage. The stages of the visitor journey to consider when identifying the gaps and deficiencies are:

- a) Pre-Arrival and Approach
- b) Welcome and Orientation
- c) Experience and Interpretation
- d) Post-Visit

A process for completing this part of the form is set out in the Dublin's Surprising Stories Toolkit. Below are some additional questions to consider, that may be appropriate for your site:

1. Pre-arrival and Approach

- Visitor Orientation – at what point is the visitor oriented and how? Is there attractive and functional en-route and local signage directing visitors to your site and area?
- How well do you know and understand your target audiences? Do you use appropriate media channels to communicate with them?
- Does your experience engage the visitor from when they first come into contact with your attraction, i.e. pre-visit?
- Is it easy for visitors to find up to date, informative, motivational information about your experience when they are planning their trip?
- Do you provide a quality ticketing solution both online and offline?
- Can the visitor access relevant information from other providers in advance of visiting your site? In turn, do you promote visits to other sites in the Dublin area?

2. Welcome and Orientation

- Appearance of exterior buildings, grounds, gardens, etc should be appealing and well maintained.
- Are there quality on-site visitor facilities with sufficient capacity – reception, parking, toilets, etc?
- Do your retail, food & beverage facilities enhance the visitor experience through layout, visitor flow, quality and presentation of food, merchandise, etc?

- Is your site accessible in terms of the infrastructure provided? Consider visitors with limited mobility, families, etc.
- Is the visitor warmly welcomed and easily orientated upon arrival? Good service is key and requires investment in staff training and development across all areas of the business to continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge
- Keep transactions simple. Is there more than one pay point?

3. Experience and Interpretation

Well-planned, entertaining and authentic interpretation which is based on an understanding of the visitor, their motivations and interests, can deliver a great visitor experience. Stories and characters bring content to life. Great stories and engaging characters reveal what may not be apparent, relate to the visitor on a personal level and provoke an emotional response.

- Layout and Visitor Flow of the experience – make it easy for visitors to understand your story through clear signage and layouts, both internally and externally.
- Have compelling and authentic stories and characters been developed and communicated? How does the story resonate with your targeted visitor segment?
- How are your stories revealed? How are they structured?
- How are the unique characteristics of the site or project presented?
- Are the visitor's engaged?
- Are the themes brought to life through interaction and animation? Are there opportunities for the visitor to get involved and learn something new?
- Are local artists, musicians, artisan producers, etc. integrated where possible into the experience?
- Are there knowledgeable and engaging tour guides?
- How does your interpretive media inform and motivate your target audience? Consider language barriers for non-English speakers.
- Is the infrastructure (both physical and digital) and equipment of a high standard? Does your media need to be enhanced/updated/replaced?
- Does the experience incorporate the Dublin brand proposition?

4. Post-visit

- Are people encouraged and facilitated to share their story through social media and other mediums during and post visit?
- Is there a mechanism in place to gather visitor data and feedback post-visit?

Conducting a Gap Analysis

Having put yourself in the shoes of the visitor, you should now be able to identify the main gaps and deficiencies in your offering.

A complete and exhaustive list of all gaps and deficiencies is not required. However, applicants should identify the most important ones – those that if addressed would have the biggest impact on the quality of the visitor experience.

Consider all relevant objects, touch points and experiences along the visitor journey and how the combination of these will deliver a memorable experience for visitors, keeping in mind that different audiences have different requirements.

Categorise the main gaps in terms of the following four areas:

- Your visitors
- Your story
- The experience
- The interpretation media (e.g. panels, audio-visual, technology etc)

In Step 5, describe the **impact** that these gaps and deficiencies have on the visitor experience, on your business.

