



Oifig
Fiontair
Áitiúil

Local
Enterprise
Office

TRADING ONLINE VOUCHERS



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Local Enterprise Office



TRADING ONLINE VOUCHER SCHEME

With the trend ever increasing towards online spending it is estimated that only 23% of small Irish businesses are engaged in any meaningful way in eCommerce sales. For businesses employing less than ten people this percentage could be even lower. It is now believed that of online purchases made in Ireland that up to 70% of these are done in overseas markets.

There is now an urgency to ensure that businesses recognise that this is happening and that they are encouraged and supported to correctly respond to this digital reality.

In order to support this goal, the National Digital Strategy aims to get a further 2,000 businesses trading online by the end of 2015. To this end, the Department of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources (DCENR) has launched a Trading Online Voucher Scheme and has teamed up with the Local Enterprise Offices to deliver this to Irish business.

What is it?

The voucher is a financial incentive to small businesses to develop or enhance their ability to trade online. Under the scheme a qualifying business may apply for matched funding to a maximum value of €2,500 or 50% of eligible expenditure (exclusive of VAT), whichever is the lesser. Following approval of their application, a successful applicant can engage suppliers and upon completion of the work, submit a request for payment to the LEO in line with the terms and conditions of their voucher.

Information seminars will be available to prospective applicants to support them in their application process and it will be a condition of applying for the vouchers that applicants attend one of these seminars. At each seminar attendees will be informed of the purpose of the scheme and how best to use and get value from the application of the voucher.

The application process for the vouchers will be a competitive process.

What are the eligibility criteria?

The vouchers are targeted at businesses with the following profile:

- Limited Online Trading presence;
- Less than 10 employees;
- Turnover less than €2m;
- Applicant business must be trading for at least 12 months;
- Business must be located in the area covered by this phase of the scheme i.e. within the remit of the participating LEOs.

What are ineligible projects for this scheme?

- Companies with charitable status, commercial semi-state companies, trade associations and company representation bodies such as Chambers of Commerce are not eligible to participate in the scheme;
- "Not for profit" and social entrepreneurship applicants unless they operate in a commercial domain;
- Professional services specialising in IT type services who are already capable of trading online using existing in-house systems;
- Conferences and Seminars;
- Projects which are contrary to public policy;

- Duplication of support for projects which would be eligible for assistance from other State Agencies of EU funded Operational Programmes;
- Projects with employees in excess of 10 people;
- Projects deemed to be capable of proceeding in any event without scheme assistance i.e. deadweight;
- Projects essentially comprising importation and distribution.

What can the vouchers be used for?

- IT consultation;
- Development or upgrade of an e-commerce website;
- Implementing Online payments or booking systems;
- Purchase of Internet related software;
- Purchase of online advertising (this purchase cannot make up any more than 30% of approved Voucher costs and can only be drawn down in one payment phase);
- Developing an app (or multiplatform webpages);
- Development of a digital marketing strategy;
- Implementing a digital marketing strategy;
- Training/skills development specifically to establish and manage an on-line trading activity.

What are the things the vouchers cannot be used for?

- Development of brochure websites;
- Purchase of non-internet related software;
- Anything other than online trading related activity.

What else do I need to know about vouchers?

- Voucher approval must be gained prior to incurring any expense;
- Own labour is not an eligible expense;
- Third party costs only will be considered;
- All third party/supplier invoices must contain proper business details (e.g. tax or business registration details or proof that the supplier is a registered business in the territory in which the supplier is located).

What is the voucher application and drawdown process?

Application

- Read the terms & conditions;
- If satisfied you are eligible and wish to apply register to attend an information event;
- Attend information session;
- Submit copy of completed and signed application form in hard copy to your local LEO;
- Soft copy of completed application to be supplied by email to your local LEO.

Evaluation

- Evaluation of applications will be conducted by each LEO who will make recommendations for approval;
- An evaluation committee will assess the applications and make recommendations for approval;
- A competitive process will be put in place to assist with selection process. Selection of successful applicant will be based on the following criteria:

- Eligibility for scheme
- Value added potential
- Export potential
- Job creation potential
- Financial Sustainability
- Record decisions and report to the Local Enterprise Office approvals committee;
- As part of the application process applicants will be required to attend a training session on how to use and get the best value for money from the voucher.

