

## **‘Online has been a lifeline for Irish business’**

### **The total budget for the Irish Government’s Trading Online Scheme has increased 1,000pc from €2m to €20m.**

The [Trading Online Voucher Scheme](#) to help small and micro-enterprises to get online and start selling has been boosted by €14.2m.

Following a previous scheme in early April, total additional funding for the scheme is now almost €20m.

Under the Scheme, small businesses can claim up to €5,000 in two vouchers worth €2,500 each. The Scheme also facilitates subscriptions to low-cost online retailing platform solutions to quickly establish a retailing presence online.

If anything, the Covid-19 crisis has focused minds among owner-managers that not having online trading capability puts them on the back foot at a time when most consumers are dab hands at online shopping.

Included in the additional funding allocated for the Trading Online Voucher Scheme is an allocation of €600,000 in new money provided for Údarás na Gaeltachta to deliver the scheme in Gaeltacht areas.

“There has been unprecedented demand for the Trading Online Voucher Scheme since the outbreak of Covid-19,” said Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys TD.

“To put this into perspective, in 2019, there were 1,218 applications for the Scheme; this year, between mid-March and early-June alone, there were 3,962, representing three years’ worth of applications in less than three months.

“The scheme is an essential part of our Covid-19 business supports for small businesses, and it is vital that we continue to make it available for enterprises to meet the ongoing trading challenges.

“Thousands of small businesses across the country have already benefitted from funding under the scheme. The additional funding which we are announcing today will mean that total funding for the scheme has been increased by almost 1,000pc,” Humphreys said.

### **Lessons from lockdown**

The expansion of the funding was welcomed by the CEO of [Chambers Ireland](#) Ian Talbot.

“The demand for the Scheme over the past number of months has been significant,” he said.

“The ability to trade online has been a lifeline for so many businesses during the lockdown and will continue to be a valuable support, even as we move to Phase Two of reopening the economy. We had been raising the need for additional funding with Minister Humphreys, and so today’s news will be a relief to the many still hoping to apply.

“Covid-19 has been extremely challenging for our local economies, and we are by no means out of the woods just yet. However, the capacity of businesses to innovate, particularly SMEs, during lockdown has proven to be a saving grace for so many retail and hospitality businesses.

“Our message to Government is to emphasise that businesses have suffered immense economic damage over the past two to three months and will require as much financial support from the State in Phase Two and future phases, as they did during the lockdown.

“If this support does not materialise, we risk permanently losing jobs over the coming months, further compounding the damage to the Irish economy. We call on this Government, and the next, to ensure that businesses are appropriately supported to trade through this pandemic. All supports, financial and otherwise, must be made available in a timely and accessible manner, so that the recovery reaches all sectors, in all parts of the country,” Talbot urged.

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