In Step 6, you are requested to detail what visitor insights helped you research these conclusions in your deficit and gap analysis. This is a key requirement so please provide as much information as possible on the qualitative research that you have undertaken. Applicants should:

- Identify the source(s) of their research or insights
- Detail the extent of the research exercise undertaken (e.g. size of the sample, who the target audience was, when the research took place etc)
- Explain how the findings have been applied to the gap analysis and/or solution

Proposing a Solution

Having outlined the gaps and deficiencies in your attraction's storytelling offering, you should now set out how those gaps/deficiencies will be addressed. It is this solution that will be considered for funding. Again, there are four key areas to consider:

- The Visitor
- Story
- Experience
- Interpretation media

Please refer to the Dublin's Surprising Stories Toolkit when designing your solution. Of particular importance are:

- Finding your best story and its key characters
- Turning your story into an experience
- Selecting the appropriate media mix to tell your story well

This is a sequential process. The type of interpretation media selected to bring the experience to life should be the last part of the process. Before thinking about all the exciting media that can be used to tell your story, take some time to reflect on what you really want people to take away from the experience.

All applicants should provide details on how their project will positively impact the visitor experience, business growth and how it will support and enhance the Dublin brand promise.

Additional Resources:

In addition to the Dublin's Surprising Stories Toolkit, the following resources may also be of benefit at this point:

- *Growing International Sales*: When developing the solution, you need to think about your target customer, understand their needs and motivations, ensure that your story delivers what they want to hear and that it is aligned to the Dublin brand promise <http://www.failteireland.ie/International-sales/International-sales.aspx>.
- *Experiences Explained* – A Guide to Understanding and Developing Memorable Tourism Experiences – http://www.failteireland.ie/Failtelreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/4_Corporate_Documents/Strategy_Operations_Plans/Experiences-Explained.pdf?ext=.pdf. This guide provides an introduction to experiential tourism. The sections of the guide relating to Story and Narration are particularly relevant.

- *Sharing our Stories*: Using interpretation to improve the visitors' experience at heritage sites – http://www.failteireland.ie/Failtelreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Business/3_Marketing_Toolkit/5_Cultural_Tourism/Heritage_Interpretation_Manual.pdf
- Sections 4-8 of this manual are directly applicable.

Cross-Promotion and Cross-Selling

Cross-selling and cross-promotion are core to the strategic development of Dublin tourism. The benefits of these are clear – improved dwell time, economic growth and increased visitor spend in the area. Stories can serve to link places and support cross-promotion to develop a unified and coherent destination. Clustering with nearby tourism businesses and supporting each other, sometimes through packaging and bundling, is another approach to cross-selling.

In this section of the form you are required to

- Identify linkages with other places/experiences in or around Dublin that you will cross promote after the project is completed.
- Specify how you will cross-sell/cross-promote these linked experiences in the application form. What tangible actions will you undertake?

Projected Visitor Numbers

Projected visitor numbers for the next 5 years will be required in the table provided in the application form. Projections should include the estimated growth figures for both domestic and overseas visitors.

A credible methodology for the projections, in the view of Fáilte Ireland, will also be required. This must include sources of projected figures, logic and strength of assumptions, projected benchmarking against other relevant sites/attractions and current visitor numbers trends, broken down by origin (i.e. local, regional, or international)

Current visitor numbers, including the percentage of overseas visitors, for a minimum of one calendar year (up to 3 calendar years) will be required from operating visitor attractions. These numbers can be from 2015-2017.

Note: It is likely that this process will result in a solution which will require both capital and non-capital expenditure. However, only capital costs can be grant-aided under this Scheme. More details on what types of expenditure are deemed eligible and ineligible is provided in Appendix 1.

Remember at this point a consultant is not required to develop your solution.

7. Evaluation

Eligible completed applications will be evaluated on a competitive basis, taking into account the aims and requirements of the Grants Scheme, and in accordance with alignment to Fáilte Ireland's overall strategic priorities.

Applicants may be requested to give a presentation on their proposals to Fáilte Ireland as part of the overall evaluation process.



8. Approval Process

There is no guarantee of funding for applications which achieve the minimum eligibility requirements.

In accordance with Section 25 of the National Tourism Development Authority Act 2003, the National Tourism Development Authority (“Fáilte Ireland”) has discretion to provide grants to such projects as it considers appropriate.

At all times during this process, Fáilte Ireland has complete discretion not to award grants.

Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to restrict a funding offer to certain elements of a project proposal only.