Voucher administration

- If your application is successful, a letter of offer will be sent to you for you to forward to your preferred supplier.
- The voucher is a letter of offer which is sent to the successful applicant;
- Letter of offer signed, accepted and returned;
- Successful applicant has three months to complete the work as per their application.

Drawdown

Payment will be made directly to the successful applicant upon satisfactory receipt of the following:

- Applicant and supplier(s) sign declaration on the voucher and submit to Local Enterprise Office (LEO);
- Applicant submits
 - copy of their Company Registration Office (CRO) registration
 - an up to date tax clearance certificate ;
 - the original invoice from the supplier(s), with supplier(s) CRO or Tax Registration or VAT details (or proof supplier is a registered business in the territory in which the supplier is located) when submitting claim for payment;
 - Bank statement(s) showing proof of payment from the client company to supplier(s)
 - Declaration of project completion by supplier(s)
- All work must be completed and paid for prior to claim.

Payments will only be made with relation to approved expenses which form part of this application form

All successful applicants agree that they will allow reference be made to them in case study materials, which may be used to promote the voucher scheme more widely.

What is post-voucher reporting and how does it apply to me?

By accepting a Trading On-line Voucher, successful applicants agree to report on online trading from participation in the scheme, again in 6 months and at annual intervals up to three years thereafter. Reporting will include: jobs (new or reallocated), increased turnover, exports and/or domestic market expansion, reduced costs, expected follow on investment. This may be conducted by Local Enterprise Offices, Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources or approved independent evaluators.

Suppliers will be required to report on the impact of their products and services supplied to the applicant business.

- Reporting will include how their product or service enabled trading on-line, improved business performance, reduced cost, opened markets etc.

Acknowledgements

The trading on-line voucher scheme is an initiative of the National Digital Strategy, developed and funded by the Department of Communication, Energy and Natural Resources on behalf of Government. It is being administered by the Local Enterprise Offices.

Further Terms

Applications for assistance for expenditure incurred prior to grant approval are ineligible. The Local Enterprise Office reserves the right to refuse any application and the right to terminate this grant scheme at any time without notice. The approval of applications and the payment of all monies are dependent on the availability of resources under this scheme from the Department of Communication, Energy and Natural Resources. Applicants are advised to check availability of resources with Local Enterprise Office prior to applying. All applicants approved must draw down in full within three months of the date of offer, or in exceptional circumstances within four months (i.e. three months plus one month extension) as may be agreed between LEO and company. Failure to draw down all or any portion may result in automatic de-committal without notice, i.e. loss of voucher. The Local Enterprise Office may liaise/consult other agencies/local development programmes in relation to this proposal while respecting project confidentiality. Any false or misleading statement or the withholding of essential information from Local Enterprise Office (as determined by Local Enterprise Office) will result in cancellation of any grant approved under this scheme.

PLEASE NOTE: *The Local Enterprise Office is not responsible for any disputes between the applicant and 3rd party suppliers. Therefore we recommend that you adhere to best business practice and get three quotes as well as carry out due diligence before selecting a supplier. Disclaimer – For the avoidance of doubt it is understood and accepted that it is the applicant companies who are selecting and entering into a contract with third parties. The State and its agents (including Local Enterprise Office(s), Enterprise Ireland or any Government Department) does not accept any liability whatsoever in respect of any deficit in or consequences arising from products or services procured by or provided to companies under this scheme. In submitting your application under this scheme you are confirming that you understand and accept this disclaimer.*

DESCRIBE YOUR TRADING ONLINE PROJECT

Business objective for your Trading Online project (Max 150 words):
<i>What is it that your business expects this project to do that will help your business? Handle sales, generate new leads, handle customer service, etc... (please be as specific as possible)</i>

DEVELOP A PROJECT PLAN

Unique Selling Point of your Products / Services / Business processes targeted in this project (Max 150 words):
<i>Look at your online competitors, decide what products/services you will focus on - not all of them need to be traded online. Why did you select what you have?</i>
Your Target Market through this project (Max 150 words)
<i>Who are your customers going to be? (i.e. what customers will you target through your online channels?)</i>
Trading online competitors (list 3 to 5 with a link to their websites):
<i>When you use a search engine to look for the product /services your company offers, what companies/sites are displayed</i>

Scope of work to be carried out (Max 150 words)
<i>What are the specific deliverables of the project relating back to the business objectives? Describe the work to be undertaken in this project.</i>

