

# RTO5 Tourism Relief Fund (TRF) Program

## Application Guide: Program Details and Eligibility

**ALERT: Please do not submit an application if you have already applied to the Tourism Relief Fund through FedDev Ontario unless specifically instructed by FedDev to do so.**

### Overview:

[The Tourism Relief Fund](#) is a program of the Government of Canada that supports businesses by enabling them to invest in expanding and enhancing visitor products and services. Administered by the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario), the program is designed to help businesses and destinations recover from the deep challenges of the pandemic and build toward future, sustained growth.

In the regional destination encompassing the cities of Toronto, Mississauga and Brampton, the TRF is being delivered by Destination Toronto in its capacity as Regional Tourism Organization 5, in close partnership with Mississauga Tourism, the City of Brampton and the City of Toronto.

This guide sets out the details of the program for potential applicants. Eligible applicants can apply for a non-repayable contribution between \$20,000 and \$100,000 for up to 50% of eligible project costs for incorporated for-profit businesses and up to 100% of eligible project costs for not-for-profit organizations and municipalities. Costs may be eligible on a retroactive basis for up to 12 months prior to the receipt of a project application, but no earlier than April 19, 2021. Without exception, all projects must be completed by, and all project expenses incurred no later than, December 31, 2022.

All fully completed applications received via our online portal on or before Sunday, May 15, 2022 at 11:59pm ET will be considered for TRF funding. All applications will be reviewed and assessed at the same time, after May 15. Unfortunately, applications received after May 15, 2022 will not be assessed.

Due to the high volume of applications anticipated, not all application requests will be successful. Some applications may be awarded a lesser amount than requested in order for the TRF program to reach maximum breadth of impact across the region. In the case of a lesser awarded amount, the applicant will need to determine if project goals can still be achieved to meet any conditions of TRF funding approval and a RTO5 Business Liaison may be in touch with an applicant during the assessment process for your further input into the funding request.

**It is important to please review the eligibility criteria below in full prior to applying to the fund.**

## Program Criteria:

### Who is eligible?

#### Eligible Applicants

- Not-for-profit incorporated organizations (including tourism associations and destination management organizations)
- Incorporated businesses, primarily small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME's)
- Post secondary institutions
- Indigenous/First Nation/Métis owned businesses and organizations

#### Ineligible Applicants

As set out in the criteria from FedDev Ontario and the Government of Canada, businesses that are in the following industries are not eligible for participation in this program:

- Restaurants and restaurant chains
- Hotel chains
- Partnerships
- Sole proprietors\*
- Retail sector businesses

\*Exception: Indigenous sole proprietors are eligible\*

**Note 1:** Independent businesses operating in the restaurant, hotel and retail sector may be considered for funding if they are an anchor product and the main reason for attracting visitors to the region. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

**Note 2:** If you are an eligible applicant whose operations reside outside of the RTO5 region, applications for the Tourism Relief Fund are available in your region. To check which regional office is accepting applications on your behalf, see

### Are you an Indigenous owned and controlled business?

The destination partners in Toronto, Mississauga and Brampton (RTO5) are proud to work in partnership with Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO) to deliver the Tourism Relief Fund in support of Indigenous tourism in the province of Ontario.

If your business or organization is 51% or more Indigenous-owned and controlled, please visit [ITO's Tourism Relief Fund webpage](#) to apply and access additional program support. As the recognized voice for Indigenous tourism in Ontario, ITO's program is customized to the needs of Indigenous communities,

organizations and businesses. ITO and RTO5 will work together to support the growth of Indigenous tourism in the region.

For questions, contact [TRF@indigenoustourismontario.ca](mailto:TRF@indigenoustourismontario.ca)

## **Program Objectives of the Tourism Relief Fund:**

The program seeks to enable ultimate recipients to strategically adapt projects and services to adjust to changing public health requirements, while planning for and investing in recovery efforts for future growth. It will also empower tourism entities to seize new market opportunities while helping the visitor economy sector reposition itself for both domestic and international visitors as the country safely reopens.

Specific objectives are:

- Supporting those costs related to product development and enhancement of the visitor experience to help tourism businesses adapt to the 'new normal', modernize tourism offerings, and encourage the adoption of more environmentally sustainable practices; and
- Supporting destination development so that it positions our region to take advantage of post-pandemic opportunities through strategic planning for medium to long-term investments, as well as supporting destination development in line with objectives set out in the Federal Tourism Growth Strategy and projected through the RTO5 regional priorities.

