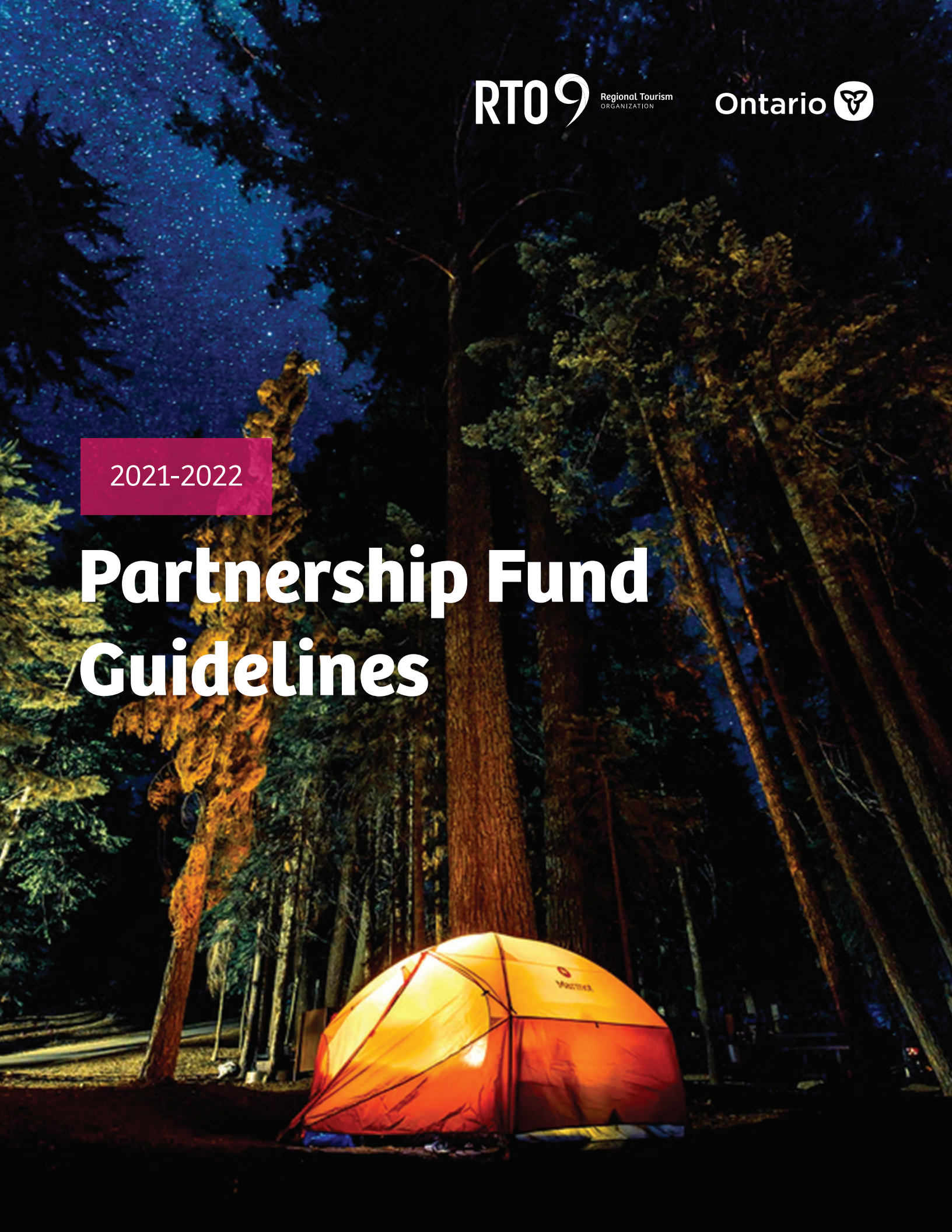


2021-2022

Partnership Fund Guidelines



Introduction

Welcome to the program guidelines for RTO 9's 2021-2022 Partnership Fund allocation program. Included in this guide is information regarding our current program including the following: program rationale, partnership eligibility requirements, funding parameters and the 2021/2022 project initiatives. We have designed this guide to answer your questions about the Partnership Fund, however, if you have further questions, you are encouraged to contact Lori McIsaac, Director of Operations at lmcisaac@region9tourism.ca. Approval of Partnership Funds are dependant upon RTO 9 receiving their 2021/2022 Transfer Payment Agreement from the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

