

**Waterford City & County Council**  
**Economic Incentive Scheme for Vacant Properties in Urban Areas 2021-2022**  
**Guidelines & Criteria**

**1. General description of Economic Incentive Scheme for Vacant Properties in Urban Areas**

Waterford City & County Council is offering incentives to attract new retail and other businesses within the core retail area of the City Centre, towns and village centre of Waterford (as defined in the City and County Development Plans) in order to bring vibrancy and vitality to the city and town centres and to address vacancy in urban areas.

**2. Purpose of the Scheme**

It is intended to ensure that any incoming retail or service use will respect and enhance the multifaceted character of the area and will allow and encourage a diversity of uses to increase its overall attractiveness for shopping, leisure and business purposes.

There will be a strong presumption in favour of grant-aid for higher order comparison retail outlets including fashion outlets – both multiple and independent stores, 'lifestyle stores', flagship stores, niche and specialist retailers such as home furnishings, beauty products, jewellery and bookshops.

**a) Eligible categories of business**

It is Waterford City & County Council's policy to support economic growth within the city and county. The aim is to attract a variety of retail businesses that will create opportunities for all citizens.

Therefore, the following businesses would be considered for the scheme:

- Cosmetics / beauty products
- Specialist Health Food shops
- Shoe Shops
- Toy Shops
- Hi-tech / High-end Electronics
- Music Shops
- Specialist (Hobby) Stores
- Artisan / Craft Shops Giftware/Interiors/Fashion businesses & shops
- High End Retail - globally scaled
- Shops offering a unique experience

**b) Ineligible businesses**

- Amusement arcades/ bookmakers/ betting shops
- Catalogue shop
- Discount shop
- Fast food outlet/ cafe/ restaurant/ takeaway
- Mobile phone/ Internet shop
- Newsagents/ convenience store
- Off licence
- Night club/ pub
- Head/ Grow Shop
- Vaping
- Adult shop
- Hair dresser/ Beauty salon/ nail bar/ tanning studio
- Supermarket

\* In exceptional circumstances and where an application is of a high standard which demonstrates economic benefit to the area and where it does not cause

displacement to existing businesses, consideration will be given to applications from the businesses classified as ineligible above.

In addition, the following factors will be taken into account in the consideration of Grant Aid:

- The number and proximity of similar outlets/ services already operating in the area
- The scale of the proposed outlet
- The physical impact of the proposed use on the internal structure of the building in which it will be located
- The quality of the shop front design and associate signage, which should be of high quality and be in accordance with the guidelines produced by Waterford City & County Council

- c) Any **non-retail business**, which applies for grant aid under this scheme, will be judged on the anticipated economic impact they may have in the area e.g. number of jobs being created, attracting improved footfall to the area and enhancing the overall attractiveness of the city/town centre.

In addition, location specific supports will be considered for **Waterford Cultural Quarter**. Preference will be given to applicants that support the production and retail of arts, crafts and creative / cultural enterprises; and which incentivise the community of WCQ to showcase their production methods as well as selling products.

### **3. Use of property**

The property to which application relates must have planning permission for the proposed use or be compatible with the exempted development classes of use set out in the Planning and Development Regulations.

