

Appendix 1 – Grant Funding Criteria and Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Edinburgh Visitor Economy Improvement Fund (EVEIF) provides grant funding to support targeted, practical and measurable improvements across Edinburgh's visitor economy.
- 1.2 The Fund is financed through the Edinburgh Visitor Levy and forms part of the Destination and Visitor Management (DVM) Investment Stream.
- 1.3 The Fund supports delivery of the Edinburgh Tourism Strategy 2030 by enabling projects that improve business resilience, enhance visitor experience, and increase accessibility across the sector.
- 1.4 This document sets out the eligibility criteria, funding parameters, and application and assessment process. It is designed to provide clear guidance to applicants on the type of activity that can be funded, who can apply, and how applications will be assessed. The application process is designed to be clear, proportionate and accessible to a wide range of businesses and organisations.
- 1.5 Unless expressly stated, the City of Edinburgh Council Standard Conditions of Grant (as updated from time to time) shall apply to this Fund and grant funding criteria.

2. Purpose of the Fund

- 2.1 The purpose of the Fund is to enable targeted investment in practical, deliverable and measurable improvements that support a more resilient, sustainable and inclusive visitor economy in Edinburgh and enhance the overall visitor experience.
- 2.2 The Fund is designed to:
 - Encourage collaboration between businesses
 - Strengthen operational resilience
 - Support environmental sustainability
 - Enhance visitor experiences
 - Improve accessibility and inclusion across the sector
- 2.3 The Fund also encourages innovative approaches, including the use of digital and AI-enabled solutions to improve efficiency, accessibility and visitor engagement.
- 2.4 All projects must demonstrate a clearly defined need or opportunity, a realistic delivery plan, and measurable outcomes.

3. The Fund at a Glance

Item	Detail
Fund Name	Edinburgh Visitor Economy Improvement Fund (EVEIF)
Funding Source	Edinburgh Visitor Levy: Tourism Excellence Fund
Fund Size	2026/27: £43,700 2027/28: £205,000 2028/29: £225,000
Delivery Model	Annual competitive application process with yearly assessment panel. Defined opening and closing dates to be applied to allow applications to be assessed together.
Individual Grant Value	£1,000 – £15,000, with an anticipated typical grant value of £3,000-£7,000. Grants between £10,000-£15,000 may only be awarded for projects that demonstrate wider impact, strong collaboration, or where match funding is provided
Project Duration	Up to 12 months. Multi-year funding (up to two years may be considered from Years 2 onwards)
Phase 1: 2026/27 onwards	Business Development - Collaborative projects supporting business resilience, innovation and visitor experience (this strand continues across all years)
Phase 2: 2027/28, 2028/29	Accessibility and Inclusion Support - Projects supporting physical, digital and service accessibility, alongside workforce accessibility and inclusive employment practices.

4. Fund Structure

4.1 The Fund will consist of two strands, which will be introduced with a phased approach:

4.1.1 Phase 1 (2026/27): Business Development Strand

- Open to constituted business groups (or to allow business groups to become constituted); and
- Focus on collaborative projects involving multiple businesses.

4.1.2 Phase 2 (from 2027/28): Accessibility and Inclusion Strand

- Open to individual businesses and constituted business groups for targeted accessibility and inclusion funding; and
- Focus on improving accessibility and inclusion including physical, digital and service accessibility, as well as workforce accessibility, inclusive employment practices and business resilience through inclusion.

4.2 **From Year 2 (2027/28) onwards, the Fund will operate with both Business Development and Accessibility and Inclusion strands in parallel.**

5. **Eligibility**

5.1 Applicants must:

- Operate within Edinburgh's visitor economy, with the projects being delivered within the City of Edinburgh Council area;
- Have been trading for at least 12 months; and
- Demonstrate the capacity to deliver the proposed project.

5.2 For the **Business Development Strand**, applications must be submitted on behalf of a group of at least three businesses, demonstrating clear collaboration between participating businesses. The group may already be formally constituted at the point of application or may be in the process of becoming constituted. Where a group is not yet constituted, the application must identify a named lead organisation that will coordinate the application and, subject to approval, act as the accountable body. The group must be formally constituted and able to enter into a grant agreement before any funding is awarded. Constituted groups may partner with other organisations where this supports delivery, expertise or impact.

5.3 For the **Accessibility and Inclusion Strand**, applications may be submitted by individual businesses or constituted groups of businesses operating within Edinburgh's visitor economy.

5.4 **“Businesses operating within Edinburgh's visitor economy” includes those facilities or services which are substantially for or used by persons visiting the City of Edinburgh Council area for leisure or business purposes (or both) and may include, but are not restricted to:**

- Accommodation providers, attractions, tour operators, cultural venues, hospitality businesses, and retail businesses primarily serving visitors;
- Social enterprises, charities and cultural organisations operating within the visitor economy; and
- Business events and conferences.

