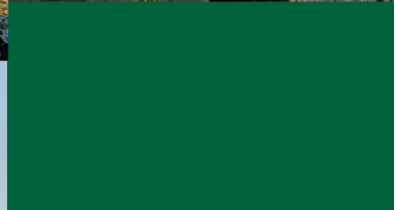




**Digital  
that Delivers.**

# **Vendor Panel Criteria - Connected Online Booking Systems**



# INTRODUCTION

The Digital that Delivers Programme involves c1,350 businesses. Part of the programme involves the execution of digital transformational strategies over a 5 year period.

The Connected Online Booking System (COBS) activation workstream is focused on experienced tourism and visitor attraction providers that either do not yet have an online booking system, or that need to replace their system with one that meets essential requirements for a robust channel of distribution for day tours, activities, and other visitor attractions online. Selecting a connected booking system vendor that is right for their business will enable them to;

- maximise reach and sales
- improve businesses operational efficiencies
- garner insights and data to improve their performance.

The vendors on this list should be able to demonstrate that they offer systems that are designed to manage schedules for day tours, walking tours, outdoor activities, or other experiences that are available either at defined times or 'on request'. Depending on the complexity of each business's requirements, these systems should also work for attractions. Features that are important for larger attractions, such as large-scale event ticketing, account sign-in, memberships, venue management, or sophisticated CRM functionality.

## VENDOR QUESTIONNAIRE

When a vendor submits their enquiry to be included on the panel, the process set out below will be followed. A member of the COBS team will be in touch with your nominated representative to organise the following:

1. A questionnaire will be sent for your review and completion. Please see the table below for details of the criteria and question types. You must meet all essential criteria to be included in the vendor panel.
2. If you meet all of the essential criteria, a call and a live demonstration date and time will be arranged between Core Optimisation Ltd (Core) and the vendor to validate that your system meets the criteria.
3. Upon confirmation that requirements set out below have been met you (the Agency) will be informed that you have been successful and that your details will be added to the Core open vendor panel list for industry participants to select from. If we cannot validate on this call, that the requirements have been met, we will set out the reasons in a follow up email and invite you to resubmit your application when these issues points have been addressed.
4. There is no guarantee of any work at this stage. It is the client's (Activity provider/Attraction) decision to select who they want to work with from the panel. They are typically required to seek three quotations/ proposals.

We have grouped criterion / features into 3 categories:

- **Essential** - these features are those that all (or nearly all) tour, activity or attraction are likely to need and that are key to achieving the DTD programme objectives. Agencies must be able to confirm their service includes these features to be considered for the panel.
- **Situational** - these features may or may not be required, depending on individual business requirements. For example, an outdoor activity provider may require the functionality to link availability to a stock of equipment such as kayaks or bikes. These features will be highlighted against your panel entry when validated and may be important for some clients.
- **Optional** features are unlikely to be essential for any provider, but may provide added value in terms of driving sales, efficiency, or insights. These features will be highlighted against your panel entry when validated and may be important for some clients.

## Connectivity

Feature	Description	Type
Booking API	Booking APIs allow experience providers to integrate their system both with their direct distribution channels (e.g. ePOS) and with third party distributors. Note that connected distribution via APIs is a key aspiration of the DTD programme.	Essential
Channel Manager	Built-in channel managers with pre-existing connections to online distributors (e.g. OTAs, online marketplaces) provide an easy and inexpensive way for providers to streamline their distribution.	Situational
B2B online booking portal	A B2B booking portal allows tour operators or other resellers to see live inventory on suppliers' systems (including exclusive inventory) and to book that inventory at contracted rates	Situational
Affiliates	Affiliate marketing support allows businesses to promote their products through hotels or other affiliates (e.g. via affiliate-coded links), while allowing bookings and revenue to be attributed to specific affiliates	Situational
Point-of-sale solution or integration	Businesses that sell to 'walk-in' visitors may require the ability to integrate with an existing electronic point-of-sale (ePOS) system. Some vendors also offer ready-made point-of-sale solutions, e.g. tablets with a mobile point-of-sale (mPOS) device.	Situational
Reseller marketplace	Reseller marketplaces allow separate providers on the same system (or networked systems) to create and sell combination products or resellers to sell products on	Optional

	behalf of providers — with bookings processed in real time	
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## Design

