



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts

**POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR THE
ADMINISTRATION
OF**



REIMBURSEMENT GRANT

March 2023

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Livestream videos, motion art, visual albums, virtual museums, immersive theatre, contactless bookings and e-payments are some of the new technologies that are available worldwide. The development and diffusion of digital technologies in general have changed the customers' expectations due to technologies such as unlimited mobile internet, social networking and real time video sharing.

The Creative sector has identified increased awareness and interest in the sector as an important economical driver. Visitors and locals enjoy participating in authentic and exciting creative experiences that accurately depict the destination of choice. Creative tourism has been accepted as a real economic driver in many countries, as all places have culture, and Trinidad and Tobago is no exception to this market.

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts (The Ministry) recognizes that the continued collaboration within these two industries will bring about synergies to produce an experience that touches all senses, as they interact with the tangible and intangible elements of our unique offerings. To assist our providers and operators to take advantage of the digital opportunities available through technological advancements, the MTCA has initiated D.O.T.S., a Digitalization of the Tourism and Creative Sectors Reimbursement Grant. This grant is expected to assist participants in utilizing novel solutions to expand their offerings worldwide through social media, e-commerce, e ticketing, and e-bookings etc.

The Ministry has established a DOTS Committee which is responsible for the assessment of this Reimbursement Grant and falls under the Grants, Sponsorship and Subventions Secretariat which is responsible for the administration and assessment of stakeholder funding under the purview of the Ministry.

The Committee will comprise senior members of the Ministry with competencies in relevant areas including, tourism, culture and creative arts, information technology.

2.0 KEY DEFINITIONS

APPLICANT - Any organisation, special interest group or individual that submits a completed Application for DOTS Reimbursement for consideration by the MTCA.

CREATIVE SECTOR- The collection of industries whose activities are all geared towards the production and support of generating intellectual products and cultural values.

CULTURE- The set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses, not only art and literature but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

DIGITALIZATION PROJECT- strategies, initiatives and projects that utilize digital technologies to expand markets and drive economic sustainability in the tourism and creative arts sectors as set out at Section 6

DOMESTIC TOURISM - Travel by residents of a given country within that country for pleasure or vacation.

GoRTT -The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

GRANT AGREEMENT - A legal *Letter of Exchange* (agreement) which sets forth and memorialises the terms and conditions of a grant made by the Ministry to a grantee pursuant to this Policy.

FORCE MAJEURE - An act, omission, cause or circumstance outside a party's reasonable control including, without limitation, pandemic, epidemic, inclement weather, fire, storm, flood, earthquake, explosion, accident, enemy acts, war, sabotage, labour dispute, riot or civil commotion and an act or omission of a third party.

REIMBURSEMENT GRANT - A financial award provided by the GoRTT to an Applicant for a project after finances have been expended by the awardee. Awarding of such funds is aimed at transforming Trinidad and Tobago into a premier tourist destination, as well as the development of Trinidad and Tobago's many cultural and artistic forms and is critical to fulfilment of the Ministry's mandate to grow and transform the tourism, culture and heritage resources for the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago. A Reimbursement Grant does not include technical assistance or other financial assistance, such as a loan or loan guarantee, direct appropriation, or revenue sharing and the grantee is not expected to repay the money.

STAKEHOLDERS - Individuals who have a vested interest in development of tourism culture and the arts through developing digital technologies including community members; environmental, social, and community NGOs; hotel owners, tour operators, guides, transportation providers, and representatives from other related services in the private sector.

TOURISM - Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes.

TOURISM SECTOR- The collection of industries whose activities are all geared towards the production and support of Tourism.

TOURISM STATE ENTERPRISE - A State Agency with responsibility for the marketing and promotion of destination Trinidad and Tobago.

