



Department for
Business & Trade

Unlocking Business: Reform Driven by You

BUSINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

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Introduction

Help shape a modernised regulatory environment to support growth

Britain's economic potential is being held back by outdated and excessive regulation. Businesses across the country are spending valuable time and resources navigating administrative burdens that hinder innovation, investment, and job creation.

The Government has set an ambitious target: to reduce administrative regulatory costs by **25%**. Achieving this requires the insight and experience of those who understand the impact of regulation firsthand—you.

We're calling on business leaders, entrepreneurs, and industry experts to help identify regulations that are **outdated**, **duplicative**, or **disproportionate**. Your input will directly inform how we streamline the regulatory landscape while maintaining essential protections.

Every inefficiency removed is an opportunity for businesses to grow, compete, and thrive. This is your chance to shape a more agile, responsive, and growth-focused economy.

Join us in cutting red tape and unlocking Britain's full potential.

This business questionnaire is central to delivering the Government's commitment to cutting the administrative costs of regulation. It will build on measures already announced, including in the [Regulatory Action Plan](#)¹, published in March. It will also build on the [Industrial Strategy](#)², published in June, and on the evidence received about regulation in response to the [Green Paper](#)³ which preceded it.

The Government recognises that it needs to be even more ambitious. We will leave no stone unturned to identify aspects of the regulatory system, across all sectors of the economy, that impose disproportionate costs on business – stifling economic growth, innovation, and investment.

Balancing Protection and Growth

Effective regulation is a force for good. It protects consumers and the public from harms related to quality, health and safety, pricing, and excessive monopolisation. It builds confidence in UK products and services, benefiting businesses themselves.

However, we know that excessive regulation or poor regulatory practices can undermine these strengths—it is precisely these issues that the Government is

¹ HMT (2025), [New approach to ensure regulators and regulation support growth \(HTML\) - GOV.UK](#)

² DBT (2025), [Industrial Strategy - GOV.UK](#)

³ DBT (2024), [Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy - GOV.UK](#)

committed to identifying and tackling while maintaining the highest standards for consumers and workers.

What we need from you

The purpose of this business questionnaire is to examine the specifics of the regulatory system and focus on those precise regulations and processes which are not fit for purpose and unjustifiably inhibiting growth, innovation, and investment.

Past studies have provided a high-level understanding of the challenges posed by the UK's complex and often inconsistent regulatory system. Now, we want you—UK businesses—to identify the exact aspects of regulations or their implementation that create problems, so we can work together with regulators, consumers, and other stakeholders to bring about vital change. In doing so, you may also wish to highlight examples of good practice, which might be adopted more widely.

If you cannot name a specific regulation or regulatory process, please describe the issue and its impact on your business as clearly and precisely as possible. All feedback is valuable and will help us prioritise reforms.

Scope and Audience

Scope

What is included

This business questionnaire asks for evidence about regulations which impose burdens on business, and public sector bodies performing statutory regulatory functions, in the UK which are the responsibility of the UK (Westminster) government.

We are particularly interested in regulations which impose unnecessary and disproportionate administrative burdens on business, outweighing their benefits. These include rules that demand time, effort, and resources to comply with, often beyond the core operational needs of the business. These burdens include tasks like filling out forms, maintaining records, reporting data, and navigating complex legal procedures. They can slow decision-making, increase costs, and reduce productivity—especially for small and medium-sized enterprises. While intended to ensure compliance and accountability, excessive or poorly designed regulations can hinder innovation and competitiveness.

There are a number of different types of bodies performing regulatory functions, including:

- Dedicated regulators - bodies with specific oversight of economic sectors, activities, or occupations. These have generally been established by statute and have operational independence from government. Examples include the Security Industry Authority and Information Commissioner's Office. Dedicated regulators also include economic regulators that oversee sectors with limited competition that ensure fair prices and quality of service for customers; and professional regulators that ensure technical and professional standards are met, for example the General Medical Council and Law Society.
- Government departments and agencies - executive agencies with regulatory functions include, for example, the Maritime & Coastguard Agency, Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, and Intellectual Property Office. Some government departments also have regulatory responsibilities, for example, the Food Standards Agency and (within the Department for Business and Trade) the Office for Product Safety and Standards.
- Local authorities – they, for example, enforce health regulations and consumer protection laws, issue licences for various activities or handle local planning, building safety, and environmental considerations.

