

Funds on offer for new ideas to boost Somerset's tourism economy

A new grant scheme has launched which will help expand Somerset's tourism offer as the county's visitor economy recovers from the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Grants of between £25,000 and £40,000 are available for Somerset SME businesses (small and medium size businesses of up to 250 employees), business partnerships, or community organisations wishing to introduce and implement a project that delivers genuinely new provision for visitors to the county.

The grant is part of the Visitor Economy Support Programme (VESP), an initiative developed in partnership by Somerset's Local Authorities (Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset West & Taunton Council, and South Somerset District Council) working closely with business representative bodies and wider stakeholders including Visit Somerset, Visit Exmoor, and Exmoor National Park Authority.

Projects supported by the Visitor Economy Innovation Grant will need to be completed in 2022, but applicants must also demonstrate that they will be sustainable for future years.

The grant has been designed to enhance Somerset's tourism offer by backing genuinely new service provision, creating more 'shoulder season' opportunities to extend the main tourism season, targeting higher spend customer markets, and developing new partnerships to consolidate activities into visitor-friendly packages.

The deadline for applications to the Visitor Economy Innovation Grant is Monday, 14 March. Visit [Somerset Visitor Economy Innovation Grant Scheme](#) for more information about applying.

The Visitor Economy Support Programme is being funded through a Business Rates Retention pilot scheme that allows councils in Somerset to retain a proportion of the business rates income locally to invest in developing the economy and improving the way local authority services are delivered.

The VESP initiative has been designed to strengthen small and medium size businesses in the sector so that they become more resilient and build their competitiveness.

As part of this work there are also a number of VESP Skills Sessions running in the coming weeks, each tackling a specific area such as improving your business website,

direct marketing, and Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). [Click here](#) for more information on the tourism workshops on offer and how to apply.

Ends

For further information, contact any of the five local authority Communications Teams or press offices.

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