Feature	Description	Type
Booking Widget or Plugin for website integration	Businesses should be able to integrate bookings with their websites without having to undertake significant web development. Widgets, embed codes, plugins, or support for iframe integration can make this process quicker and less expensive.	Essential
W3C standard accessibility for booking screens	Booking systems should meet basic accessibility standards for people with disabilities.	Essential
Customisable look and feel for booking screens	Businesses should be able to customise the <i>look and feel</i> of booking screens to match their own branding and website design. This can help to provide a more seamless user journey and promote higher conversion.	Situational

## Functionality

Feature	Description	Type
Direct Online Bookings	Systems must allow consumers to book tours, activities, admission or events online, directly via the provider's own website	Essential
Product Information Management (PIM)	PIM allows providers to upload information about their experiences (or other products), including names, descriptions, access restrictions, and pricing	Essential
Payment gateway (built-in or integration options)	Systems must support online payments, either through a built-in solution or integrated third party payment gateways. A payment gateway authorises transactions between providers 'merchants' and their customers.	Essential
CRM (built-in or integration options)	While the sophistication of these modules will differ significantly between platforms, all systems must include a customer relationship management (CRM) module that stores information about customers such as name, address, email and telephone — or be able to integrate with external CRM systems via API.	Essential
E-communications	Allows businesses to send automated emails and texts based on booking behaviour (e.g. confirmations and reminders) or send email newsletters or promotional campaigns. This may be supported either via a built-in module or an integrated platform such as MailChimp or Dotmailer.	Essential
Timed slots	Experience providers need to be able to set availability for different products at specific dates / times, with multiple slots per day and overlapping schedules.	Essential
Close outs based on bookings	Closing out slots manually to account for phone bookings or walk ins and ensure slots are not double booked.	Essential
Customised schedules for tours, activities, or admission to attractions	Customisation based on business needs is a key requirement - i.e. when tours / activities / attractions are available for reservation. Businesses will need to	Essential

	explore their specific requirements in detail with vendors before selecting their system.	
Gift Vouchers and / or Merchandise	Allows customers to purchase merchandise or vouchers through the booking system (e.g. as add-ons within the booking process) and redeem them when making an online booking.	Situational
Back Office Booking Functionality	Businesses should be able to process bookings over the phone or by email on behalf of customers (including individuals, groups or trade customers)	Situational
Resource Management Module	Upload staff, equipment, spaces or other resources to enable the delivery of experiences. This may be an essential requirement for outdoor activity or sightseeing operators, in particular, for whom resources may limit how many tours or activities they can run at any given time.	Situational
eTickets and Scanning	Issue tickets with unique barcodes or QR codes which can be saved on customers mobile phones for validation onsite. This feature may be essential for attractions or sightseeing providers who need to control access or check validity.	Situational
Extras - Meals, Merchandise and Accommodation	Businesses that sell Meals, Merchandise, Accommodation, or other products may require the option to include these as 'add-ons' in online booking screens	Situational
Online Waivers	Create online forms to capture information to ensure visitors meet specific requirements (e.g. Age / Skill) and accept terms and conditions. This is increasingly an essential requirement for providers of outdoor activities or food providers in order to manage their liability.	Situational
Seating Plans and Allocated Seating	Ability to select seats on bus tours, river cruises or other experiences with confined spaces — as well as allocated ticketing for events.	Situational
Accounts and Membership	Create Membership associated with specific user accounts on the Online Booking System.	Situational
Donations and Fundraising	Collect and Manage donations and fundraising campaigns.	Situational