Program Overview

RTO 9's Partnership Fund initiative is designed to build on existing and introduce new tourism products that enhance the region's diversity of tourism attractions and competitive advantage by supporting the development of visitor experiences in the region. This program's estimated allocation is \$219,000.00 from the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

The Ministry's and RTO 9's objectives in providing this opportunity are to:

- Enhance tourism across the Province, especially overnight stays
- Support the RTO as the leader in regional tourism
- Maximize support for tourism at a regional level by encouraging strong partnerships, expanding the breadth and diversity of funding partners
- Encourage RTOs to engage industry partners to broaden their financial base to extend reach
- Support a coordinated approach that aligns planning, product development, investment attraction and workforce development in the region
- Assure the transparency and accountability of funding through the transfer payment agreement
- Increase the economic tourism value to the region

The Partnership Fund, is not a grant program. The program is designed to have partners work with RTO 9 to attain mutual benefits by delivering on partnership project objectives. RTO 9 can only enter into partnerships when projects align with their mandate and goals, target audiences, segments and activities as outlined in RTO 9's current Business and Operational Plan. The intent of the Partnership Fund program is to assist new or existing tourism products or activities, it is not intended to provide year over year funding to organizations. Projects are expected to have a sustainability plan in place for continued growth. Higher priority will be placed on new initiatives that show potential to increase tourism receipts for the region.

Partners must be prepared to commit to and follow through on the collection of jointly determined data related to the project undertaken. The data collected from partners may then be aggregated with other data in the longer term to provide a clearer picture of the state of tourism within the region.

The Theory of Hospitality

$$E^2 = MC$$

Expectations
Exceeded

Memories
Created

Program Objectives

The Partnership Fund program is an initiative designed with the intent to make the RTO 9 region a premiere travel destination in Ontario. Due to the current COVID pandemic and its effects on international travel, the focus will be to attract local, inter-provincial and eventually national visitors to the region until such time as international travel resumes. RTO 9 will work with eligible partners that encourage tourism by:

- Creating and enhancing tourism offerings within the region that generate new and repeat visitation.
- Extending the reach, breadth and depth of partnerships between RTO 9 and industry partners.
- Utilizing partner synergies to develop travel itineraries that drive tourism across the region thereby extending the length of stay and visitor receipts.
- Expanding partner digital presence increasing their visibility through website enhancement, digital marketing and e-commerce tools.

Priority will be given to proposals that:

1. Are submitted from private sector businesses
2. Promote overnight visits, increasing the length of stay
3. Include *two or more partners that are financially committed to the project, in addition to RTO 9
4. Have clearly defined and measurable goals *See project categories for additional details

**Additional partners not required for Digitizing Your Business application.*

Partner Eligibility

2021-2022 Funding will only be provided to legal incorporated tourism businesses. Examples include those that are established by or under legislation; are federally or provincially incorporated; are band councils established under the Indian Act, Canada or other Aboriginal organizations that are incorporated; proof of registration in Canada or another jurisdiction.

Eligible partners are not-for-profit and for-profit tourism businesses, as well as First Nations businesses with a role in the delivery of tourism promotion/ product development and services, within the geographic boundaries of RTO 9.