3.0 OPERATING PRINCIPLES

This Grants and Sponsorship Policy is guided by the seven (7) core principles listed below:

1. **Accountability** The use of transparent management systems in administering the Funds while requiring recipients to account for the funding/sponsorship received.
2. **Collaboration and partnerships** Recognition that there are synergies to be gained through the development of relationships in which individuals and organisations work together for the common good.
3. **Equity and fairness** The provision of funding in a manner which recognizes the diversity and variations in the challenges faced by organisations, communities, and districts throughout Trinidad and Tobago.
4. **Good Governance** The implementation of clear management and decision-making processes that are accessible to all qualifying stakeholders, which provide consistency in the operations of all entities of the Ministry responsible for Tourism, Culture and the Arts, involved in the process for disbursement of grants and sponsorships; and ensure the appropriate sensitization of users and Officers.
5. **Individual/
Organisational
Contribution** Promotion of a sense of responsibility and partnership with Government among civil society and the private sector in celebrating national traditions and advancing culture and tourism as key sectors for growth and development
6. **Sustainability** Promotion of tangible, long-lasting change in the quality of life and opportunities afforded to individuals that can result in improvements in their physical environment through holistic planning for human, social, cultural, relational and environmental transformation without undermining future development potential.
7. **Transformation** Prioritization of initiatives which promote cultural development, support the development of tourism and facilitate national pride, good citizenship and diversity.

4.0 POLICY'S ALIGNMENT NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS

The DOTS Policy is guided by broader national policy objectives outlined in the Vision 2030 which are committed to “rebuilding our country and economy, and restoring every area of national life” with an aim to partnering “with every business, worker and citizen, to recalibrate the economy to its correct posture of sustainable growth, development, social peace, economic stability and transformation ...” (Vision 2030).

This commitment prefaces the National Development Strategy 2016 – 2030 that “prescribes five key transformative areas including evidence-based decision making, nurturing creativity, innovation and entrepreneurial investment, productivity and care for the environment. (Vision 2030).

Therefore, the objective of this Policy is to partner with and support tourism and creative service providers to participate in the rebuilding of our economy to bring it to sustainable levels.

5.0 POLICY OBJECTIVES

- To provide guidelines for fair and equitable disbursement of the D.O.T.S Reimbursement Grant.
- To ensure transparency, accountability and equity in dissemination of the grant.
- To improve competitiveness of culture, creative and tourism sectors.
- To increase visitor arrivals and visitor expenditure.
- To support industry partners and key tourism stakeholders.
- To establish mechanisms for the effective monitoring and evaluation of disbursements.

6.0 POLICY SCOPE

The Digitalization of the Tourism and Creative Sectors grant will provide reimbursement of **50% of expenditure up to a maximum of TT\$50,000.00** for the development of a digitalization project that is tourism and/or creative related. This Policy limits the Digitalization of the Tourism and Creative Sectors Reimbursement Grant to the following types of projects and technologies:

1. **Recognition Technology-** Technology utilized to allow machines to read data from travel documents and match same with facial features and finger digits as well as voice search and control abilities.
2. **Robots-** Improve the customer experience through concierge service, data

processing, providing quick responses to general questions. Robots can be used to market and promote products and services, greet guests etc.

3. **Mobile Integration/Mobile App-** The use of smartphones continues to show exponential growth among the sectors. Thanks to its multi-functionality, mobile devices are, and are destined to become, an increasingly important touch point for any operator who wants to reach potential customers.

People can do almost everything with their smartphones, which has placed mobile integration and app creation at the forefront of disruptive technology, which continue to improve the customers' value proposition.

4. **Chat Bots and Artificial Intelligence-** Provides rapid response to general basic queries and reduces the work force usage and cost of operations in the industries where they are utilized as they have the ability to work continuously, from booking a request to reporting the weather, to providing location information anytime, anywhere and in any language.
5. **Personalization-** Technology that focuses on the use of "big data" to make the forecasting of future demands predictable and evidence-based. Customers value the benefits of services personalized to their expectations, it creates brand loyalty, personalization also impacts revenue management, reputation management, strategic marketing and optimizing the experience curve.
6. **Internet of Things-** The connectivity of internet of things (IoT) provide opportunities to the Tourism and Creative sectors through every day usage. IoT data facilitates businesses to know their needs, their demands, travel habits and other characteristics that makes customers feel the care for them in service offerings.
7. **Virtual/Augmented Reality-** Businesses across the globe are exploring and utilizing every opportunity to build and improve customer experience. Unprecedented opportunities brought by technologies, such as Data, AI, 3D and XR (extended reality) brings Creative heritage sites back to life. Virtual museums offer visitors the possibility to see art works in context and experience objects or sites inaccessible to the public. The transformation of the sector is resulting in easier online access to Creative material for everybody.
8. **Geotagging-** Geotagging is the process of appending geographic coordinates to media based on the location of a mobile device. Geotags can be applied to photos, videos, websites, text messages, and QR codes, and could also include time stamps or other contextual information.
9. **Transformational trends in videography-** To demonstrate and/or promote the digital product technology can also be utilized through content creation and development. Some areas to consider are as follows:

- a. **Virtual Reality-** With the development of technology and new

hardware, virtual reality productions for mass market have become more and more available in recent years. This allows companies to display their brands in new and creative ways.

- b. **Cinemograph Creations-** A fusion of still photography with films that allows you to tell a story in a new way through social media, emails, digital displays/projections, websites and digital ads.
 - c. **4K or Ultra High Definition-** 4K technology has been developed to the fastest growing smartphone market. They produce better post-processing of images, more options for manipulating frame by frame, better results in green screen matting, motion tracking and reduced grain and rotoscoping.
 - d. **Go Pro Cameras-** In 2019, the global action camera market grew to an estimated 22.2%. Everyone from beginners to professional videographers wanted a Go Pro Camera. This camera can be used in any situation and produces professional quality content.
 - e. **Other Trends-** Integrated video campaigns, slow motion videos, hyperlapse video, video chaptalization, 360 degrees videos, vertical videos and much more.
- 10.**Digital Marketing Systems or Solutions-** Search Engine Optimization, personalization and ChatBots are some of the disruptive technologies used in the marketing space to engage the consumer. Companies are also including Livestream Commerce, Non-Fungible Tokens, Shoppable videos, voice search optimization and influencer marketing techniques.
- 11.**Music & Art Products or Services-** Social Media Livestreams, visual albums and music documentation, motion art work, immersive theatre and sync within videos, television, games and tipping.
- 12.**Long Term digitalization-** Cloud Technologies, Data Analytics, Business Remodeling, Blockchain, Digital Ecosystems and much more technologies that can be channeled to globalize national product offerings.

7.0 APPLICATION PROCESS: Digitalization of the Tourism and Creative Sectors Reimbursement Grant

7.1 Eligibility

Organizations, Groups, Companies or individuals applying for assistance **must** satisfy and submit evidence in support of the following criteria:

1. Proof of being a bonafide Tourism and/or Creative operator/provider operating in the sectors for the last 3 years. This bonafide may consist of registration

with:

- Government Ministry, Division or Agency or
 - Recognized umbrella Non-Governmental Organization (TTTA, TUCO, COTT, PATT, etc.)
 - Registry for Artists and Cultural Workers
2. Provide proof of availability of funds to complete the project if ongoing.
 3. Evidence of Trinidad and Tobago citizenship, residence or registration;
 4. Proof of a digitalization project that is tourism and/or creative related that has or will be completed between **October 1, 2022 and August 18, 2023**.

The Applicant shall ensure that any and all service providers or contracts engaged by the Organisation for the digitalization project are registered with the Procurement Depository of Trinidad and Tobago, as established by the Office of Procurement Regulation in accordance with the Public Procurement and disposal of Public Property Act, No. 1 of 2015 and its Regulations.

Additionally, the following will apply based on the applicant:

Organizations, groups or companies must be properly registered with the Registrar General with constituted rules/regulations/bye laws and/or incorporated by Act of Parliament. Supporting documents including but not limited to Certificate of Incorporation/Articles of Registration with list of directors must be submitted.

Individuals must be a sole proprietorship. Evidence of registration with the Artist Registry of Trinidad and Tobago (ARTT) under the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts will be an asset. *Creatives who are not registered will be encouraged to commence the process;*

7.2 Ineligible Activities

These include:

- Any project that includes the use or purchase of drones
- Projects that are **not** tourism and/or creative related
- Projects which are deemed to promote acts of violence, lewdness, hatred and/or divisiveness;

The above list is not exhaustive and the Ministry retains the right to decline a grant application which the Ministry in its sole discretion considers inappropriate or unsuitable.

