

Lobbying update

ExecSpace, Louise Lowe

After a second appeal regarding the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants Fund, we have been successful and awarded the Grant, so we are hopeful then that the business rates relief will apply too – they tend to go hand in hand so I think it would difficult for Edinburgh Council not to fulfil this obligation. The application journey was as follows -

- Our initial Grant application was declined, as we were not classified as Hospitality Retail - Hotel/BB/Restaurant/Pub etc...
- First appeal – we challenged the decision and stated we are part of the hospitality sector, as a provider and organiser of meetings and events.
- First appeal rejected – as our building wasn't a Hotel/Venue, we operate from an "office" – the B2B issue and we should be B2C.
- Second appeal - we used the caveat that we are a "Sales" office, as we sell Hotel/Venue meeting and event space (the Grant is available for "Sales" offices as well as the actual Hotel/Venue).
- Grant awarded – the Council agreed that we came under the "Sales" office caveat and approved our Grant application.

During all of this we lobbied our local MSP, Ruth Davidson and have very good dialogue with her. The lessons we have learnt from this, is don't give up – we nearly didn't appeal the first rejection and put it down to lost cause. However, we decided not to roll-over and really drill down on how we could be recognised and be awarded the Grant. Thank goodness we did and I have to say it is very true what Julie Shorrocks said – with local and central Government those who shout loudest get heard.

So for us, good news and I certainly advise all Agents – appeal, appeal and appeal some more, I think Councils are relying on business to accept their first and even second decisions.