

Omicron Event Sector Top Up Fund – Equality Impact Assessment

February 2023

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Name of Grant: Omicron Event Sector Top Up Fund

Policy Lead: Rachael McKechnie, Deputy Director, Major Events and Themed Years

Legal power used

Scottish Government funding is being used for the Omicron Event Sector Top Up Fund. The fund is being administered by VisitScotland. As VisitScotland is a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPD) it is covered by the Scottish Budget in particular Schedule 1 purpose 8 of the Budget (Scotland) Act 2021 which gives the Scottish Ministers the power to fund tourism.

Funding is delivered through the grant making powers of:

Sections 126 and 127 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. It is made on the basis that the funding is fostering employment as an express purpose as well as stopping areas being blighted by the collapse of employment; and

Section 23 of the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985 that gives Scottish Ministers authority to make payments to anybody who appears likely to promote the development or understanding of cultural or scientific matters.

Grant Overview

In December 2021 the Scottish Government announced £19.8 million of funding to help those in the events sector who had been impacted by measures introduced to combat the omicron variant of COVID-19 from December 2021 – March 2022. A further £2 million of support was announced in February 2022¹, taking the total funding to £21.8 million.

This funding is to be used as follows:

To support Scottish businesses in the events industry, and particularly those in the supply chain that are facing hardship as a result of having events postponed or cancelled.

To support a marketing campaign to support public confidence returning to events £2.2 million to provide additional funding to VisitScotland's existing National and International funding programme.

This EQIA sets out equalities considerations for the Omicron Event Sector Top Up Fund only. This fund is open to event businesses who have previously received funding through either the Pivotal Event Business Fund (PEBF)² or the Event Industry Support Fund 1³&2 (EISF 1&2)⁴. VisitScotland has published recipients of previous funding.⁵

¹ [News - Further Support for culture recovery](#)

² [Pivotal Event Business Fund - Guidance](#)

³ [Event Industry Support Fund Guidelines](#)

⁴ [Events Industry Support Fund 2 Guidance](#)

⁵ [EISF 1 Successful Awards](#)

Eligibility⁶

There will be no application process for previous recipients of PEBF, EISF and EISF 2 to complete, however, the businesses will be asked to confirm:

They are still trading;

Their bank details remain the same;

Confirm which event(s) / date they were due to organise and/or supply to has been cancelled or restricted during the period 08/12/21 and 31/01/22; and

That the cancellation or restriction of such event(s) has resulted in a loss of projected income during the period stated above.

Awards will be based on pre-COVID annual turnover, broken down as follows:

£10,000 - £24,999 = £2,000

£25,000 - £49,999 = £3,500

£50,000 - £99,999 = £5,000

£100,000 - £499,999 = £10,000

£500,000 - £999,999 = £25,000

£1,000,000 + = £50,000

Two tranches of payments will be made. One for December 2021 and January 2022, and other for February and March 2022. The maximum award for each tranche is £50,000, so events businesses can receive a maximum of £100,000.

A separate fund with similar levels of support will be available to new entrants to the events sector (EISF 3)⁷. EQIAs for EISF 3 and for the National and International funding programmes have been prepared separately.

Some events businesses may also have applied for Creative Scotland omicron funding. Where this is the case VisitScotland and Creative Scotland will liaise to ensure that businesses receive the maximum funding available, to the maximum award level for the fund that would provide the largest single payment but without providing duplicate funding or exceeding likely need. This is likely to require netting off in some cases. The aim is to minimise disruption for businesses – i.e., not requiring any funding to be paid back but rather for the appropriate funding top up to be provided.

Executive Summary

Strategic Context

Events make a key contribution to Scotland's economy, boost Scotland's profile internationally and can enhance community engagement, empowerment and inclusion. Events can act as a catalyst for investment in infrastructure and built environment. They can increase tourism in the short and longer term, and drive spend in other sectors such as hospitality..