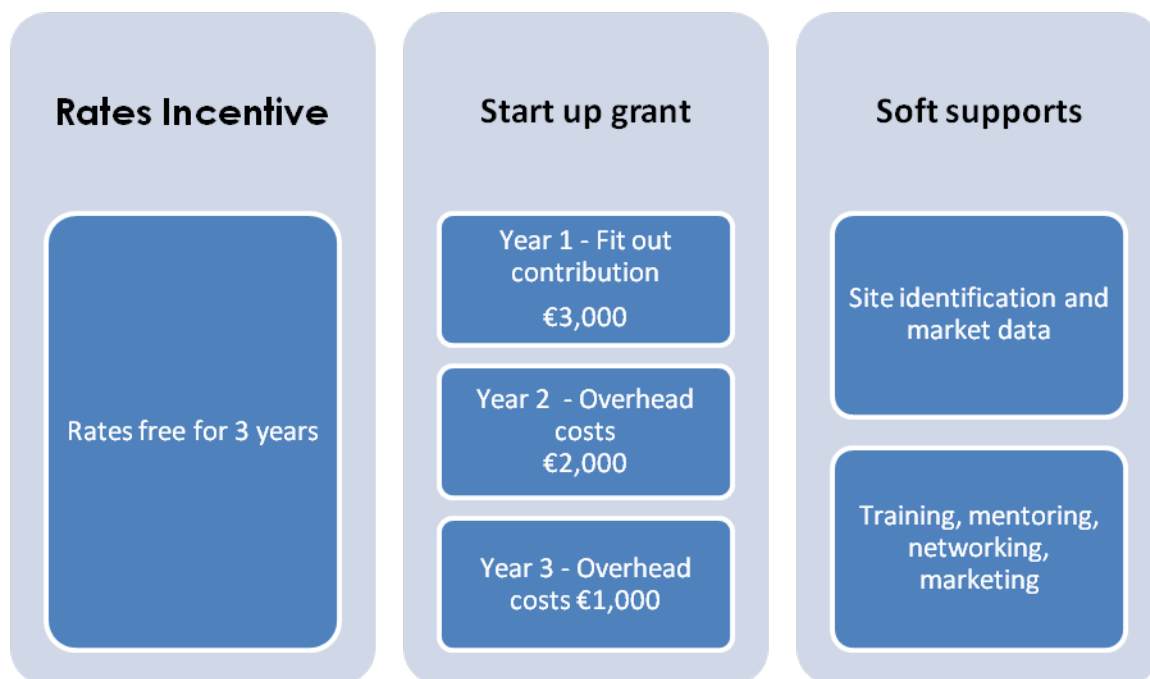
### **4. Status of property to qualify for Economic Incentive Scheme for vacant property**

In order to qualify for this scheme the property must be vacant for at least one month on the day the application form is submitted.

### **5. Businesses relocating to a similar sized premises within the eligible areas will not qualify for grant relief under the scheme**

The operation of the Economic Incentive Scheme for vacant properties shall not result in the displacement of a business from one property to another and/or from the same property however should a proposed business or retail use type be able to adequately demonstrate that they require a larger premises that will have a positive economic impact, consideration will be given to the inclusion of such a proposal under the terms of this scheme.

### **6. Level of Funding**



### Rates Incentive

Successful applicants will be eligible for up to three years rates free.

### Start up Grant

In addition, an additional Start Up Grant will be provided over three years on a step back basis to contribute towards fit out and overheads. The grant will be paid each year on production of proof of expenditure.

Year one	€3,000
Year two	€2,000
Year three	€1,000

### Soft Supports

In addition a package of soft supports will be provided to successful applicants:

- Assistance in identifying suitable property – facilitate site visit (including overnight costs if necessary) and access to local industry data i.e. footfall
- LEO supports including mentoring, TOV, social media training etc.,
- Other training provided for management or staff provided by Waterford Local Enterprise Office
- Sponsorship of membership of REI (€250+ pa) and place on REI Retail Management Development Programme (cost €975+VAT).
- Partnered with local ambassador in same sector
- Marketing support via Shop Waterford

### 7. Qualifying Costs for Grant Relief

The eligible qualifying costs applicable for grant relief under the Economic Incentive Scheme for Vacant Properties in Urban Areas are fit-out/shop front improvement costs and overheads within the three year period of the agreement. Any reasonable costs associated with either of the above will qualify for grant relief subject to receipt of valid invoices and verification/ approval that costs were incurred.

### 8. Other Qualifying Criteria

Landlords will be required to support the application. This will require the landlord to:

- The landlord must provide proof of rent over the previous 5 years to demonstrate that rent has not been increased

- Landlord will be required to sign a letter of undertaking with the tenant to maintain current rent over the period of the scheme.

Applicants who have previously benefitted from other economic incentive schemes administered by the Economic Development Department of Waterford City & County Council will not be eligible for this scheme, unless they can demonstrate significant economic benefit to the urban area in terms of job creation or increased footfall.

**9. Effective period for operation of Economic Incentive Scheme for Vacant Properties in Urban Areas**

The scheme will be effective until the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022. Only complete applications received by this end date will be considered.

**10. Assessment of Applications**

All applications will be assessed under the above Guidelines & Criteria and any Grant awarded will be further subject to the availability of the necessary funds being available to this Scheme.

**Note:** Full terms and conditions and the application form will be completed once the scheme is formally adopted by Waterford City & County Council.