What is not included

The following regulators and areas of regulation are not included within the scope of this business questionnaire:

- Areas where the Government has already initiated examinations into the effectiveness of parts of the regulatory system since the July 2024 General Election. These include, for example, environmental regulators, the water sector regulatory system, Ofgem, and the Office of Rail and Road. The business questionnaire is complementary to such action and respondents are asked to focus on areas of the regulatory landscape which have not been subject to extensive scrutiny by the current Government.
- Regulators and regulations within the Devolved Governments' remit (although we will work with them where UK-wide consistency benefits business).
- Self-regulating sectors (e.g. advertising).

Audience

Our primary audience is businesses operating in the UK - from sole traders to large corporations across all sectors. We also want to hear from **innovators and investors** (current and potential) - both domestic and international. We want to understand the regulatory challenges you face day-to-day and how UK regulation compares with other countries.

While focused on business feedback, we also welcome input from: **consumer groups, industry experts, academics and other interested stakeholders.**

Duration, Responding and Next Steps

Duration of the Business Questionnaire

Responses to this business questionnaire are invited for eight weeks until 16 December 2025.

Responding to the Business Questionnaire

Online: https://ditresearch.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cO2kwpLWscbljw

Email to: businessquestionnaire@businessandtrade.gov.uk

Write to:

Regulation Directorate
Room 1.91
Department for Business and Trade
Old Admiralty Building
Admiralty Place
London
SW1A 2DY

Your response will be most useful if it is framed in direct response to the questions posed, though further comments and evidence are also welcome.

When responding, please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. Evidence will be reviewed thereafter by the review team. If further information or clarification is required, the review team will be in contact with you.

Next steps following the Business Questionnaire

Ideas generated in response to this business questionnaire will be thoroughly tested with all interested stakeholders before any changes are implemented. Our goal is a balanced approach that prioritises growth while protecting consumers and businesses alike.

We aim to publish the response to evidence submitted through this business questionnaire within twelve weeks of the closing date.

If you have any complaints about the way this business questionnaire has been conducted, please email: businessquestionnaire@businessandtrade.gov.uk

Summary of Structure

The business questionnaire is structured as follows:

- **Section 1: Identifying regulatory burdens to business growth and innovation:** We ask for examples of how regulations impose disproportionate costs on business, and what changes might be helpful to reduce burdens. (Questions 1 - 2)
- **Section 2: Direct costs of regulation on business:** We ask questions about the direct costs on business arising from regulation, i.e. those costs imposed by regulations themselves rather than how they operate, and ask what changes might be helpful to reduce direct costs. (Questions 3 - 8)
- **Section 3: Indirect costs of regulation on business:** We ask questions about indirect costs on business arising from regulation, i.e. costs that arise from how regulations operate in practice. These costs can arise from how regulators carry out their duties on a day-to-day basis, and mechanisms for challenging regulators' decisions. (Questions 9 - 16)
- **Section 4: Opportunity costs of regulation for business and consumers:** We ask questions on the opportunity costs of regulation, such as missed or delayed business opportunities caused by regulations and the way they operate in the UK, where possible in comparison to overseas jurisdictions. We want to understand how particular aspects of regulation are inhibiting growth and investment, and how you think this can be remedied. (Questions 17 - 21)
- **Section 5: Closing questions:** We ask some background questions about respondents to help us understand how the impact of regulation differs between different sectors and types of business. (Questions 22 - 28)

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Information you provide in response to this business questionnaire, including personal information, may be disclosed in accordance with UK legislation (the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please tell us, but be aware that we cannot guarantee confidentiality in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not be regarded by us as a confidentiality request.

We are trialling Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions to support the delivery of our functions. Unless made expressly clear to you, we will not use AI to either make or inform decisions about you. We will apply effective data minimisation techniques to all such uses of your data.

Your responses, including any personal data, may be shared with a third-party provider, or other government department or organisation acting on behalf of the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) under contract or an equivalent agreement, for the purpose of analysis and summarising responses for us and may use technology, such as AI.

