

Leitrim County Council



Arts/Craft Studio or Art/Craft/Artisan Food Shop Grant Scheme.

Introduction

Leitrim County Council (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Council’) is providing a Business Incentive Scheme to encourage the use of vacant commercial premises by the **Art/Craft and Artisan Food Sectors**. The Council is aware of the current challenges facing businesses in County Leitrim and the difficulties for new businesses to gain a foothold during recessionary periods. The purpose of the scheme is to give an incentive to both landlords and new aspiring business owners/lesers to occupy vacant premises by lowering entry costs through a grant related to the level of rates payable on the property.

By encouraging the occupation of vacant premises the Council will also support the improvement in appearance and attraction of the commercial properties and thereby will contribute indirectly to increased footfall for existing businesses.

This scheme sets out the mechanism, eligibility and conditions for new businesses to receive financial assistance from the Council for the purpose of locating in premises which have been vacant for a period exceeding 3 months.

Aims of the Scheme

To encourage and support Art/Craft Studios or Art/Craft/Artisan Food businesses to occupy commercial premises/retail units that have been vacant for a period of three months or more.

To enhance the vitality and vibrancy of County Leitrim by promoting the re-development of underused premises around the County.

To support new business creation as a means of generating new vibrancy within County Leitrim.

To support the continued role of retail and wider commercial centres in the urban fabric of the County and their prominence as business destinations.

To demonstrate the serious commitment of the Council to contribute to economic development, regeneration and recovery in the County.

Competition Clause:

Potential displacement will be a primary concern in determining the eligibility of any application to the scheme. The executive may deem a project to be ineligible if it has the potential to lead to displacement of existing enterprises.

Eligibility

The Art/Craft Studio or Art/Craft/Artisan Food will be available to qualifying occupiers in the County who self produce arts, craft or artisan foods or where arts, craft or artisan food are produced on location.

Applications under the Artisan Food Shops Category are restricted to retail outlets where the sale of self produce is the primary activity of the retail space. **Premises such as restaurants, cafes, pubs etc are not eligible under this scheme.**

The floorspace of the studio or shop should be less than 60m². Where the occupied premises has a larger floorplate, consideration will be given to inclusion of a portion of the premises under this scheme.

The Scheme is applicable to the use of existing rated commercial properties in County Leitrim.

The following prerequisites apply to the subject premises:

- There are no outstanding enforcement proceedings or monies due to the Council under the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2014 or the Derelict Sites Act 1990.
- The Scheme shall apply to the authorised planning use of premises only.
- There are no outstanding or current commercial rates, or any other local authority charges owing on the subject premises for which the grant is sought.

It shall be a condition of the scheme that:

1. An application for the scheme is made on the relevant Art/Craft Studio or Art/Craft/Artisan Food Shops Application form.
2. All applicants will be reviewed on an individual basis and acceptance onto the scheme will be at the discretion of Leitrim County Council.
3. An entitlement to the Art/Craft studio or Art/Craft/Artisan Food Shops Scheme is personal to the qualifying occupier entitled thereto and shall not be capable of being assigned or shared with any third party. Any provision in an agreement or lease for the assignment or sharing of such entitlements shall be void.
4. Should the successful applicant move to another location within the life of the scheme, the continuation of the grant will be at the discretion of the County Council.
5. Failure to meet the criteria of the scheme may result in the cessation of the scheme.

Qualifying Applicants

The following requirements apply to all applicants:

- The applicant must be the owner or lessee of the subject premises.
- The applicant must have a current Tax Clearance Certificate at the time any Grant becomes payable.
- The applicant must sign up for Standing Order payments of any charges due to the Council.
- The application must be accompanied by a lease agreement (if applicable) whereby the parties agree to a minimum three year lease period, which can be a rolling lease renewed annually OR a copy of the Land Registry entry showing ownership details.

The following conditions will lead to immediate disqualification and/or cessation of grant aid under the rules of this Scheme.

- Failure to remain current on any charges will result in the immediate cessation of the Scheme and the removal of supports.
- Changes to the uses or any of the requirements stated above for the applicant that materially alter the original application for grant aid.

Incentive Details

Grant relief for the Art/Craft Studio or Art/Craft/Artisan Food Shops Scheme is as follows:

100% of Commercial Rates paid in years 1 to 3 of trading (ie. 12 month period of trading)

This grant will be discharged by way of an offset against commercial rates due.

Notes: Structural changes to a property may result in a revaluation of the property by Revenue or a localised apportionment of rates.

Application

The initial application, to be submitted within three months of occupation of the property for which the application is being made, must be accompanied by the following:

- Fully completed and signed Application Form, Consent for Disclosure of Information Form and Supplier Set Up Form.
- Evidence of unit vacancy exceeding 3 months.
- Evidence of ownership and occupation of unit (e.g. Land Registry Certificate) **OR** 3 year lease agreement (this can be a rolling one year lease renewable annually).
- Evidence of permissions/consents for proposed use of leased premises (normally a part of the lease agreement).
- Revenue Commissioners Tax Reference No. **OR** PPS No. to enable us to obtain up to date Tax Clearance Certificates prior to making Grant payments.
- Evidence that an expanding business is continuing in its current location as well as in the new premises (for retail applicants) **OR** that a move to new premises from an existing location will result in increased employment for other forms of business.
- All obligations, including commercial rates or any other charges due to the Local Authority are up to date.

Effective period for operation of Scheme

This scheme will be available up to and including 31st December 2020.

The Scheme may be the subject of review and amendment at any time by Leitrim County Council.

The Scheme will continue to apply to an approved applicant for 3 years even if the scheme is subsequently withdrawn or amended.

Assessment of Applications

Each application will be assessed in accordance with the Scheme guidelines. The Council will interpret each application on face value according to its own discretion. The Council may request further information before or after the evaluation of an application. The Council may communicate to the applicant those aspects of the application which could lead to disqualification or refusal of a grant. The Council may accept an amended application following a request for more information or amendments to the original application.

Any grant aid awarded on foot of a successful application will be subject to the availability of the necessary funds to implement this Scheme.

Details of the Scheme together with an Application Form will be available to view and download online at www.leitrimcoco.ie or can be obtained from the Leitrim County Council offices in Aras an Chontae, Carrick on Shannon. Completed application forms with attached documentation to be submitted to Joe Lowe, Head of Enterprise, Leitrim County Council: joe.lowe@Leitrimcoco.ie

Conditions

- i. Application for membership of the scheme must be submitted within three months of the date of commencement of the lease on the premises for which application is being made.
- ii. The use of a grace period for submission of supporting documentation and/or payment of outstanding payments due to Leitrim County Council is limited to once only during the three year term of the scheme membership.

The scheme will be further supported by a number of supports available through the LEO office as follows:

- Confidential one to one advice.
- Participation on a Start Your Own Business Course.
- Training and mentor support in areas like marketing and social media marketing.
- Assistance with preparing an application for Microfinance Ireland if relevant.
- Financial Assistance towards trading online via the Trading Online Voucher Scheme