5.5 Other businesses which can demonstrate a tangible and credible connection to visitors and the visitor experience in Edinburgh may also be eligible to apply.

5.6 **Definition of a Constituted Group**

For the purposes of this Fund, a constituted group is a group of organisations with a formal structure, agreed governance arrangements and a named lead organisation able to enter into a grant agreement and be accountable for delivery and financial management.

6. **Fair Work**

6.1 Applicants will be expected to demonstrate a commitment to Fair Work First practices through a variety of policies and practices. Fair Work First is the Scottish Government's policy for driving high quality and fair work, and workforce diversity across the labour market in Scotland by applying fair work criteria to grants, other funding and public contracts being awarded by and across the public sector, where it is relevant to do so. Fair Work First practices include:

- payment of at least the real Living Wage
- provide appropriate channels for effective workers' voice, such as trade union recognition
- investment in workforce development
- no inappropriate use of zero hours contracts
- action to tackle the gender pay gap and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace
- offer flexible and family friendly working practices for all workers from day one of employment and,
- oppose the use of fire and rehire practices.

The Fair Work First criteria seek to address particular challenges in Scotland's labour market, to make a real difference to people and their communities, business and other organisations and the economy.

7. Eligible Activities: General Requirements - Additionality and Added Value

- 7.1 All applications must demonstrate clear additionality. Projects should go beyond existing or planned activities. They must demonstrate that the proposed work represents a new, enhanced, or collaborative approach that would not be delivered, or would be significantly reduced, without Fund support.
- 7.2 Applications that primarily seek to extend, scale, or subsidise existing programmes, events, or core activity without clear added value to the wider visitor economy are not eligible.
- 7.3 Priority will be given to projects that introduce new approaches, pilot activity, or deliver measurable improvements in business performance, accessibility, or visitor experience, rather than continuation of existing delivery.
- 7.4 Projects must be clearly defined, deliverable within the project timeframe, and demonstrate how they will improve business performance, visitor experience and/or accessibility.

8. Business Development Strand

- 8.1 Projects must involve collaboration between at least three businesses and demonstrate clear collective benefit. Activities should focus on delivering

practical, measurable improvements that strengthen business performance, resilience and the overall visitor experience.

8.2 Eligible activities may include, but are not restricted to:

- Shared digital tools, platforms or AI-enabled solutions to improve operational efficiency, customer experience or data insights;
- Joint operational improvements, including shared systems, processes or services;
- Collaborative visitor experiences, itineraries or place-based initiatives that enhance neighbourhood-level offer;
- Sustainability initiatives, including waste reduction, energy efficiency, climate mitigation and adaptation, sustainable procurement and alignment with recognised frameworks such as the GDS-Index;
- Research, data-sharing and insight projects to inform collective decision-making and improve performance;
- Workforce recruitment and development initiatives, including shared training, inclusive recruitment practices, skills development or leadership programmes;
- Demand management initiatives, including coordinated off-peak or seasonal activity;
- Pilot or test-and-learn projects that trial innovative approaches to improving business performance or visitor experience;
- Small-scale, shared infrastructure or physical improvements that support business resilience and enhance visitor experience;
- Collaborative destination development and visitor management initiatives, including joint marketing and destination positioning activity, wayfinding infrastructure, visitor information materials, themed trails, neighbourhood maps, seasonal campaigns, and other projects designed to increase footfall, improve visitor dispersal, and strengthen the identity and visibility of local areas within Edinburgh.

9. **Accessibility and Inclusion Strand**

9.1 Projects must demonstrate measurable improvements to accessibility and may include:

- **Physical accessibility:** minor adaptations, signage, accessibility aids;
- **Digital accessibility:** website improvements, accessible booking systems;
- **Service accessibility:** staff training, inclusive programming, BSL interpretation;
- **Workforce accessibility and inclusion:** inclusive recruitment practices, workplace adaptations and skills development to support a diverse workforce;

- **Business resilience through inclusion:** initiatives that improve the ability of businesses to attract, retain and support a diverse workforce; and
- **Research and insight:** accessibility audits to inform improvements.

10. Ineligible Costs

10.1 The Fund will not support:

- Routine operating costs;
- Retrospective funding;
- Standalone marketing campaigns that do not demonstrate wider collaborative visitor management, visitor dispersal, visitor experience or business resilience outcomes;
- Large-scale capital works;
- Debt repayment; and
- Activities not related to the visitor economy.

11. Funding Parameters

11.1 Grant Amounts

- Minimum grant: £1,000;
- Maximum grant: £15,000; and
- Typical grant: £3,000 – £7,000.