## **Federal Government Priorities for the Tourism Relief Fund**

As the Tourism Relief Fund is funded by the federal government, priority consideration will be given in the scoring evaluation to those applications with projects that address one or more of the following federal priorities:

- Support the Indigenous tourism sector
- Are led by a business/organization of strategic importance to the tourism sector in the region
- Contribute to the economic development of a region
- Contribute to job creation in the region
- Take place in a tourism-dependent community/region, including projects supporting downtown cores, and
- Are led or majority-led by persons of underrepresented groups: women, Indigenous peoples, members of Official Language Minority Communities

(OLMC), youth, persons with disabilities, newcomers and immigrants, black communities, racialized communities, and LGBTQ2.

### **RTO5 Regional Priorities for the Tourism Relief Fund:**

Priority consideration will be given in the scoring evaluation to those applications with projects that address one or more of the following regional priorities:

- Support the underrepresented stories and experiences in our communities, including Indigenous and equity-deserving communities;
- Support the sector's small businesses;
- Expand destination appeal and experiences that have the potential to drive growth in visitation in the winter season;
- Facilitate workforce development and promote the employment for youth and newcomers in the sector;
- Facilitate the recovery of business travel (both group and transient);
- Advance accessibility of tourism and hospitality businesses;
- Augment environmental sustainability;
- Support businesses and neighbourhoods also adversely affected by long-term infrastructure work and construction; and
- Elevate destination appeal through Placemaking and public art.

### **What types of projects qualify for the program?**

Qualifying projects could include:

- Creating, adapting, and enhancing protocols and permanent infrastructure to meet health and safety requirements to accommodate visitors;
- Modernizing operations, attractions, greening initiatives, and online sales services;
- Developing capacity for more inclusive tourism experiences to ensure welcoming, inclusive environments to diverse clientele, ;
- developing sustainable community tourism plans based on research and market analysis, and designed to rebuild tourism confidence in communities;
- Supporting seasonal dispersion by equipping tourism SMEs to extend their product offering to increase visitation during the winter and shoulder seasons;
- Implementation of tourism plans that create or improve local assets, facilities, and planning for key infrastructure;
- Developing and enhancing tourism services and experiences; and,
- Implementing strategies to re-activate and animate downtown cores, main streets and business districts through activities, public art, and mixed-use spaces.

## Other Important TRF Eligibility Information:

- Only one application per business/organization is allowed to ensure we are able to reach as many businesses as possible with the available TRF funds
- Applicants must be incorporated (Note: not applicable for Indigenous businesses/organizations)
- Applicants must be able to procure and provide proof of commercial general liability insurance of at least \$2,000,000, once approved
- Applicants must be registered for HST
- Applicants must submit financial statements for the most recent two years (in cases where applicants are a new business, all available financial statements and/or a solid business plan must be provided)
- Applicants must have evidence to support their budgeted project costs. (eg written cost estimates, quotes)
- Applicants are able to make use of other federal funding towards the specified activities contained in their funding application, but these may not overlap with TRF funds .
- Applicants must be in full compliance with all applicable government laws, rules, regulations, guidelines, and other legally binding measures (Laws).
- Applicants must be financially viable and plan to continue to operate or resume seasonal operations.

## Ineligible TRF Project Expenses

By way of example only, ineligible project costs include, but are not limited to, the following:

- costs of land, building or vehicle purchase;
- Refinancing;
- costs of intangible assets such as goodwill, whether capitalized or expensed;
- depreciation or amortization expenses;
- interest on invested capital, bonds, debentures, or mortgages;
- Bond discount;
- losses on investments, bad debts and any other debts;
- fines or penalties;
- costs related to litigation;
- non-incremental wages;
- fees for administrators, including payments to any member or officer of the Recipient's Board of Directors;
- opportunity costs;
- hospitality and entertainment costs;
- costs of individual membership in a professional body (e.g. professional designations);
- lobbyist fees; and
- gift cards.

**Note: No expenses incurred prior to April 19, 2021 will be accepted.**

## Application Evaluation Process

Submitted applications will be assessed by an Evaluation Committee including representatives from Destination Toronto, Mississauga Tourism, the City of Brampton and the City of Toronto. The application will serve as the basis for the evaluation.