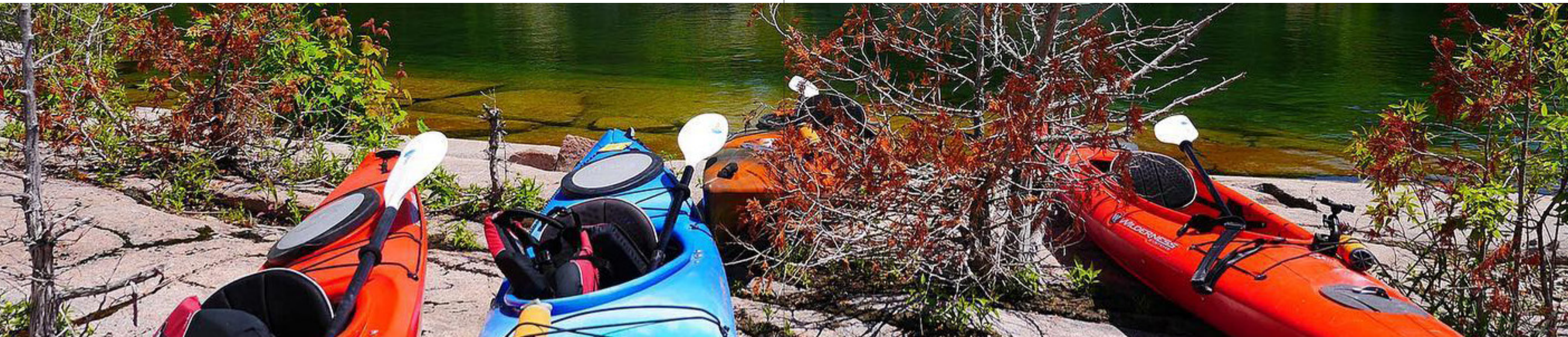
For Product Development/Enhancement and Itinerary Marketing categories, Applicant must be prepared to have at least \$2 million General Commercial Liability insurance coverage and will add "Region 9 Regional Tourism Organization" as an additional insured for the full duration of the partnership project.

The project must be located within the region served by RTO 9. This includes the geographic area of Region 9 starting at the Quebec / Ontario border in the United

Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. It travels westerly along the northern shores of the St. Lawrence Seaway to the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and the eastern gateway of the 1000 Islands starting at the City of Brockville continuing through the Town of Gananoque to the City of Kingston and north to include a portion of the Rideau Canal. It encompasses the Township of Frontenac Islands, Township of South Frontenac, Township of Loyalist, Township of Stone Mills, Town of Greater Napanee, Town of Deseronto, Township of Tyendinaga, Prince Edward County and the cities of Belleville and Quinte West.

Applications require full disclosure of all other funding granted to the initiative. Partners are not able to use Ontario grants (Celebrate Ontario, TIPP etc.) to fund their portion of the Partnership Fund.

As this program is oversubscribed each year, approved partners will have 30 days from project approval to submit the required documentation, if this time frame is not adhered to, RTO 9 reserves the right to reallocate funding at its discretion.



Project Criteria

TOURISM BUSINESS ITINERARY MARKETING

Ratio 1:1

To encourage visitors throughout the current COVID pandemic, RTO 9 wants to assist our stakeholders in marketing their unique and authentic experiences that will attract visitors from across the region, the province and eventually beyond. RTO 9 will work with our partners by providing funding to promote their multi-partnered itinerary through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube etc. All projects must take place before March 31, 2022. Funding monies can be used for social media marketing but not for product development itself. Multi-faceted itineraries designed to increase length of stay and visitor experience will be the most popular during the COVID-era. Visitors are looking for smaller group experiences with outdoor activity options that offer variety, exploration, and space. Think of a hotel or B&B stay coupled with a curated small-group experience, or a guided trail tour complete with picnic lunch or fireside storytelling. Building an itinerary creates greater interest for visitors and encourages longer stays. Multi-faceted itineraries offer visitors variety and encourage overnight stays.



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT: NEW OR ENHANCEMENT OF EXISTING PRODUCT

Ratio 1:1

Having marketable experiences that encourage tourists to come to the region will increase visitor spending and encourage longer stays. These can be large scale seasonal projects available for longer periods of weeks or months. Note: Projects under this category will be eligible to utilize up to 20% of their overall funding monies (incl. HST) for pre-approved digital marketing. Examples of this are: Facebook & Instagram posts, boosting fees etc.

