MINISTRY OF BUSINESS, INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

Regional Tourism Boost – Round 2 Guidance

This information sheet provides Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) with key information to help prepare and submit an application to the Regional Tourism Boost (Round 2) (RTB2).

PURPOSE OF THE REGIONAL TOURISM BOOST (ROUND 2)

The purpose of the RTB2 is to support New Zealand's regions to attract more international visitors to travel, stay and dine in New Zealand in 2026. Campaigns will showcase great value, time-limited discounts on air travel, accommodation, tourism and visitor attractions alongside the promotion of regional hospitality experiences.

This builds on the previous Regional Tourism Boost Fund (Round 1) which ran from February to March 2025 to attract international visitors and encourage their dispersal across New Zealand. This provided special offers on travel and visitor experiences but, unlike RTB2, did not specifically include hospitality.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL TOURISM BOOST (ROUND 2)

Following feedback from Round 1, the RTB2 will be implemented in two stages:

- **Stage One**: delivering 'ready-to-go' tourism and hospitality packages for the early 2026 traveller group (visitors arriving between 1 January 2026 until 31 March 2026, including the Lunar New Year period)
- **Stage Two**: longer term, staggered approach delivering tourism and hospitality packages that stimulate demand throughout the off-peak tourism season (visitors arriving between 1 April 2026 until 30 June 2026).

Staging the implementation allows groups of RTOs to develop Stage One promotions that target the priority early 2026 traveller group—such as those travelling during the Lunar New Year period. Groups of RTOs will have a longer timeline to prepare for Stage Two promotions, with a focus on attracting visitors throughout Autumn 2026, beyond the summer peak.

To increase international visitor numbers as quickly as possible, it should be noted that priority will be given to applications that target the early 2026 traveller group and can demonstrate the impact of activities earlier in the year.

THE ROLE OF RTOS IN THE REGIONAL TOURISM BOOST (ROUND 2)

Much like the RTB earlier this year, funding for RTB2 is only open to groups of collaborating organisations. Each group must have a lead RTO, which—if successful—will become the contracted party responsible for delivering the proposal.

Each application must have at least two RTOs including the lead RTO. It should be noted that priority will be given to applications that demonstrate strong collaboration—between RTOs, tourism and hospitality providers, and other partners.

RTOs are responsible for collaborating, designing and implementing the tourism and hospitality package outlined in successful applications. This involves working with airlines, travel

platforms/providers and relevant accommodation, tourism and hospitality providers to develop great value, time-limited discounts/promotions that will incentivise international visitors.

RTOs will also need to demonstrate how they have developed their collaborating partnerships, including how they have prioritised which partners/stakeholders/businesses will be involved. We recommend that lead RTOs develop a formal policy or process to determine inclusion.

Therefore, we expect applications to demonstrate how they have prioritised and determined which tourism and hospitality partners will be part of their applications.

KEY DATES AND TIMES

The RTB2 is focused on rapid growth for tourism. The timeframes are as follows:

Milestone	Timings Stage One	Timings Stage Two
Applications open via the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) website	17 September 2025	17 September 2025
Applications close	15 October 2025	7 November 2025
Assessments will be undertaken within the Tourism and Hospitality Branch of MBIE and will then be considered by an Advisory Panel with expertise in tourism promotion to inform recommendations to the Minister. Sequencing of applications will also be considered during this period	Mid/late October 2025	Mid/late November 2025
The Minister for Tourism and Hospitality will make the funding decisions	Late October 2025	Early December 2025
Successful applicants notified and publicly announced	Late October 2025	Early December 2025
Contracts in place with successful applicants	ASAP following Ministerial announcements	ASAP following Ministerial announcements
Delivery of funded activities. Successful applicants provide monthly reporting to MBIE	Final working day of month until project completion	Final working day of month until project completion
Evaluations of contracted activities delivered. Contracts end	30 Days following completion of the promotional period	30 Days following completion of the promotional period

HOW WILL APPLICATIONS BE CONSIDERED?

PROCESS

For **Stage One**, there is a 3.5-week application period, which opens on Wednesday 17 September 2025 and closes at 5.00pm on Wednesday 15 October 2025.

For **Stage Two**, there is a 7.5-week application period which opens on Wednesday 17 September 2025 and closes at 5.00pm on Friday 7 November 2025.

Applicants should e-mail their completed application form and any other supporting documentation to MBIE at regionalevents@mbie.govt.nz.