11.2 Higher-value (£10,000-£15,000) grants may only be awarded where projects demonstrate:

- Wider impact;
- Strong collaboration; and
- Innovation or scalability.

11.3 Match funding is not required, but applications demonstrating additional financial or in-kind contributions may be considered more competitive.

11.4 Assessment Process

- 11.4.1. Applications will be assessed through a competitive process using defined criteria, set out below.
- 11.4.2 Assessment panels will review applications to ensure fairness, consistency and alignment with Fund objectives.
- 11.4.3 Where demand exceeds available funding, priority may be given to projects that:
 - Demonstrate strong collaboration
 - Deliver wider sector benefit
 - Align with key priorities Edinburgh Tourism Strategy 2030 and Edinburgh Visitor Levy including sustainability and accessibility

- 11.4.4 All Applicants will receive feedback on the outcome of their application.

12. Scoring Model

12.1 Each criterion will be scored on a scale of 1–5.

Score	Meaning
1-2	Limited alignment with fund objectives or weak evidence of impact
3	Meets expectations with reasonable impact
4-5	Strong alignment with clear and measurable outcomes, including potential multi-year or higher-impact delivery.

12.2 Minimum weighted score of 3.0 is required for an application to be eligible for funding.

12.3 Minimum score of 3 in key impact is required for each strand:

- Business Development Strand: Collective Benefit and Operational and Environmental Impacts; and
- Accessibility and Inclusion Strand: Accessibility and Inclusion impact.

12.4 Eligible applications meeting thresholds will be ranked by score and funded until the annual budget allocation is fully committed.

13. Assessment Criteria and Weightings

13.1 Business Development Strand

Criterion	Weighting
Strategic Fit	20%
Collective Benefit	20%
Operational, Environmental and Innovation Impact	20%
Visitor Experience Enhancement	20%
Deliverability and Value for Money	20%

13.2 Accessibility and Inclusion Strand

Criterion	Weighting
Accessibility/ Inclusion Impact	40%
Customer Experience Improvement	20%
Strategic Fit	15%
Deliverability and Value for Money	15%
Sustainability of Impact	10%

- 13.3 Research and Insight activities (e.g. accessibility audits) will be assessed under Accessibility Impact, considering how the insights will lead to tangible improvements.

14. Outputs and Outcomes

- 14.1 Applicants must clearly describe
- Outputs: specific deliverables (e.g. digital tools, training sessions, visitor experiences, accessibility improvements); and
 - Outcomes: difference made (e.g. improved resilience, reduced environmental impact, stronger collaboration, enhanced visitor experience, increased accessibility).
- 14.2 SMART key performance indicators (KPIs) will be required to demonstrate delivery and impact, aligned to the 2030 Edinburgh Tourism Strategy and Edinburgh Visitor Levy objectives. Applicants will be required to report on agreed outputs and outcomes and provide supporting evidence where appropriate.

15. Application Process

- 15.1 The Fund will operate as an open, competitive application process with applications accepted during defined annual funding windows.
- 15.2 Assessment panels will include officers from The City of Edinburgh Council and industry representatives, to support transparency. Where appropriate, the panel may also draw on external expertise to support the assessment of applications with specialist requirements (e.g. accessibility, digital or AI related projects).
- 15.3 Open/close dates may be applied to allow all projects to be assessed together, ensuring funding is allocated to projects with the strongest potential impact if demand exceeds available budget.
- 15.4 Application windows will open annually, with clear advance notice provided to allow sufficient time for project development, collaboration and submission.
- 15.5 Applications must be submitted in advance of the relevant panel. Funding will be allocated in order of scoring until the annual budget allocation has been committed.
- 15.6 Applicants will be asked to accept The City of Edinburgh Council Standard Conditions of Grant.

16. Governance and Monitoring

- 16.1 The Fund will be administered by The City of Edinburgh Council with monitoring and reporting requirements as set by the Council from time to time.
- 16.2 Summaries of funded projects will be published to demonstrate Edinburgh Visitor Levy impact.

- 16.3 Completion reports of all projects will be required, including evidence of outputs, outcomes and acknowledgment of Visitor Levy support
- 16.4 Grant payments will be issued as Minimum Financial Assistance (MFA) under the Subsidy Control Act 2022. It is the responsibility of the grant recipient to ensure that they comply with the wider requirements of these regulations. Applicants will be required to provide written confirmation that they have not exceeded the relevant threshold in MFA subsidies or comparable types of subsidies within the relevant period.
- 16.5 The City of Edinburgh Council may request additional information or amend, suspend, or withdraw any grants where the recipient does not meet the criteria.