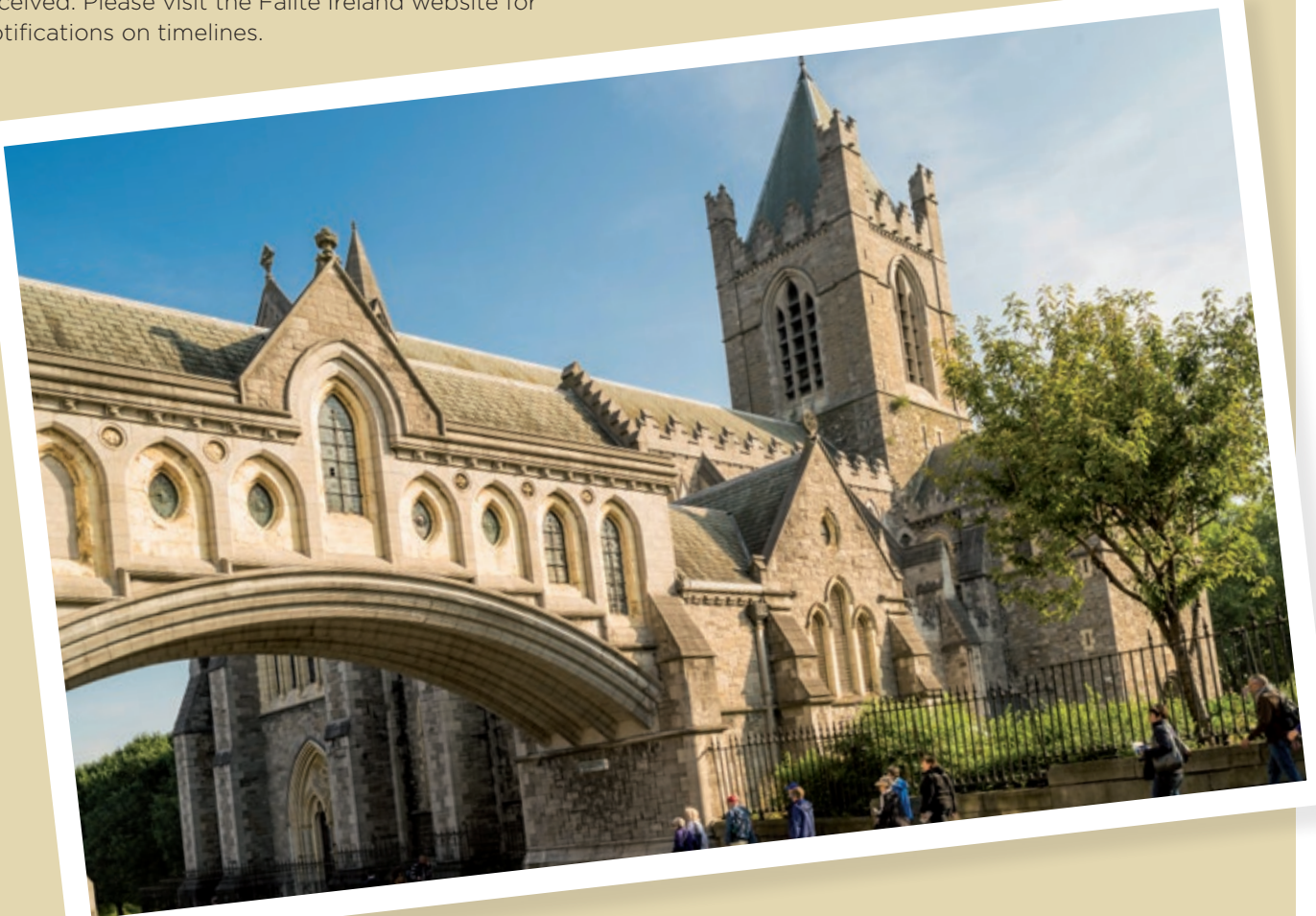
The potential impact of the project on existing tourism businesses in the locality will be assessed. Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to exercise its discretion not to award a grant or to withdraw a grant at any stage in the process if, in the opinion of Fáilte Ireland, the project could significantly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

Fáilte Ireland will notify applicants on the outcome of their submission as soon as possible but this will depend on the volume of submissions received. Please visit the Fáilte Ireland website for notifications on timelines.

