To Whom It May Concern,

In light of the Chancellor’s announcement just before Christmas about an additional £102 million in Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) funding which has been made available to Local Authorities, in response to the impact of Omicron restrictions, I am writing to provide evidence in support of my application for financial support.

The Omicron travel restrictions undoubtedly had a devasting impact on consumer demand over the Christmas period, and have dampened the travel industry’s recovery going forward. It is important that [insert council name] continues to use Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) funding primarily for the purpose it was originally intended, which is to support businesses facing challenges as a direct result of COVID-19.

Official government guidance from BEIS in relation to the ARG scheme (updated 30 December 2021) does in fact encourage local authorities to focus their support on those businesses “severely impacted by coronavirus restrictions and the rise of the Omicron variant”, “including those [businesses] outside of the business rates system. These may include, but are not limited to… the travel and tourism sector, including group travel, travel agents and tour operators, coach operators”. The guidance also states that “There is no restriction on the number of grants a business may receive”.

[OPTIONAL: In particular, minsters have made it clear that travel agents should be able to continue to benefit from the ARG fund, as the Financial Secretary for the Treasury pointed out a ministerial response to a question on 17 December that:*“travel agents can continue to apply for the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme through their local authority, which is open until March 2022.”*]

It's worth repeating the unique circumstances and challenges that many travel businesses have faced over the past 21 months. While many travel businesses have been theoretically able to remain ‘open’ to customers, measures such as ‘stay at home’ orders, bans on international travel, and travel testing and quarantine requirements, have obliterated consumer demand for their services. Indeed, it is also worth recalling that travel restrictions have remained in place throughout 2021, despite the domestic unlocking that took place in July.

[OPTIONAL: In the case of travel agents, it is also important to keep in mind that we only earn through commission that is received shortly before the departure of clients. As a result, where cancellations occur, as has been the case regularly since March 2020, this means that we do not earn income, despite often being faced with additional costs, in the form of card fees, when refunding consumers.]

[Consider stressing your personal financial circumstances and trading levels here]

[OPTIONAL: These latest restrictions have been particularly challenging for SME travel businesses, as we are less able to access quickly alternative sources of funding.]

I note having looked at the Government data, that [insert Council name] had [£…..] in unspent funding dedicated to ARG as of 28 November. This was even before the Chancellor announced the £102 million England-wide top-up for the Additional Restrictions Grant. As I understand it, [Insert Council name] should therefore still be able to allocate grants for travel businesses that have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions in recent weeks.

Other councils, such as those in Oldham and Harrogate, have previously independently introduced local grants scheme specifically for impacted travel businesses, using the funds from the ARG pot. I have been given assurances that my trade association, ABTA, would be happy to work directly with council officials, if you were also willing to consider the merits of introducing a similar initiative locally.

I hope that this letter provides suitable evidence to demonstrate the impact of COVID-19 restrictions of my business’s ability to operate, and will result in favourable consideration of additional grant support. I would be happy to provide further information if required.

Yours sincerely,