An anonymised version of responses in a list or summary of responses received, and in any subsequent review reports may be published. We may also share your personal data where required to by law. You can leave out personal information from your response entirely if you would prefer to do so.

Wherever possible avoid including any additional personal data in free-text responses beyond that which has been requested or which you consider it necessary for DBT to be aware of.

We will process your personal data in accordance with all applicable data protection legislation. See our [privacy policy](#)⁴.

We will publish a government response on GOV.UK.

⁴ DBT, [Personal information charter - Department for Business and Trade - GOV.UK](#)

Section One: Identifying Regulatory Burdens to Business Growth and Innovation

We want to know which regulations make business life unnecessarily difficult when balanced against the benefits they bring – both for your daily operations and when you try to grow or innovate. We also want to understand how these rules affect different types of businesses. Your specific feedback will directly inform our regulatory reform agenda.

Be as specific if possible – name the exact regulations that cause problems. If you can't name them, just describe how they affect you, and we'll work across government to identify which ones need fixing. This isn't about eliminating all regulations – it's about making them more practical and efficient.

We are interested in radical solutions to remove or simplify regulations (including through AI and digital technology). We want to make regulatory compliance more efficient, and less costly and cumbersome for your business. Even if you cannot name specific regulations, describing their operational impact will help us work across government departments to prioritise reforms.

Subsequent sections will explore the direct and indirect costs of regulation on businesses, as well as quantify the opportunity costs imposed on innovation and growth. Your expertise is invaluable in creating a regulatory environment that protects necessary standards while enabling British businesses to thrive and compete globally.

Question 1

- (a) Are regulations in your sector imposing unreasonable costs on **your business's** current activities?

Yes

- (b) Are there regulations which are limiting **your** ability to grow **your business** further and/or innovate for the future?

Yes

- (c) Do you think regulations in your sector are creating more unnecessary problems (costs or restrictions) for **certain types of businesses or business activities than others**? For example, do they affect small businesses differently from large ones, or impact certain business models more heavily than others?

Yes

(d) If you have answered “yes” to any of the above questions, please give **specific examples** with evidence below, if possible naming individual regulations, or regulatory activities.

Where relevant, please provide further detail here making clear which of (a) – (c) above your evidence relates to.

We have identified several regulatory frameworks that impose disproportionate administrative and compliance burdens on convenience retailers. These issues impact convenience retailers’ capacity to invest, innovate, and grow.

Licensing Act – newspaper advertising

Retailers are currently required to publish licence application notices in local print newspapers, costing between £200 and £850 per advert. Despite this significant expense, these notices generate very little public engagement compared to other forms of engagement such as online webpages, and applications being displayed on the physical premises.

Alcohol licensing – duplication and variations

Feedback from our members shows that licensing authorities sometimes impose conditions that are outdated, inconsistent, or designed for the on-trade rather than the off-trade retail environment. This often results in requirements that are disproportionate to the way convenience stores operate and create unnecessary administrative and operational burdens.

Examples include mandatory display of a drug policy, unrealistic restrictions on product placement, excessive record-keeping requirements, or obligations that assume the presence of door staff. These variations increase complexity without enhancing compliance or public safety and can make it harder for responsible retailers to manage their businesses efficiently.

Natasha’s Law – food labelling

Natasha's Law requires businesses selling pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS) food to list the full ingredients and highlight all allergens on the packaging.

For retail businesses providing their own fresh food which is pre-packed for direct sale complying with these requirements involves ingredient management, specialist labelling software, and constant updates. Smaller stores often face a disproportionate administrative burden, which can disincentivise these businesses from offering freshly prepared food altogether.

Tobacco & Vapes Bill – proximity and density restrictions

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill includes powers for a licensing authority to refuse a licence being granted to a business to sell tobacco and vaping products based on their proximity to outlets (e.g. school, hospital) and density of businesses operating with a licence in an area. If implemented, these proximity and density restrictions

would create uncertainty for retailers over how restricted zones are defined and enforced locally.