If your project is approved in principle for funding, Fáilte Ireland will issue a confirmation of the proposed grant amount. As outlined in the application process, successful applicants will have to submit additional documents within 15 working days of being notified of approval. These documents – see Appendix 2 for the list of documents – must then be reviewed and deemed satisfactory by Fáilte Ireland otherwise the offer of funding will not proceed.

Upon receipt and review of this information, successful applicants will receive a Letter of Offer or Grant Agreement. This document will form the basis of the contract between Fáilte Ireland and the project promoter. The Letter of Offer will contain all terms and conditions related to the offer of funding. In any case where security is required for the grant, separate and satisfactory security documentation must be provided before any part of the grant is paid.

All projects not approved for funding will receive a letter advising them accordingly.



9. Post Approval



Step 1: Project Initiation and Tender Preparation

If your project is approved for grant funding, you will be offered a grant amount based on the indicative costs presented in the application form. Furthermore, a member of the Fáilte Ireland's Dublin Team will be assigned to work in partnership with you during the project.

The first step will be to develop your Interpretation Plan. This will most likely involve engaging professional consultants (such costs are eligible under the Scheme). You will be required to consult with Fáilte Ireland when you are drafting this 'request for tender' documentation. All consultation with Fáilte Ireland will either be with a member of the Dublin team, or with an appropriate expert operating on behalf of Fáilte Ireland.

Step 2: Interpretation Plan and Design

You will also be required to consult closely with a member of the Dublin Team as you develop the Interpretation Plan, and as you design your solution, to ensure that it is in line with the Dublin region brand proposition. Fáilte Ireland's prior approval for the Interpretation Plan is required before advancing to the next stage.

Step 3: Project Delivery Team

When your solution is developed and agreed, you will need to procure your delivery team (e.g. construction, fit out etc) under the "Public Procurement Guidelines – Competitive Process", available at www.etenders.gov.ie. Fáilte Ireland has the right to sign off on the tender design brief for the procurement of the delivery team for your project.

Step 4: Implementation

Fáilte Ireland will monitor the implementation of the project in accordance with the agreed design.

If you already have an implementation plan developed for your project, Fáilte Ireland will need to review this plan before you commence the public procurement process.



10. Grant Claiming Process

Grant payments will only be made to the body specified as the Grantee in the application, and will be based on eligible expenditure incurred and paid by the Grantee. Expenditure paid by a third party, unless reimbursed by the Grantee, will not be grant-aided. 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 grant claim, to certify that the project has not become eligible 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 grant payments is subject to Fáilte Ireland being in receipt of sufficient Exchequer funding to meet the payments. In the event of any unavailability 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.



11. Appeals Procedure

In accordance with Section 25 of the National Tourism Development Authority Act 2003 the National Tourism Development Authority (“NTDA”) has discretion to provide grants to such persons as it considers appropriate.

Submitting an Appeal

If having discussed the outcome of an unsuccessful application with a member of Fáilte Ireland staff an applicant still wishes to appeal the decision, the applicant must write to the Appeals Officer at Fáilte Ireland within 20 working days from the date of the letter notifying the applicant that the application was unsuccessful. The letter of appeal must state:

- The grounds on which the applicant believes the application was not properly dealt with or assessed;
- Specific reasons or evidence the applicant may have to support the appeal.

Letters of appeal must be sent to the Appeals Officer, National Tourism Development Authority, Áras Fáilte, 88-95 Amiens Street, Dublin 1.

Validity of Appeal

On receipt, the appeal will be checked to ensure it falls within the scope of this appeals process and that sufficient grounds for the appeal have been provided. The applicant will receive an acknowledgement from the Appeals Officer or from a person delegated to represent him/her in his/her absence noting the outcome of the validity check within 10 working days. Invalid appeals will be rejected at this stage of the process.

Appeal Review Process

Within 20 working days of receiving a valid letter of appeal, the appeal will be considered by the Appeals Officer in Fáilte Ireland. Their decision will be binding and will not be subject to any further appeals. Their conclusions and recommendations will be communicated to the applicant within 7 working days of their decision. Where any delay is anticipated the applicant will be informed in writing of the extended timescale.