MBIE and an advisory panel will assess the proposals using the Assessment Criteria. The advisory panel is likely to include representatives from Regional Tourism New Zealand, Tourism New Zealand (TNZ), Hospitality New Zealand, the Restaurant Association of Aotearoa and other sector bodies. At this stage, TNZ and MBIE will also work with applicants to ensure applications are best aligned for maximum impact in target markets throughout 2026.

A report will be prepared for the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality summarising the applications and recommending a selection for funding. The Minister makes the final decisions. Even if the RTB2 is under-subscribed, the Minister retains discretion whether to fund each proposal.

Following the Minister's decisions, MBIE will contact successful applicants to negotiate contracts. Stage One contracts are expected to be in place as soon as possible following a Ministerial Announcement.

All contracted activities must be delivered by 31 March 2026 (Stage One) and 30 June 2026 (Stage Two).

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The RTB2 criteria is outlined in the Eligibility Criteria and Assessment Criteria document available on the MBIE website. It is also repeated here.

Applications must:

- be led by a Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) (including Associate RTOs), who will be the contracted party for this funding and be responsible for delivery of the project
- include at least two member RTOs (including Associate RTOs) in the application group
- include an airline partner and/or a travel provider/platform
- include multiple accommodation providers and tourism and hospitality operators
- deliver all funded activities by:
    - Stage One – 31 March 2026 (visitors arriving from 1 January 2026 until 31 March 2026, including the Lunar New Year period)
    - Stage Two – 30 June 2026 (visitors arriving from 1 April 2026 until 30 June 2026)
- demonstrate how the promotional activity will attract international visitors to travel, stay and dine in New Zealand from early 2026 (either by enhancing existing activities or delivering new activities)
- demonstrate how the promotional activity will be evaluated (including the uptake and impact of the funded activities) within 30 days of the end of the promotional period.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Applications will be considered by an independent panel with expertise in tourism promotion.

Priority will be given to those applications that can demonstrate:

1. the ability to increase international visitor numbers, particularly the early 2026 traveller group
2. high levels of collaboration between stakeholders
3. the ability to increase regional dispersal of international visitors and tourism and hospitality spend
4. a robust measure of the impact of the effectiveness of the activities, ideally in terms of visitor numbers and/or visitor spend
5. regions have the capacity to host the additional international visitors
6. alignment with other RTO-led applications regarding target markets and campaign timings
7. alignment with Tourism New Zealand's marketing advice
8. leverage private sector investment.

Each of the above criteria will be scored up to a maximum of three points.

A moderation process will be included in the assessment process for the Assessment Panel to reach agreement on the recommendations. This may mean lower scoring projects are ranked more highly.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

DEVELOPING PROPOSALS

What counts as 'regional dispersal'?

The purpose of this fund is to attract more international visitors with the ability to encourage dispersal of international visitors around the country. We want to see international visitors:

- visiting different regions of New Zealand
- exploring within a region to alleviate pressure on congested areas
- having high-quality engagement in those regions (e.g., doing more activities, spending more, staying in each place for longer).

In terms of regional dispersal, MBIE will be looking for proposals that: show strong collaboration between multiple RTO regions, have a plan to make regional dispersal happen quickly and can explain how they will use robust qualitative measures to demonstrate the regional dispersal they have achieved.

Can proposals focus on any market?

Yes. The focus for Stage One is on early 2026 travellers including the Lunar New Year period.

However, if you can demonstrate your application meets the RTB2's outcomes, your proposal for either stage can target any international market/s. We note that applications are evaluated based on how well they are able to increase international visitor numbers.

Do we have to meet all of the criteria or just some?

There are two sets of criteria: eligibility criteria and assessment criteria:

- Applications must meet all the eligibility criteria. Your application cannot be considered if it does not meet these criteria.
- Applications do not have to meet all the assessment criteria. The assessment criteria are the measures that will be used to determine which proposals are recommended for funding. For the best chance of a successful application, MBIE recommends striving to meet all of the assessment criteria to the best of your ability.

What time period should the promotional work target?

The RTB2 must target either visitation for early 2026 including the Lunar New Year period up to the end of March 2026 or for activities to be delivered during the period from April to June 2026. Reporting on outcomes should cover from the start of activity until the end of the promotional period.

Are there any specific activities we're not allowed to seek funding for?

The RTB2 cannot be used to substitute other, existing funding for promotional activity. It may be used to supplement or enhance existing activities.