The industry association "2020 UK Events Report" reported direct spend of £70 billion in the events sector in the UK in 2019. VisitScotland has estimated 9% of the

⁶ [VisitScotland Event Funding Update](#)

⁷⁷ [Funding Update for the Events Sector](#)

UK total can be attributed to Scotland, representing £6 billion of direct spend to the Scottish economy and also accounting for approximately half of the country's total visitor spend.⁸

The Scottish Government recognises the significant impact that COVID-19 restrictions have had on the events sector in Scotland. As the events sectors overlaps with other sectors and acts as a driver for other sectors such as tourism and hospitality, it is not straightforward to measure its economic and wellbeing impacts, or its impact on people with protected characteristics. We have identified three broad groups from data to capture the range of activity in the events sector: Art, Entertainment and Recreation; Accommodation and Food Services; and Transport and Storage. We think that this funding is likely to have most differential impact on people with protected characteristics relating to age, race, disability and gender. This is discussed in more detail in the Key Findings section below.

Engagement with the events sector did not raise any specific concerns about differential impacts of the restrictions and development of funding support on people with any of the protected characteristics. However, it did provide feedback that some parts of the events sector rely on zero hours workers, who may be more likely to experience socio-economic disadvantage. While it was not ultimately possible to develop a support scheme for zero hours workers due to reserved powers, fraud assessment, and interactions with the benefits and tax systems, the Scottish Government did thoroughly explore options to create a support scheme for zero hours workers as part of omicron events sector funding.

Actions Taken to Ensure Equality

In order to address the needs of many sectors adversely impacted by the omicron variant, a range of business support funds were introduced over January 2022 to provide funding to help secure jobs, safeguard businesses and to alleviate hardship, including the Event Sector Top Up Fund and [Event Industry Support Fund 3](#) (for which a separate EQIA has been undertaken).

Within this context of needing to react quickly, there was limited opportunity to gather evidence on the possible impacts of funding streams. Therefore this document draws upon the Equality and Fairer Scotland Impact Assessment⁹ undertaken for Events Sector Guidance, which also helped frame assessment for the PEBF and EISF 1&2, supporting consideration of the impact of events on people with protected characteristics. We also discussed fund eligibility with the Event Industry Advisory Group¹⁰, which is made up of representatives from business, sporting and cultural events.

KEY FINDINGS - Impact assessment of benefits and/or disadvantages.

Given the unprecedented nature of the pandemic we are aware that there are gaps in knowledge and in the evidence base. We are developing data, research and

⁸ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Strategic Framework Update February 2022: Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment \(BRIA\)](#)

⁹ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): events sector guidance: equality and Fairer Scotland impact assessment](#)

¹⁰ [VisitScotland Event Industry Recovery Plans](#)

understanding of lived experience as we move forward.¹¹ The headline data, engagement and information gathered to underpin the Event Sector Guidance EQIA, and which is also relevant here includes:

Age: Older People and Children and Young People

The Annual Population Survey 2019 found that approximately 51% of the events workforce is under the age of 35 compared to around 35% for Scotland's workforce as a whole. A disproportionately young workforce could result in a heightened risk and impact (in terms of lost lifetime earnings) of unemployment in the industry.

The Scottish Household Survey figures shows levels of cultural attendance, in 2020, when excluding reading, adults aged 16 to 24 (76%) were more likely to have participated in a cultural activity than adults aged 75 or over (44%).

Therefore providing support to sustain events businesses through Omicron top up funding so that they remain viable to operate once restrictions are eased could disproportionately positively impact on young people who are more likely to work for these businesses. In the longer term, it could also disproportionately positively impact on young people attending events in the future as these may be more likely to be able to take place once restrictions are eased due to availability of Omicron top up support sustaining businesses within the sector during the December 2021 - March 2022 period so that it can restart and events can take place over the spring and summer

Sex: Men and Women

The proportion of women aged 16 and over in employment in the events sector is higher than the proportion of women in employment in Scotland overall – 54.9% and 49.1% respectively.¹²

Research has highlighted a disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women. Women are more likely to have reduced hours, been made redundant, and been furloughed. Women working from home have had additional responsibilities (childcare and work). Not all women have been affected equally – young and minority ethnic more affected and pregnant women are also significantly impacted. Mothers are 23% more likely than fathers to have lost their jobs (temporarily or permanently) during the current crisis. Of those who were in paid work prior to the lockdown, mothers are 47% more likely than fathers to have permanently lost their job or quit, and they are 14% more likely to have been furloughed.¹³