BUSINESS INVESTMENT

Internal resources brought to the project
External resources brought to the project
Existing Assets the project should leverage off
<i>What additional information can you provide to help suppliers assist you? Social media presence you want to leverage? Design material? Photographs? Brand & marketing material?</i>

INDICATE PROJECT ELEMENTS FOR GRANT SUPPORT

The work you are seeking to have done by external service provider(s) will entail (click all that are applicable)	Yes	Unsure
IT Consultation		
Project Management		
New eCommerce site development (from scratch)		
Upgrade of existing eCommerce site		
Content Management System – a computer program that allows publishing, editing and modifying content as well as maintenance from a central interface		
Implementing an online payments system		
App development		
Development of a digital marketing strategy		
<p>online advertising*</p> <p>* purchase of online advertising cannot make up any more than 30% of approved Voucher costs and can only be drawn down in one payment phase</p>		
Training specific to the establishment of trading online		
Copy (written or graphic content) for website		
Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) services – process of optimizing the visibility of a website or a web page in a search engine’s organic search results.		
Analysis of existing site analytics – analysing web data for purposes of understanding and optimizing web usage		
Other		

PROJECTED OUTCOMES

Market expansion potential (Max 150 words)

What impact will the trading online project have on your business in terms of employment, revenue and ability to export? Based on your target market and competitor analysis, how will this project help you grow your revenue? Export potential? Gain back lost market share to existing online traders?

Financial Information	Current	Projected 12 months	Projected 24 months
Turnover			
Staff numbers			
- Full time			
- Part-time			

Trading Online Expenditure

Please note: supplier is not restricted to those based in Irish/EU territory.	Product / Service	Service provider Name	Cost (€ Excluding VAT)
Supplier 1			
Supplier 2			
Supplier 3			
Add any additional suppliers & quotes below			

Trading Online Voucher Request Amount	
Expected Cost based on Quotes (ex VAT)	
Eligible Voucher amount requested (€2,500.00 Maximum Voucher Award)	

VOUCHER PAYMENT CONDITIONS

- * **If your application is successful you will receive a letter of offer detailing the amount approved. (Maximum Grant/Voucher exclusive of VAT is €2,500)**
- * **Payment will be made directly to you on completion of the work and subject to the following being provided satisfactorily:**
 - 1** Copy of your Company Registration Office (CRO) registration
 - 2** Up to date tax Clearance Certificate
 - 3** Original Invoice(s) for work undertaken
 - 4** Declaration of project completion by supplier(s)
 - 5** Bank statement(s) showing proof of payment from the client company along with evidence of Supplier details (e.g. Company Registration Office (CRO) details or VAT details or Tax Clearance Certificate or proof that the supplier is a registered business in the territory in which the supplier is located)
- * **Payments will only be made with relation to approved expenses which form part of this application form**

SCHEME TERMS & CONDITIONS

No.	Key Terms of this Scheme	Please tick you have read & agree to comply with the scheme terms
1	Vouchers will be available to a maximum value of €2,500 or 50% of eligible expenditure, exclusive of VAT, whichever is the lesser.	
2	Trading Online Voucher Scheme is operated under a <i>matched investment</i> arrangement.	
3	Businesses are required to attend an Information session. This requirement is to ensure applicants are supported in developing the project plan which forms part of their application.	
4	<p>Businesses can apply for Trading Online Voucher Scheme to support expenditure only on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IT consultation; - Development or upgrade of an e-commerce website; - Implementing Online payments or booking systems; - Purchase of Internet related software; - Purchase of online advertising (this purchase cannot make up any more than 30% of approved Voucher costs and can only be drawn down in one payment phase); - Developing an app (or multiplatform webpages); - Development of a digital marketing strategy; - Implementing a digital marketing strategy i.e. Social media marketing; - Training/skills development specifically to establish and manage an on-line trading activity. 	
5	<p>All relevant supporting documents should be included with the application form:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a copy of a quotation from 3 suppliers detailing the works to be done and cost* - evidence of duration of trading if an unregistered business or sole trader <p>Failure to provide the supporting documents could result in the application being turned down.</p> <p>*Where 3 quotes for a particular product/service is not possible or overly burdensome in the case of multiple project components, the requirement for 3 quotes per item may be waived and the application may be evaluated on the quotes available. The applicant should consult with the LEO prior to submitting their application. The LEO must be satisfied that the application represents value for money and that the applicant has engaged with suppliers in developing their trading online proposal.</p>	
6	An evaluation Committee will assess the applications. A competitive process will be put in place to assist with the selection process. I have noted the criteria on which evaluation will be based.	

