

Regional Tourism Product Development Program – FAQs



Where can I get more information on the Regional Tourism Product Development Program?

Destination NSW has developed Program Guidelines which are available at www.dnsw.com.au/rtf-productdevelopment.

There is also a 30 minute webcast which provides more detailed information and examples. You can register and view the Regional Tourism Fund - Tourism Product Development Program webcast at www.destinationnsw.com.au/nswfirst.

If after reading the Program Guidelines and watching the webcast you think your project is eligible, we recommend you collate the information needed for a Business Case and supply it to your Destination Network who can provide you with further feedback and guidance in developing your project and application. The contact details of the Destination Networks are available in the Program Guidelines.

What's in a Business Case?

There is a detailed explanation of the type of information that should be included in a Business Case in the 30-minute Regional Tourism Fund – Product Development Program webcast. You can register and view the webcast at www.destinationnsw.com.au/nswfirst. Start the webcast on slide 12 to go directly to this information.

Is developing a Business Case really that important? It seems like a lot of work and I don't have that much time!

Not doing a business case could cost you much more than time. It is very likely going to cost you money. Most tourism businesses are small and many small businesses fail within the first two years of operation. For a great many of those businesses, they didn't take the time to research and develop their business idea and do the financial forecasting to ensure their business would generate sufficient income.

Working through all the points suggested for a business case, and taking advantage of the support and feedback available will help you and any potential investor – be it a funding partner like Destination NSW or a commercial partner - to see if the business is viable and sustainable. It will give you the best chance to be a small business that succeeds.

What is a Destination Management Plan?

Destination Management Plans, which are commonly called DMPs, are essentially a strategic plan for an area. The plan's purpose is to look at managing and developing a destination, ensuring the needs of residents, businesses and visitors are met. The plan identifies key issues and opportunities

and any gaps in infrastructure, services and experiences within the destination. It also includes an action plan to address the agreed priorities.

Your area's DMP is an important resource for you and it is important that you are familiar with it. Your DMP might, for example, identify that the priority need in your region is the development of high quality self-catering family accommodation. A project to develop that type of accommodation would be eligible and be seen as a strategically strong project.

Where can I find the DMP for my area?

You should first contact your Destination Network. They can let you know if their DMP is available and, if not, when it will be ready and provide you with details on how to access the most relevant available plans for your area.

Who can apply?

Destination NSW accepts Product Development applications, for eligible activities, from:

- Local Councils
- Tourism sector organisations such as Destination Networks and local or regional tourism organisations.
- Industry associations such as the Wine Industry Association, Backpacker Operators Association, Caravan and Camping Industry Association and so on.
- Individual Tourism operators

All applicants must be GST registered and the proposed project must be located in one of the six new Destination Networks. There is a map of the Destination Networks in the program guidelines.

Why is funding only available for new accommodation projects?

The upgrade or refurbishment of existing accommodation facilities is a long-term recurring business cost that should be factored into the ongoing operation of the accommodation establishment. The intention of this funding program is to support new tourism product supply opportunities. An existing accommodation property that is adding new accommodation (e.g. a hotel building a new wing) would be eligible to apply for funding.

Why do I need to have a DA approved before I apply for funding?

An approved DA has been included as a requirement for funding in order to avoid issues associated with projects being significantly delayed, altered or stopped as a result of the Development Application (DA) process. The approved DA ensures that the project as described in the proposal can proceed prior to entering into a funding agreement.

What is 'infrastructure'?

Buildings and permanent installations necessary to support visitors which can clearly demonstrate that they will drive increased overnight visitation to the region and are aligned with identified needs in the region's Destination Management Plan. One example is a surf school requiring a facility in close proximity to the beach to accommodate and better service more clients at the school.

Infrastructure that is consistent with community facilities e.g. meeting facilities, parks, barbeques, playground areas, public toilets, regional and town entry features are not eligible under the Regional Tourism Product Development Program.

Would this cover things such as room or bathroom upgrades in an accommodation property?

No, room or bathroom upgrades are part of a business's normal maintenance and a recurring business cost that should be factored into the ongoing operation of the accommodation.

Can you please define 'visitor signposting'?

Visitor signposting, for the Regional Tourism Product Development Program, relates to installing signage that tells visitors the story (i.e. interpretive signage) regarding the site/location or that provides pedestrian way-finding in areas with high volumes of visitor foot traffic. It does not relate to road signage such as the white on brown tourist signs or Local Government, town and region "Welcome" signs.

I am an Attraction. Can I apply for visitor signposting?

No, only a Council or tourism sector organisation can submit a proposal for visitor signposting.

Does 'visitor signposting' include interpretive signage at my attraction?

Interpretive signage is covered as part of 'visitor signposting'. A tourism operator is not able to apply for funding to install interpretive signage on their property. A proposal would need to be submitted by a Council or tourism sector organisation and any interpretive signage within or about your attraction would need to be part of the larger interpretive or wayfinding signposting project.