Appendix One - Eligible/Ineligible Expenditure

Capital Expenditure

Only the eligible capital expenditure elements of projects can be grant-aided under this programme. Eligible costs associated with the upgrade of the interpretation or experience at a visitor attraction may include provision of interpretation media e.g. panels, audio guides, interactive technology etc. (installation and associated building costs). Note that costs associated with improving visitor facilities/services (e.g. toilets, parking etc) are not eligible under this scheme. A list of ineligible project types is provided in Section 5.

Eligible/Ineligible Expenditure

Expenditure, to be eligible for 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 statements and other appropriate documentation

Ineligible Expenditure

The following expenditure is ineligible in all cases:

- Accommodation 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 Letter of Offer
- Expenditure incurred and/or paid before date

of approval by Fáilte Ireland of the project

- Expenditure on food and beverage facilities e.g. cafés/tearooms
- Financing costs (including bank interest and charges)
- Fines, penalty payments, legal costs, audit fees, insurances
- Loose fittings, furniture etc.
- Marketing, including start-up marketing
- Motorised and non-motorised transport vehicles (including bikes, buses, boats etc.) Exceptions may be made, at Fáilte Ireland's discretion, where a vehicle is integral to the experience and has a restricted transport range. (e.g. transport museum items)
- Operational costs
- Purchase of land and buildings
- Recoverable Value Added Tax (VAT)
- Repairs, maintenance and replacement expenses
- Retail facilities
- Salaries and wages
- Trails costs (maintenance, furniture, etc)
- Training costs
- Unpaid expenditure
- Visitor information provision e.g. leaflet stands, tourism information points, as well as print or distribution of visitor information such as calendars, pocket-guides, leaflets, maps etc
- Websites and Mobile Apps (Exceptions may be made where the digital media in question is part of the overall interpretation scheme. General information apps are ineligible)



Appendix Two - Approval Compliance Documents

If your project is approved in principle for funding, you will need to submit the following documents within three weeks of receiving approval confirmation for satisfactory review by Fáilte Ireland, before a Letter of Offer/grant agreement can be issued.

Required:

- Copy of business plan to include:
- Marketing plan
 - Relevant research undertaken
 - Projected cashflow and profit and loss accounts for the next three years
- Adequate security to the satisfaction of Fáilte Ireland (where applicable)
- Company Constitution
- Company accounts for the last two years

Subject to project status, the following may also be required:

- Detailed drawings
- Building plans
- Any other additional documents that may be requested by Fáilte Ireland



Appendix Three – Terms and Conditions

Terms and Conditions attaching to a Grant Offer

This section outlines the terms and conditions that a successful applicant will have to adhere to. Successful applicants will receive a Letter of Offer or Grant Agreement, which will form the basis of the contract between Fáilte Ireland and the grantee. This will outline the terms and conditions of the grant and will cover various elements including but not limited to the following requirements:

- Purpose
- Commencement of work
- Drawdown of grant
- Security
- Monitoring
- Project planning
- State Aid compliance
- Public Procurement
- Retention of records
- Visitor use
- Repayment/Disposal
- Marketing
- Publicity
- Freedom of Information
- Data Protection
- Children First legislation

If the project is not already measuring visitor numbers, the project must incorporate a new method, compliant with all applicable data protection legislation, for recording visitor numbers and include a methodology for recording the country of origin of overseas visitors.

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 letter of offer.

Displacement

The potential impact of the project on existing tourism businesses in the locality will 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.

Operative Period

The Operative Period of the grant-aided Project is five years. The project must operate as a visitor attraction for this period, which commences from the date of the last grant instalment paid.

Monitoring & Updates

The Grantee will provide monthly update reports on the progress of the project during the course of the Construction Period. 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, 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.



Visitor Use

During the Operative Period the Project must be open to the public for a minimum five days per week, including weekends, and nine months per year. 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 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 grant if any of the conditions of the grant offer are not complied with.

Marketing

It is essential that the capital development be supported by marketing activity for the project. The “Dublin Region” logo, message and branding must be included on all marketing collateral including any promotional media and literature, any web-sites that the Grantee operates and on any external signage. Brand guidelines will be issued to approved projects prior to completion.

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 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

Applicants must comply with their obligations under Data Protection Legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation (EU 2016/670 (GDPR) and the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018) with regard to any personal information supplied as part of their application.