The application evaluation process will include a fair and consistent evaluation of the merit, impact and viability of submissions against standardized evaluation criteria. As noted in the guide, priority consideration will be given in the scoring evaluation matrix to those applications with projects that address federal priorities and established RTO5 regional priorities. All recommended applications and the allocation of funding amounts will also be vetted by FedDev Ontario to approve.

Unfortunately, applications that fail to meet eligibility requirements or are incomplete when received, will not be considered for TRF funding.

Please note that all decision results are final. There is no appeal of the TRF Evaluating Committee's recommendations regarding funding allocations.

## Requirements for Successful Applicants

- **Fund Disbursement**
  - Upon awarding of TRF funds, applicants will be required to enter into a formal Funding Agreement defining the terms of payment and the obligations of the parties.
  - RTO5 will disburse funds to successful applicants as follows:
    - Sixty-five percent (65%) of funds to be awarded upon signature of the Funding Agreement
    - Remaining payment of thirty-five percent (35%) of awarded funds upon completion and approval of the Final Report to be received within 30 days of project completion.
  
- **Itemized List of Approved Claim Summary Deliverables:**
  - All successful applicants will be required to submit an itemized claim summary of eligible project costs incurred, along with a certification of the claim by a director or officer of the business/organization, confirming accuracy of the claim as part of their Final Report.
  - No expenses incurred prior to April 19, 2021 will be accepted.

## Applicant Report Submission:

Successful applicants will be required to submit the following reports:

**Status Report** – All non-retroactive projects (i.e. projects with an End Date after September 31, 2022) may be asked to complete a brief Project Status Report due August 31, 2022.

**Final Report** – This will include a brief summary of how the awarded funds were used, including a synopsis of how the project helped to create and/or maintain jobs and improve the visitor experience.

## Key Dates

- **April 22, 2022** RTO5's Tourism Relief Fund online application, funding criteria guide and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) are live and applications are being accepted.
- Consider registering for 1 of 2 Group Information Webinar Sessions to learn about the RTO5's Tourism Relief Fund and to ask questions in a group setting:
  - **April 27, 2022 at 9:00AM** Group Session 1 [Tourism Relief Fund - RTO5 Webinar 1](#)
  - **May 2, 2022 at 12:00PM** Group Session 2 [Tourism Relief Fund - RTO5 Webinar 2](#)
- **From April 27 to May 14, 2022** applicants are encouraged to book a 25 minute call with one of our in-house Business Liaisons to seek answers to any questions related to either the program criteria and/or the application process. If you are interested, we encourage you to book your virtual call at your earliest convenience by sending a short email to: [trf@destinationtoronto.com](mailto:trf@destinationtoronto.com) .

Note: Participating in either the webinar or talking 1:1 with one of our Business Liaisons concerning your application is optional and does not affect the evaluation or decision process.

- **May 15, 2022 at 11:59PM.** Application Portal Closes . No further applications to the RTO5 Tourism Relief Fund will be accepted after this time.
- **December 31, 2022** All projects to be completed by, and all project expenses incurred no later than this date.

## Frequently Asked Questions

1. *What if I've already applied to the Tourism Relief Fund through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario)?*

You can only make one application per organization to the Tourism Relief Fund.

2. *Can a business/organization submit multiple applications?*

No. Only one application per business/organization is allowed to ensure as many applicants as possible are able to take advantage of the RTO5 Tourism Relief Fund throughout the entire duration of the program, even if you applied last year and were unsuccessful

3. *When will I know if our application was successful?*

Applicants can expect to be notified starting mid-June if their application was successful. All applicants - successful and unsuccessful - will receive a communication to inform them of the decision.

4. *Our main operating company is a limited partnership, but we do have a general partner that is an incorporated company that owns the partnership. Do we submit the application under the general partner incorporation number?*

The limited partnership would be connected to the project but the applicant would be the Incorporated company.

5. *Can I submit a paper-based application rather than through the online application portal?*

No. Only applications submitted electronically will be considered. If you are having difficulty, one of our RTO5 Business Liaison Specialists listed below would be happy to assist you.

## **The Application:**

Applications will be accepted until Sunday May 15th, 2022 at 11:59 pm ET.

[View application](#)