Interpretive signposting projects could include, but are not limited to:

- interpreting the vistas seen from scenic lookouts
- interpreting the heritage sites located within a town to create an interpreted heritage walk
- interpreting key sites and experiences located on a touring route

My Council or Destination Network wants to replace and upgrade the existing interpretive signposting in my town. Can they apply for funding?

Replacement and upgrading of existing interpretive signposting are normal maintenance and a recurring cost that should be factored into the ongoing operation of the Council.

Why can't I apply for funding for my existing attraction or tourism experience?

The upgrade or refurbishment of existing attractions is a long term recurring business cost that should be factored into the ongoing operation of the attraction. The intention of this funding program is to support new tourism product development opportunities.

An existing facility that is adding an entirely new attraction (e.g. a wildlife park building a new conference/education facility or adding new animal enclosure space to allow new species to be introduced to the park) could be eligible to submit a proposal for funding.

I have bought an old 3 star accommodation property and we are completely gutting it to develop the site as a 4.5 star high end accommodation. Is that eligible?

Such a project is unlikely to be eligible as it isn't creating new accommodation but replacing existing accommodation. As it is creating 4.5 star rooms from an old 3 star hotel it may even be replacing it with less accommodation stock than was there before. However there may be a new element such as a new attraction or experience in your project that could be eligible, so you could apply for funding of that component. It is worth discussing the project with and providing information to your Destination Network and seeking feedback from them on eligibility.

Can I include marketing for my business in my product development application?

Marketing costs are an ineligible component of a product development application. Destination NSW does however provide free listings on visitsnw.com for tourism products and we recommend you send us any press releases about your product and, where appropriate, we will promote your business in trade and journalist updates and fact sheets. Your product may even be included in relevant familiarisation visits or in our social media feeds.

The Regional Tourism Fund also has a separate Cooperative Marketing funding stream which Local Councils, Industry Bodies and Sector Associations can apply for. A webcast is available (Regional Tourism Fund - Co-operative Tourism Marketing Program) that provides more information on this program. You can register and view the webcast at www.destinationnsw.com.au/nswfirst.

Why is funding limited to \$150,000?

A maximum figure has been included to ensure that the available funding can be spread out across multiple projects rather than allocating all funding to a single applicant. A maximum amount of \$150,000 is consistent with the previous funding program run by Destination NSW. However, the minimum threshold has been reduced to \$15,000 from \$50,000. The reduced threshold allows smaller projects to submit proposals for funding.

When do submissions close?

The Regional Tourism Fund is a three year program which opened on 2 December 2016 and will cease on 30 June 2019. Product Development Proposals can be submitted at any time until 30 June 2019. Please note, submissions must be submitted at least three months prior to the proposed start date of the product development activity.

How is my application assessed?

An application to the Tourism Product Development Program is assessed against four criteria:

- Economic Impact
- Strategic and marketing Impact
- Community Impact and
- Your Capacity to Deliver the project

Information on what the Assessors look for against each of the criteria is included in the webcast on the program. You can register and view the Regional Tourism Fund - Tourism Product Development Program webcast at www.destinationnsw.com.au/nswfirst. Start the webcast on slide 31 to go directly to this information.

An ideal project scores highly against each of the criteria, however funding will also be considered where an application scores well against at least two criteria or scores satisfactorily against all four.

How does the Assessment process work?

Your Destination Network needs to review the draft application to confirm it is compliant prior to you formally submitting it to Destination NSW. Once the Destination Network confirms it is compliant then you can submit your application.

When the application is submitted Destination NSW forms an assessment panel that includes representatives from different areas of the organisation to assess each application. Applications are individually scored by each panel member using a scoring framework. The panel then meets to review their scores, discuss where there are any major differences and then agree on a final recommendation for the application.

The panel's recommendation and the reasons for their decision are then submitted for approval.

Where an application has been unsuccessful, feedback is available and applicants are encouraged to review elements of the project or application based on this feedback. The applicants can then reapply for funding for the project if they wish. Successful applications are announced by the NSW Government.

How long will the process take?

The Assessment and approval of an application will take around eight weeks. Applications must be submitted at least 3 months prior to the project's anticipated start date. If you are successful, the NSW Government will announce the funding and you and Destination NSW will also need to enter into a Funding Agreement. No money can be spent on the project being funded prior to the Agreement being signed by both parties, so please keep the three month timeframe in mind.

If I am successful will I get all the funding as an upfront payment once I sign the Funding Agreement?

The payments are linked to the achievement of project milestones. In the Funding Agreement there will be a payment schedule which specifies what needs to be delivered to receive each milestone payment. The requirements will be related to key stages of your project's implementation. The final

payment will be made once you have supplied Destination NSW with a final report which includes the results against Key Performance Indicators specified in the Funding Agreement.