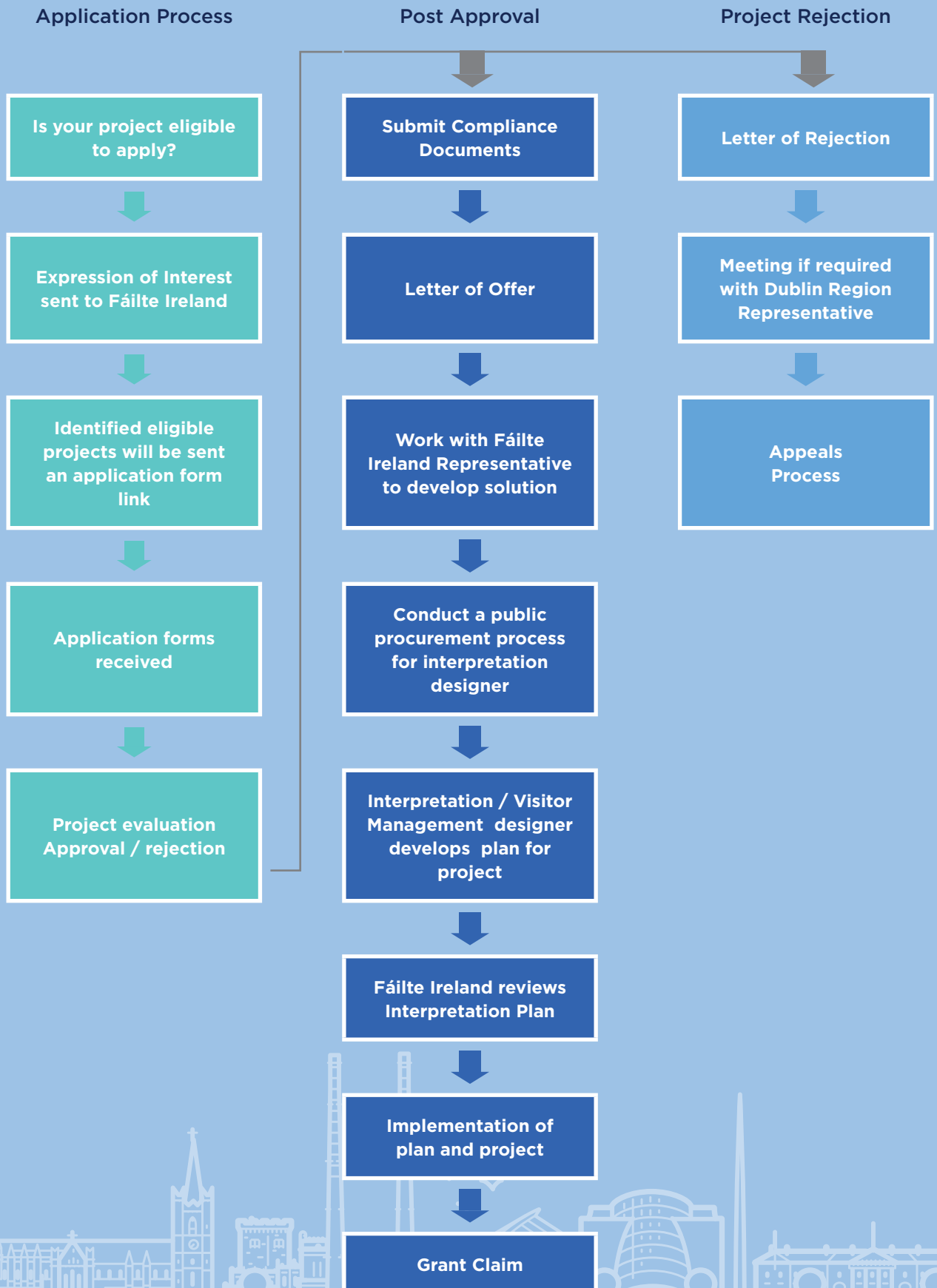
Fáilte Ireland’s Privacy Policy is available at <http://www.failteireland.ie/Footer/Privacy-Policy.aspx>

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.



Dublin's Surprising Stories Grant Scheme Process





Dublin
*Surprising
by Nature*