SCHEME TERMS & CONDITIONS CONT'D

No.	Key Terms of this Scheme	Please tick you have read & agree to comply with the scheme terms
7	Project expenditure can commence from date of voucher approval. Date of voucher approval is confirmed in writing to the company by the Local Enterprise Office. Any expenditure incurred by a company prior to this date is ineligible. There is no physical voucher. The letter of offer is the voucher.	
8	A letter of Offer is sent to the company to provide legal confirmation of the company's participation in the scheme. Companies must return a signed letter of offer by return. Failure to do so will result in the voucher approval being cancelled.	
9	Project Time Limit is 3 months from date of voucher approval.	
10	Businesses should submit <u>only</u> one claim at the end of the project. It is not possible to submit more than one claim for this grant.	
11	Projects may be extended by one month at the end of the 3 months subject to agreement with the Local Enterprise Office. After this one month extension, a LEO will de-commit the project and withdraw the letter of offer. The applicant may reapply for funding.	
12	Applicants should retain all relevant paperwork during the project in order to assist them in processing their claim at the end of the project including: applicant Tax Clearance Certificate, original Invoices from supplier with required supplier details (see page 9) and proof of payment to supplier and proof that all work being claimed for is completed prior to claim.	
13	I note the Indemnity Clause on page 4 of the application form.	
14	All successful applicants agree to report on online trading upon completion of the scheme, again in 6 months and at annual intervals up to three years thereafter. Reporting will include: jobs (new or reallocated), increase turnover, exports and/or domestic market expansion, reduced costs, expected follow on investment. This may be conducted by approved independent evaluators.	
15	Applicants agree that on successful completion of their projects they will allow reference be made to them in case study materials which will be used to promote the voucher scheme more widely.	
16	I note the voucher payment conditions on page 9 of the application form.	

TRADING ONLINE VOUCHER SCHEME APPLICATION - SIGNATURE FORM

PLEASE NOTE: The Local Enterprise Office is not responsible for any disputes between the applicant and 3rd party suppliers. Therefore we recommend that you adhere to best business practice and get three quotes as well as carry out due diligence before selecting a supplier. Disclaimer – For the avoidance of doubt it is understood and accepted that it is the applicant companies who are selecting and entering into a contract with third parties. The State and its agents (including Local Enterprise Office(s), Enterprise Ireland or any Government Department) does not accept any liability whatsoever in respect of any deficit in or consequences arising from products or services procured by or provided to companies under this scheme. In submitting your application under this scheme you are confirming that you understand and accept this disclaimer.

PLEASE NOTE: Applications for assistance for expenditure incurred prior to grant approval are ineligible. The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) reserves the right to refuse any application and the right to terminate this grant scheme at any time without notice. The approval of applications and the payment of all monies are dependent on the availability of resources under this scheme from the Department of Communication, Energy and Natural Resources. Applicants are advised to check availability of resources with their LEO prior to applying. All applicants approved must draw down in full within three months of the date of offer, or in exceptional circumstances within four months (i.e. three months plus one month extension) as may be agreed between LEO and company. Failure to draw down all or any portion may result in automatic de-committal without notice, i.e. loss of voucher. The LEO may liaise/consult other agencies/local development programmes in relation to this proposal while respecting project confidentiality. Any false or misleading statement or the withholding of essential information from the LEO (as determined by the LEO) will result in cancellation of any grant approved under this scheme.

DECLARATION: I/We hereby declare that the above information and details are accurate and true to the best of my/our knowledge and belief and I/we make this application for grant assistance on the basis of the information and details given. I/We have not sought and will not seek grant aid from any state agency or other sources in respect of this expenditure. I/We have read and fully accept the terms and conditions attaching to the 'Trading Online Voucher' from the Local Enterprise Office. I/We consent to the processing of my/our personal data (within the meaning of the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003) contained in this application for the purposes of administration of the Trading Online Voucher Scheme.

Sign here

Signed

Business Name

Date

Your Local Enterprise Office:

Application completed!

You'll receive a confirmation email that we've received your application.