The immediate priority of this funding support is to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic and help businesses survive. However, this funding to support

¹¹ [Equality Evidence](#)

¹² [Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2021, ONS - ONS Annual Population Survey \(APS\) responses for periods April 2019-March 2020 onwards are weighted to new populations derived using growth rates from HM Revenue and Customs \(HMRC\) Real Time Information \(RTI\) to allow for different trends during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic. The new weighting methodology gave improved estimates for both rates and levels following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. ONS plan to reweight the APS data again later this year using newly available RTI data.](#)

¹³ [Parents, especially mothers, paying heavy price for lockdown - Institute For Fiscal Studies - IFS](#)

businesses that have lost opportunity/income could disproportionately positively impact on women working in Events Catering Activities and women working in Other Reservation Service and Related Activities.

Race

With the events sector often making use of casual labour, Eastern European, African and other ethnic minority communities have been identified as potentially at risk groups of being affected by COVID. In terms of participation and attendance, access is in danger of being restricted by COVID due to financial implications and lack of additional resources hitting ethnic minority families disproportionately hard.

According to the Ethnic Minority National Resilience Network (Scotland) which is coordinated by BEMIS Scotland, minority ethnic communities have disproportionate vulnerabilities to COVID-19 exposure. This is represented in both social and health outcomes. For example, due to the immigration status of some minority ethnic individuals it is financially harder to self-isolate because their precarious employment circumstances mean they will not receive support such as furlough pay or state benefits. This means they are more likely to work in low paid and non-unionised work environments where regulations are not being appropriately adhered to.

In 2020, cultural attendance (including cinema) was highest for 'White: Other' adults (65 per cent). 51 per cent of minority ethnic adults had attended or visited a cultural event or place compared with 42 per cent for 'White: Scottish' adults and 48 per cent for 'White: Other British' adults (Table 4.8). However, these differences were found not to be statistically significant.¹⁴

The scheme is in place to protect jobs and support businesses which will have a positive impact on Minority Ethnic people employed in the events sector.

Disability

In 2019, 27.5% of the workforce had a self-reported long-term condition (lasting 12 months or more), including 29.3% of the Transport and Storage workforce, 28.2% of the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation workforce, and 26.6% of the Accommodation and Food Services workforce.¹⁵ We have not been able to source any specific data on the number of disabled people working in events businesses so we have considered this wider data as a proxy measure.

In the Scottish Household Survey, 'disability' is defined as the presence of any physical or mental health condition or illness that is expected to last 12 months or more, and that reduces the person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Attendance at cultural events or places of culture varied by disability in 2020. Only 32% of adults with a disability had attended a cultural event or place of culture, compared to 48% of non-disabled adults. The top concerns that disabled people have about visiting places as restrictions lift and events resume: People not respecting and honouring physical distancing; not having access to venues' or public

¹⁴ [Scottish Household Survey 2020 Telephone Survey Culture and Heritage Report](#)

¹⁵ [Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places, and Regions - Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2019](#)

toilets when outside; and having to queue or wait outside venues, especially when weather is bad.¹⁶

The omicron top up scheme is in place to protect jobs and support businesses which will have a positive impact on people with a disability employed in the events sector.

Religion and Belief

There is no evidence of a differential impact identified at this time

Sexual Orientation

There is no evidence of a differential impact identified at this time

Pregnancy and maternity

There is no evidence of a differential impact identified at this time

Gender reassignment

There is no evidence of a differential impact identified at this time

Marriage or Civil Partnership

There is no evidence of a differential impact identified at this time

Socio-economic disadvantage: any people experiencing poverty

Poverty has higher prevalence across protected characteristics. For example, risk of poverty is much higher for women, disabled people, minority ethnic people, lone parents, and children and young people. We know that work does not fully protect against poverty, with 60% of adults in poverty being in work¹⁷. The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that low earners were seven times more likely than high earners to have worked in a sector that has shut down as a result of the lockdown in 2020.¹⁸ Around 78% of workers in the events sector earn at or above the Living Wage compared with 83% of all Scottish employees.¹⁹ This means that restrictions on the events sector may have a disproportionate impact on people earning below the living wage and so providing funding support to mitigate the impact of these restrictions may have a disproportionate impact on these people through retaining businesses and jobs in the sector in the longer term as events restart.