Long-established stores could retrospectively lose the ability to sell legal products based solely on geography, rather than compliance conduct. For new entrants, a system that prevents responsible retailers from opening new stores would damage the convenience sector, weaken high streets, limit access to essential local services, and undermine the government's wider aim of supporting growth.

Simpler Recycling – separation of waste materials

The Separation of Waste Regulations, introduced via the Environmental Protection Act, requires retailers in England to ensure the separate collection of recyclable waste streams including glass, metal, paper, plastic, card and food waste. This separation can be done at any point before collection and has been enforceable by the Environment Agency since 31 March 2025.

However, there was very little lead time before these regulations came into force, with no clear guidance for retailers to follow, and limited time for businesses to adapt operations or invest in appropriate bins and infrastructure. There is still no enforcement guidance or clarity on acceptable contamination thresholds, leaving businesses uncertain about compliance expectations.

To maintain a fair and proportionate approach to enforcement, charges should only apply after a formal breach has been identified, otherwise this can lead to significant and unpredictable costs for small businesses who often operate on tight margins. Additionally, the lack of transparency around how charges are calculated and enforced makes it challenging for businesses to plan effectively and assess the potential financial impact.

Question 2

How can we cut down on the paperwork and administrative burdens created by regulation and regulators, and with what positive effects? You should name specific regulations, regulators, and/or regulatory activities wherever possible.

Please provide your answer here.

Licensing Act – newspaper advertising

Remove the statutory requirement to advertise licence applications in print newspapers. Instead, require councils to publish the application on their website which would maintain public engagement while reducing costs and administrative burdens for retailers.

Alcohol licensing duplication

The government has completed its call for evidence on reforms to the alcohol licensing system, which included a proposal for an “amnesty” to recognise that many licensing conditions particularly those inherited from pre-2005 regimes may no longer be relevant or

proportionate. Under this proposal, the removal of such conditions would be treated as minor variations, simplifying the process for licensees.

However, the call for evidence focused exclusively on the on-trade. We recommend that this amnesty be extended to the off-trade sector as well, to relieve unnecessary administrative burdens on retailers and ensure outdated conditions do not continue to impose disproportionate compliance requirements.

Government call for evidence is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/reforming-the-licensing-system>

Natasha's Law

The FSA provides comprehensive guidance on the requirements under Natasha's Law for retailers. One practical improvement could be the provision of a downloadable labelling template that retailers can easily customise and print for their own products. This would reduce administrative burdens, support consistency in compliance, and make it easier for small and low-volume retailers to continue offering freshly prepared food safely.

Tobacco & Vapes Bill

To ease burden on local authorities and thousands of businesses applying for a licence when the scheme goes live we propose that the government develops a "fast track application" for businesses that sell tobacco and vapes which meet a certain criteria of compliance whereby the business already holds a valid alcohol licence and has not been subject to formal enforcement action in the past 12 months specifically for offences relating to underage sales or the possession or supply of illicit tobacco or vape products.

There is precedent for this approach under the alcohol licensing system where "grandfather rights" were provided to businesses selling alcohol when the alcohol Licensing Act was implemented in 2005.

Remove provisions to implement proximity and density restrictions. This would allow licensing and enforcement to be intelligence-led, targeting retailers who fail to comply rather than applying arbitrary limits.

Section Two: Direct Costs of Regulation on Business

In this section we want to hear about the **direct** costs imposed on business by regulation. These are costs businesses must meet when laws require them to take specific actions, with little or no flexibility in how they comply. Indirect costs, i.e. those incurred because of how a regulator decides to fulfil its role through the processes it adopts etc, are examined in the next section.

This part of the business questionnaire focuses on four ways in which regulations and regulators may impose **direct** costs on a business:

- Information requirements
- Investigations, inspections and enforcement
- Further regulatory activities
- Regulatory structures and strategic prioritisation

Further information to help you answer the questions in this section is provided under each subheading below. Please be as specific as possible in your answers, providing clear examples to make your points and explaining how you think these issues can be addressed.

Your detailed examples will help us develop a comprehensive understanding of regulatory cost distribution across different business sizes and sectors, informing our efforts to create a more proportionate and efficient regulatory environment.