Close outs where staff / equipment are unavailable.	In some cases there can be dependencies between resources for different activities. For example if there is 1 resource responsible for 2 activities there needs to be a connection between this resource and the 2 activities associated	Situational
Rapid turnaround on payments	Many businesses prefer that customer payments (e.g. from online bookings) arrive in their own bank account immediately or within 12-24 hours, rather than landing in the software providers account with reconciliation required thereafter.	Situational
Mobile / tablet app	Businesses that sell tickets in person and have access control requirements (e.g. ticket scanning) may need a system that offers a mobile app that supports this — as a replacement for or in addition to a fully integrated solution.	Situational
Hand-scanner or access control support	Businesses with a high volume of visitors or a fully integrated access control solution may require systems that support fast ticket scanning, e.g. via handheld bluetooth scanning devices.	Situational
Verified Visitor Review Functionality	Send past visitors / bookers automated invitation to rate their experience and leave a review	Optional

## Reporting and Measurement

Feature	Description	Type
Sales reports	Booking systems vary greatly when it comes to measuring sales performance and generating reports. The system needs to report on total transactions and revenue and also allow you to break this down by time, date, product, category, distribution segment and customer segment	Essential
Google Tag Manager support	In many cases, end-to-end Google Analytics ecommerce tracking is only possible when tracking code is deployed via Google Tag Manager. Without this, sessions may be reset when users book via iframes or navigate to payment gateways — resulting in transactions and revenue being attributed to booking system / payment domains rather than the original referrer.	Essential



Google Analytics Ecommerce tracking support	Allows anonymised data about online bookings to be shared with Google Analytics	Essential
Reporting API	Fáilte Ireland has identified a strategic opportunity to improve the efficiency of reporting by using reporting software to access industry booking systems via reporting APIs. This would allow for more precise and timely reporting and support funding evaluation and insight generation.	Situational
Google Analytics 4 tracking support	Google Analytics 4 is the newest version and offers a number of significant enhancements to tracking capabilities and standardisation. <i>This will likely become an essential requirement from the start of 2022.</i>	Optional
Facebook pixel support (incl. Revenue)	For businesses that are running Facebook Ads campaigns, pixel tracking is required to monitor conversion and return on investment, and to optimise ad targeting and creative.	Optional
Google Ads (incl. Revenue) support	For businesses that are running Google Ads campaigns, specialised tracking code is required to monitor conversion and return on investment, and to optimise ad targeting and creative.	Optional

## Commercial / Customer service

Feature	Description	Type
Help desk support	Effective support systems and processes are key factors in determining the success of onboarding and, ultimately, how satisfied businesses are with their booking solution	Essential
SLA for Customer Support	We need to understand what is this under any support contract offered. We may further define criteria based on minimum response / resolution times.	Essential
What is the timeframe for a new Go Live	As this workstream will be running parallel with other related workstreams (including Website Development for example) it is important to understand the average go live time frame. We may further define criteria based on minimum Go Live time.	Optional



Do you provide Go Live Training and Support	How much support is available for the business to ensure the system is set up for success from day 1. We may further define criteria for a minimum amount of Go Live training and support.	Optional
Is there a Knowledge / Learning Centre Available	Is there a knowledge base available for clients where they can find answers to FAQs and Video Guides and how extensive is this content. We may further define assessment criteria based on the quality / comprehensiveness of this material.	Optional
What is the Commission / Transaction Fee	Does the system operate on a subscription pricing model (e.g. fixed monthly cost) or on a per-booking model (e.g. percentage commission, fixed fee per booking) or a combined model? What	Optional
Any Additional Costs?	Are businesses required to pay additional one-off or ongoing fees for support, integrations, payment gateways, etc.?	Optional

## Thank you

We hope this information helps you in your application. Please remember the panel is an open panel. If you do not succeed in getting a place on your 1st application you can re apply with an updated application.