8.0 GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications are to be submitted using the prescribed DOTS Application form only, provided at **Appendix I**. In addition to the completed application form the applicant must submit:

- (a) Documents as detailed at paragraph 7.1 Eligibility;
- (b) A Cover Letter addressed to the Permanent Secretary stating clearly what is being requested;
- (c) A detailed budget in addition to the budget submission on the application form;
- (d) Project Proposal/Report;
- (e) Copies of relevant quotations or bills and invoices;
- (f) Links to the completed project or sufficient evidence as to its current status and completion within the stipulated timeframe.

The Committee reserves the right to request any other documentation that will provide clarity to the applicant's submission.

Applications should be submitted no later than **June 1st of any given year** to facilitate timely processing within the fiscal year. Applications submitted or completed after June 1st may be processed for the next fiscal year pending budgetary allocation.

The application package, with all supporting documents are to be addressed to:

Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts
Attention: Grants, Sponsorship and Subventions Secretariat
Levels 8 – 10, Tower C,
International Waterfront Complex
1A Wrightson Road,
Port of Spain,
Trinidad and Tobago

The application package can be submitted in hard copy or electronically by completing the online form and submitting digital documents and links. For more information email grantsandsponsorship@gmail.com.

The Ministry assumes no liability for delivery failures. Should an incomplete package be received, the applicant will be informed of the deficiencies and permitted to provide the outstanding document(s). Applications **will not** be processed without the required information.

9.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE DIGITALIZATION OF THE TOURISM AND CREATIVE SECTORS REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST

- Approved applications will be issued either a ‘Reimbursement Approval’ for completed projects, or a ‘Concept Approval’ for projects yet to be completed. All approved projects must be completed by August 1st of the fiscal year in which the approval is received. Failure to do so may result in consideration being moved to the next fiscal year or withdrawn entirely.
- The funding is a reimbursement, and thus will only be issued once the project has been completed and the required report, evidence and documentation have been submitted.
- The Ministry accepts no liability for non-reimbursement of funds due to an incomplete project or non-compliance with submitting all required documentation.

Reimbursement funding will not be considered in any of the following cases:

- Promotion of Divisiveness - any activity, which, in the opinion of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, has the potential to cause discord, national instability and degrades moral fabric, or which contravenes the Laws of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago;
- No evidence of Strategic Alignment – any project that does not align with the goals of the Ministry and does not further the achievement of its mandate.
- Incidence of Reputational Damage - any project that seeks to do harm to the reputation of the Ministry, the GoRTT and/or Trinidad and Tobago or any of the governing structures of the country.

The above list is not exhaustive and the Ministry reserves the right to decline any application which the Ministry in its sole discretion considers inappropriate or unsuitable.

10.0 EVALUATION PROCESS

The Digitalization of the Tourism and Creative Sectors will be assessed by a Committee consisting of officers assigned by the Ministry’s Administration under but not limited to the following areas:

DOTS Assessment Committee

- i. Information Technology
- ii. Tourism
- iii. Culture and the Creative Arts
- iv. Communications
- v. Head of Grants Secretariat

The Ministry may co-opt expertise as and if required.

The reimbursement grant requests will be evaluated based on the project and application's alignment with the policy objectives and eligibility requirements as outlined within this policy document. Detailed assessment sheet at **Appendix III**.

The amount of available funding is capped at a reimbursement of 50% of the digitalization project's expenditure not exceeding **fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00)**.

The Committee reserves the right to recommend support based on the merit of each application and the corresponding applicable budget items.

Any appeals or concerns should be directed as follows:

Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts
C.C. Grants, Sponsorship and Subventions Secretariat
Levels 8 – 10, Tower C,
International Waterfront Complex
1A Wrightson Road,
Port of Spain,
Trinidad and Tobago

11.0 CONDITIONS OF THE DIGITALIZATION OF THE TOURISM AND CREATIVE SECTORS (DOTS) REIMBURSEMENT GRANT

Grant recipients are required to submit the following to the Secretariat to satisfy the following reporting requirements:

- i. Provision of statement of expenditure (inclusive of bills)
- ii. Evidence of the operational product.
- iii. Submission of a Project Completion Report or completion of the project completion section of the application form. (**Appendix IV**)
- iv. Only upon submission of items at (i) to (iii) above, will the successful applicant receive reimbursement as outlined above.