(A) Information Requirements

Regulations often impose a range of information obligations on businesses, including to:

- *Provide information to government bodies and/or regulators.* This can include for registration or notifications in relation to particular activities; periodic reporting on regulatory compliance; and/or making applications for any sort of licence or authorisation in relation to a regulated activity, or for an exemption from those requirements.
- *Provide information to third parties.* This can include requirements to label products or installations with specified consumer information; or to make other information, e.g. a financial prospectus to accompany investment products, available in certain circumstances.
- *Keep and maintain specified documents and records.* This might include keeping copies of some records for minimum time periods or maintaining up to date manuals on issues such as emergency planning.

Question 3

In relation to such rules:

- (a) What information or reporting does your business have to provide to regulators that creates unnecessary burdens? Please be as specific as possible.

Please provide your answer here

Waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) record-keeping requirements

All retailers selling vaping products are required to provide a recycling bin for customers to return used vaping products. In addition, they must record information for four years on the number of units collected both in-store and via their vape collection service provider. For many retailers, particularly those with limited staff and resources, this level of reporting is disproportionate and administratively intensive.

VOA annual duty to notify – Section 13 of the Non-Domestic Rating Act 2023

From 2029, ratepayers will be required to submit annual notifications to the Valuation Office Agency (or HMRC) and to report all changes to a property's occupier, lease, rent, or physical characteristics within 60 days. For many convenience retailers, property details change very rarely from year to year, yet the obligation to report annually will still be mandatory. For smaller independent retailers in particular, it is often unclear what operational or physical changes will affect a property's rateable value without access to professional rating advice, creating a significant risk of inadvertent non-compliance.

These new duties are being introduced at a time when there are already well-documented issues around the resourcing and capacity of the VOA and HMRC, including delays in updating the rating list, challenges in securing timely valuations, and difficulties in resolving appeals. Without a substantial increase in investment in systems, staffing and guidance, there is a risk that the volume of additional data generated by annual confirmations and 60-day notifications will overwhelm existing capacity. This could lead to processing backlogs, inconsistent treatment of cases, and increased disputes. For retailers, that would mean prolonged uncertainty, delayed bills, and greater exposure to retrospective adjustments and penalties despite having acted in good faith.

- (b) For any requirements identified in your answer to question (a), how much money does your business spend and how many staff hours are devoted to meeting these requirements? Please provide specific cost and time estimates if possible.

Please provide your answer here.

Don't know

(c) What changes would you make to reduce these burdens?

Please provide your answer here.

Waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) record-keeping requirements

Instead of requiring records to be kept for four years, it would be more practical to reduce this to 12 months, as this would significantly reduce the administrative burden on retailers while still allowing regulators to monitor compliance effectively. A shorter retention period is proportionate to the scale of most retail operations and reflects the practical realities of managing record-keeping in small stores.

VOA annual duty to notify – Section 13 of the Non-Domestic Rating Act 2023

For the duty to notify the VOA/HMRC, there should be the option to introduce a “no material change” declaration for VOA returns. The forms should also be pre-populated with data already held by Government to reduce the time it takes.

(B) Investigations, Inspections and Enforcement

Regulations often contain requirements that regulators conduct periodic inspections and investigations, or powers to enable them to do so where they consider it appropriate. Failure to comply can result in enforcement action including fines, requiring a business to do certain things, or even prosecution. Some of the need to co-operate with enforcement bodies is the inevitable consequence of an enforcement regime, but some requirements may feel disproportionately burdensome for your business.

Your insights will help us identify how the current investigation, inspection and enforcement regimes can be made more proportionate – focusing resources where risks are greatest and reducing unnecessary burdens.

Question 4

(a) What does your business have to do for regulators’ investigations and inspections which you feel is unnecessarily burdensome? Please be as specific as possible.

Please provide your answer here.

Alcohol licensing – duplication and variations

Retailers frequently need to re-engage with their licensing officer or submit licence variations, which can be time-consuming and, in some cases, disrupt store operations. Often, the licensing officer may also need to visit the store to assess the application of specific conditions, adding further administrative burden for both retailers and local authorities.

- (b) For any requirements identified in your answer to Question (a), how much money does your business spend and how many staff hours are devoted to meeting these requirements? Please provide specific cost and time estimates if possible (but exclude any penalties that might be levied through enforcement action).