For example: An RTO has planned a famil for 20 invitees. It has secured a budget of $45,000. It **cannot** apply for $45,000 from the RTBF2 to deliver this famil (allowing it to return or reallocate the existing funding). It **can** apply for additional funding from the RTBF2 to enhance the planned famil – e.g., to add more attendees, increase the length of the famil, or add new regions/offerings.

Can we apply for both Stage One and Stage Two?

Yes. RTOs can apply for both Stage One and Stage Two.

Can I apply for a proposal that spans Stage One and Stage Two timelines, e.g. March - May 2026?

Yes, applications can span across both the Stage One and Stage Two timelines. To ensure a consistent evaluation process, all applications containing activity that begins during Stage One (1 January - 31 March 2026) must be received by the Stage One deadline of 5pm on 15 October 2025. Applicants should also ensure they demonstrate the expected impact of their activities across both Stages in their applications.

Is there a limit to how much funding we can apply for?

No. As part of the application form, MBIE asks applicants to rank their proposed activities in order of importance. If the RTB2 is oversubscribed, MBIE may recommend some proposals are partially funded. MBIE notes that, when recommending the successful applications to the Minister, we will be considering the assessment and prioritisation criteria, as well as whether applications deliver value-for-money.

If I can secure funding from the private sector, will this increase our application's chances of success?

Yes, obtaining private sector funding is listed as an Assessment Criteria prioritisation and so will increase the application's chance of success.

Are RTOs expected to provide co-funding?

No. The Government encourages RTOs to work with industry to leverage the benefits of the RTB2, but co-funding is not required for a successful application. Government is aware of RTOs' financial constraints and wants to ensure all RTOs have the option to apply for the RTB2.

Why do applications have to increase visitation, tourism/hospitality spend and dispersal? Why can't we just focus on one of those three goals?

The purpose of the RTB2 is to attract more international visitors to travel, stay and dine in New Zealand in 2026. Campaigns will showcase great value, time-limited discounts on air travel, accommodation and visitor attractions alongside the promotion of regional hospitality experiences.

Increasing international visitation grows tourism and the New Zealand economy. However, Government is aware that some tourism hotspots are concerned about overtourism. Therefore, the RTB2 requires regions to work together with tourism partners to both attract additional visitors and disperse them to places with capacity and appetite for tourism.

COLLABORATION

Is there a limit to how many organisations can be a part of one application?

No. However, MBIE will be prioritising applications which show strong engagement and collaboration between all group members. If your application includes many organisations, please consider how you will demonstrate that all organisations are active participants in the proposal. As there is likely to be a strong interest from multiple stakeholders and businesses to be part of a campaign, RTOs are strongly encouraged to have strong processes/policies in place which show how they have prioritised who will be included/involved within their campaign. MBIE will be asking for this information as part of the application process.

Are organisations limited to one application group only?

No, RTOs and other organisations can participate in multiple applications. We appreciate that some industry partners are present in many regions of New Zealand and may want to be involved in several applications. MBIE strongly recommends applicants focus on developing a one or two strong applications rather than many weaker ones.

EVALUATIONS AND MONITORING

Are there specific metrics we have to report on?

MBIE expects applicants to provide tangible metrics that best demonstrate that their proposal will be effective in increasing visitor numbers, tourism/hospitality spend and dispersal. If MBIE conducts a subsequent evaluation of the RTB2, successfully funding RTOs are expected to contribute fully to this process.

Why do we need to give visitor number projections in the application form?

Projections will help MBIE assess how effective your proposal would be. They can also be compared with the evaluation results to see whether projects have been more or less effective than expected.

What monitoring will MBIE be doing during the contract delivery?

Successful applicants will be expected to provide MBIE with monthly project reports. MBIE will use these reports to track project progress and provide updates for the Minister. Project reports are not required to include evidence of outcomes (as outcomes are not expected until the end of your respective programme of activity). MBIE will agree a format with successful applicants that balances oversight for MBIE and efficiency for RTOs.

The Eligibility Criteria includes the delivery of an evaluation report within 30 days of the end of your promotion period. What are MBIE's expectations around this and the measures we use for it?

MBIE wants to see applicants' best efforts to provide robust evidence that the activities the Government funds had an impact. Ideally, we would like to see a robust quantitative measure. Applications that can demonstrate "a robust measure of the impact of the effectiveness of the activities, ideally in terms of visitor numbers and/or visitor spend" will be prioritised for funding.

Contact us

If you have any questions about the RTB2, please contact us at **regionalevents@mbie.govt.nz**