Adults from the most deprived areas are less likely than those from the least deprived areas to attend an event. 36% of adults living in the 20% most deprived areas had attended a cultural event or place of culture, including the cinema, compared to 53% of adults living in the 20% least deprived areas.²⁰

Engagement with the events sector did not raise any specific concerns about differential impacts of the restrictions and development of funding support on people with any of the protected characteristics. However, it did provide feedback that some parts of the events sector rely on zero hours workers, who may be more likely to experience socio-economic disadvantage. While it was not ultimately possible to

¹⁶ [Euansguide - COVID Survey Results](#)

¹⁷ [Poverty and Income Inequality Statistics](#)

¹⁸ [Events Sector Guidance - Equality and Fairer Scotland Assessment](#)

¹⁹ [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2019](#)

²⁰ [Scottish Household Survey 2020 Telephone Survey Culture and Heritage Report](#)

develop a support scheme for zero hours workers due to reserved powers, fraud assessment, and interactions with the benefits and tax systems, the Scottish Government did thoroughly explore options to create a support scheme for zero hours workers as part of omicron events sector funding.

Stakeholder Engagement

We recognise that the event sector was one of the first to lock down in March 2020 and one of the last to restart fully in late summer 2021, and experienced more stringent measures than other sectors during the outbreak of the Omicron variant. We remain committed to the support and recovery of the sector, and to the underpinning public health measures as well as supporting public confidence to return to the full range of business, sporting, and cultural events.

When developing these funds we spoke to stakeholders, including the Event Industry Advisory Group on 22 December 2021²¹ and drew upon feedback from applicants and two online surveys of the event industry supply chain conducted by VisitScotland's Events Directorate in 2020. We also drew on the EQIA prepared for the COVID-19 Events Sector Guidance²² which was developed following consultation with a range of organisations representing people with one or more protected characteristics;

This provided an opportunity to listen to stakeholder views, test ideas, share information about progress and discuss and address specific issues identified by the sector and individual businesses.

Mitigations

This funding support is designed to sustain the industry and protect jobs through provision of top up funding to businesses that have previously received support, therefore mitigations will be principally focused on ensuring the application process is accessible through administration by VisitScotland.

To help to ensure accessibility for previous COVID-19 funding, VisitScotland ensured that there were multiple channels of communication and submission for the applicant if they has accessibility issues (online and by telephone). As there is no application process for omicron top up funding, accessible communication channels was not a consideration for applications, however, VisitScotland ensured that there were a range of communication channels for people with queries about this funding to raise these, including by phone, email and video calls, in order to improve accessibility. Where appropriate VisitScotland teams when performing anti-fraud/verification checks on businesses will use video call to establish the relevant verifications.

For previous funds dedicated email contact points were set up and VisitScotland reception redirected any calls to appropriate staff. VisitScotland provided within application guidance an email contact point for those applying who wish to apply in an alternative format. These measures were intended to boost inclusion and ensure that people with a range of protected characteristics could access the funding

²¹ [VisitScotland EIAG Updates](#)

²² [Equality and Fairer Scotland Impact Assessment - Results - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): events sector guidance: equality and Fairer Scotland impact assessment](#)

support. As all businesses targeted in this funding had successfully engaged with VisitScotland previously no other options would be required. There may be circumstances where revised contracts would require from businesses for which a phone call and email will be required.

Next Steps

The Scottish Government will undertake an exercise to identify lessons from across the various omicron funding schemes, including events. The Scottish Government will work with VisitScotland and other public bodies such as Creative Scotland, where appropriate, to capture learnings on how the events omicron funding was delivered, including learning in terms of equalities and socioeconomic impacts, and improvements that could be made. This will inform the proactive development of options for future COVID-funding schemes, and any areas of learning that can be applied to events funding schemes more generally.

Declaration and Publication

I have read the Equality Impact Assessment and I am satisfied that it represents a fair and reasonable view of the expected equality impact of the measures implemented.

Signed: Rachael McKechnie

Date: 19 June 2022



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