Please provide your answer here.

Don't know

- (c) What changes would you make to reduce these burdens?

Please provide your answer here.

Alcohol licensing – duplication and variations

See previous response in relation to applying an “amnesty” on outdated conditions as per the government’s “reforms to alcohol licensing” consultation.

(C) Further regulatory activities

The Government has already announced a range of measures to simplify this landscape, so that it is easier and less costly for business to navigate while continuing to act in consumers’ and the wider public interest.

In this section, please provide evidence of any additional ways in which legal obligations imposed by a regulator have created unnecessary burdens or operational challenges for your business. This may include requirements stemming from a regulator’s statutory duties or discretionary powers that compel businesses to take specific actions, even when those actions may not be proportionate or clearly aligned with business needs.

We also would like to understand whether and how you think regulators should be doing more to drive growth. Under the Deregulation Act 2015, certain regulatory bodies must have regard to the desirability of promoting economic growth under the “Growth Duty”, alongside various other duties. The Government announced on 21 October that it intends to reform the Growth Duty so that the legal framework is clearer, more focused and elevated to ensure regulators must actively consider and promote growth.

Question 5

- (a) In questions 3-4 above, we asked you about what you have to do to meet regulators’ information and inspection / investigation / enforcement requirements. Do regulators make other demands of your business outside these categories which result in it facing unnecessary challenges?

Yes

(b) If you answered “yes” to question (a) above, what does your business have to do which you feel is unnecessarily burdensome?

Please provide your answer here.

Alcohol licensing – duplication and variations

As explained in previous answers, due to the nature of the conditions imposed these can have an impact on trading operations, staff training and layout of store.

(c) How much money does your business spend and how many staff hours are devoted to meeting these requirements? Please provide specific cost and time estimates if possible.

Please provide your answer here.

Don't know

(d) What changes would you make to reduce these burdens?

See above answer in relation to “amnesty”.

Please provide your answer here.

Question 6:

(a) Do you believe the regulators you deal with adequately support economic growth in your sector?

No.

(b) If not, please provide evidence of how this could be improved if they had a stronger legal duty to promote economic growth alongside their main objectives?

If no, please provide your answer here.

Please see answers above

(D) Regulatory Structures and Strategic Prioritisation

We would like you to identify regulators that perform with similar, overlapping, or potentially redundant functions and consider whether these could be consolidated or, or, where appropriate, abolished. Please highlight areas where regulatory oversight

is fragmented by such instances. Multiple agencies are responsible for overseeing different aspects of the same business activity. We encourage you to suggest specific opportunities for streamlining these processes in ways that would reduce the compliance burden on businesses, while still maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of regulatory objectives.

Finally in this section, we want you to recommend areas where more binding government guidance to regulators about how to weigh up competing priorities (sometimes called “strategic steers”) would benefit business planning and operations. This might include where you think that regulatory priorities appear misaligned with market realities or business needs. An example of a recent strategic steer is that issued to the [Competition and Markets Authority](#) in May 2025.⁵

Question 7

- (a) Would **combining or streamlining the number of regulators** save your business money, including where you think they do similar or overlapping work?

Yes

- (b) If you answered “yes” to question (a), please provide **further detail** here making clear which regulators, and similarities or duplication, you are referring to.

Please provide your answer here.

Alcohol Licensing

The application of alcohol licensing often varies across local authority licensing teams, police forces, and environmental health departments, creating uncertainty and inconsistency for retailers. Recognising this, the government recently published the first iteration of a National Licensing Policy Framework, aimed at harmonising the interpretation of the Licensing Act and making it easier for businesses to comply and for local authorities to apply the rules consistently.

However, this framework is primarily focused on the on-trade sector (pubs, bars, and restaurants). Extending its remit to the off-trade sector, including convenience stores and other retailers, has the potential to help ensure consistent application of licensing conditions, reduce unnecessary administrative burdens, and provide greater certainty for all alcohol retailers.

⁵ DBT (2025), [Strategic steer to the Competition and Markets Authority - GOV.UK](#)

Framework link is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-licensing-policy-framework-for-the-hospitality-and-leisure-sectors>