If upon review, the **Project Completion Report** is deemed deficient, the funding

recipient will be informed of the gaps and must submit a revised report upon written notice. The reimbursement shall not be disbursed by the Ministry unless all identified gaps are duly addressed.

12.0 COMMITTEE REPORTS

Reports on the Committee's consensus and recommendations regarding applicants for DOTS funding will be forwarded to the Minister and Permanent Secretary for review and final approval under cover of a Ministerial Note. Upon review, the Minister can exercise his/her discretion regarding any recommendation made by the committee.

The report will be accompanied by a matrix outlining which applications were recommended and those where the Ministry is unable to assist.

13.0 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST FOR GRANTS AND SPONSORSHIPS

Applicants for Grants and Sponsorships are expected to act in good faith and are to be guided by the principles of honesty, accountability transparency and value for money in interacting with the Ministry responsible for Tourism, Culture and the Arts. The following considerations are to be noted:

- The Ministry reserves the right to take any and all action(s) deemed necessary against grant applicants and/or recipients in all instances of fraudulent activity, misappropriation of funding, malfeasance or misrepresentation and/or non-disclosure.
- Recipients of grants are required, at all times, to hold the Ministry's interests paramount with strict avoidance of conflicts of interest (which include actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest) particularly with other assignments.
- All recipients are under an obligation to immediately inform the Ministry, in writing, of any conflict of interest that impacts its/their capacity to deliver on grant activities and secure the best interest of the Ministry during or in relation to the grant/sponsorship process.
 - Failure to disclose such situations may lead to the immediate disqualification of the recipient and the cessation of any and all rights and/or advantages under the Grant Agreement.
 - A conflict of interest may result in an applicant or grant recipients being disqualified and debarred from obtaining any future grant/sponsorship from the Ministry.
- In submitting to be considered for a DOTS reimbursement grant, the applicant

warrants that its application and other supporting documents have not been prepared as a result of any collusive, coercive, fraudulent, obstructive or improper conduct in the preparation and submission of their Proposal and other supporting documents. Attempts to influence or provide any form of inducement (personal or otherwise), reward or benefit to any of the Ministry's representatives; or attempts, by any means whatsoever, to manipulate the process proceedings will result in the immediate disqualification of applicants or Grants recipients from obtaining any future support or funding.

- The Ministry reserves the absolute right to report any suspected irregular, collusive or fraudulent conduct by Grant applicants or recipients to the relevant Authority/Authorities and to provide that Authority/those Authorities with all relevant information including but not limited to the proposals of the applicants or recipients.
- The Ministry reserves the right to request a return of funds if the recipient is found in violation of any of the above mentioned transgressions.
- The disbursement of any grant and sponsorship funding does not bind the Ministry to any legal obligations, save and except for the conditions of the Sponsorship Agreement or the Grants Letter of Exchange/Agreement.

14.0 TRANSPARENCY OF INFORMATION

Information about Applicants as well as the grantee will be made available to the public upon request; and the Ministry will maintain a register of same, which may be published. By applying for a Reimbursement Grant, an applicant automatically agrees to such disclosure in the interests of transparency and accountability in the management and disbursement of public funds.

15.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Effective management practices shall be applied at all stages of the Grants process. These include assessment of project plans, oversight of the implementation process and appropriate feedback mechanisms.

The management processes employed should enable the Committee and its Secretariat to identify any shortcomings and make suitable recommendations for quick intervention.

The applicant must agree to create and implement a two (2) year monitoring and evaluation framework to allow monitoring of the digitalization project's beneficial impact on the tourism and creative sectors.

16.0 DISCLAIMER

The Ministry does not accept liability for errors or omissions contained in any advertising or other content provided or produced by any applicant in receipt of grant funding. The Ministry does not accept any liability for any information or claims made by any grant recipient or its advertisements or advertisers. Any inclusion of the Ministry's name on a publication should not be taken as an endorsement by the Ministry.

17.0 POLICY REVIEW

The Grants and Sponsorship Policy shall be reviewed when required or on a yearly basis and amended when necessary. Application and assessment forms are also subject to change upon review.