- COVID-era visitors are looking for small-group experiences that put Health & Safety first
- Curated outdoor adventures are in high demand
- Creating new and very unique experiences will attract visitors to the RTO 9 region
- Partnering with other tourism businesses will broaden your products appeal
- Visitors can be day-trippers, week-end warriors, long-stay vacationers, remote workers or locals looking for adventure in their backyard



DIGITIZING YOUR BUSINESS

Ratio 1:1

Having a strong online presence is essential to attracting customers. The Digitizing Your Business funding category will help eligible tourism businesses increase their visibility online and attract and service visitors. Through this category, tourism partners can access funding that can be utilized to enhance or develop effective digital marketing tools. Funds can be used towards website creation, search engine optimization, content creation, digital marketing strategy, social media strategy, online booking systems and e-commerce tools.



Travel Trends for 2021-2022

- Outdoor activities list
- Staycations - discovering what is close
- Health & Safety protocols top of mind
- Family Vacations - After missing holidays with loved ones, reconnecting with family is going to be more important than ever
- Road trips will rule!
- Wellness Vacation: spa visits, forest walks, back to nature
- Unique experiences are in high demand
- COVID-Cabin fever will encourage longer visitor stays
- Nomadic travel: Embracing work from any location
- Smaller footprint vacation

Conditions of Funding

Funding Criteria

Funding is open to tourism-based businesses only within the RTO 9 region. RTO 9 is bound to the funding guidelines as set forth by the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries (MHSTCI). First and foremost, the funds are only available to partners that are able to provide matching funds. The Ministry uses the following definition of Partner:

*In the context of the funding model, ‘partnership’ is defined as the agreement of the RTO to work with one or more entities on a specific project in support of the RTO’s business plan. The RTO is the project lead and **the partner contributions ‘flow into’ the RTO – they do not ‘flow through’ to the partner(s).***

Ineligible Costs

The following are deemed ineligible by the Ministry:

- Grants and flow-through to other organizations
- Charitable fundraising
- Advocacy
- Donations to political parties or lobby groups
- Capital costs related to permanent structures or acquisitions (except for wayfinding signage)
- Competition prizes, prize money and monies paid to competition participants
- Previously incurred expenses
- Refundable portion of the HST or other refundable expenses
- Expenses that do not directly relate to the application/delivery of the Partnership Fund project
- In-kind donations
- Funds for operational funding, such as salaries and wages
- Alcohol is not a reimbursable expense

Partnership Fund projects may receive up to 50% for their eligible project, with a minimum matching contribution of \$1,500.00 and a maximum matching contribution of \$40,000.00. **Costs are inclusive of HST.**

Some exceptions to the above matching funds will apply.

All projects must be completed by March 31, 2022.

Project Expenses/Payments

The Ministry requires that RTO 9 be responsible/ accountable for the administration of project funds, meaning that **RTO 9 cannot pay or reimburse the partner directly.** The partner will be invoiced by RTO 9 for their portion of the project and will then pay partner-approved invoices that have been submitted directly to the supplier. RTO 9 is not required to charge HST on their invoices, however, RTO 9 does reimburse the partner for their share of the HST rebate on project invoices that are received.

Upon receipt of the 50% partnership invoice from RTO 9, partners must submit a cheque payable to RTO 9 within 30 days. Projects cannot commence until payment has been received from the partner and proper supporting documentation (contract, disclosure and release statement, WSIB and Insurance etc.) has been signed and received by RTO 9.

Please note that all paid work must be completed by third parties, and that suppliers are to have a valid HST registration number and WSIB coverage, as required by Provincial regulations. Partners can contribute in-kind contributions to the project, but cannot be reimbursed for project expenditures and they must provide cash payment (cheque) for their portion of the project budget.

All partnership fund vendor invoices must be made out to RTO 9 as follows:

RTO 9
Re: (Partnership Fund/Event Name)
403-829 Norwest Ave.
Kingston, Ont.
K7P 2N3

Invoices not addressed to RTO 9 cannot be paid. Invoices must be sent to the partner for approval first and then forwarded by the partner to RTO 9 through the partners Basecamp project folder for payment. Invoices received directly from partner vendors to RTO 9 will be rerouted back to partner for approval. RTO 9 will only process payment for invoices for items agreed to and specified in the approved project budget. Changes to project deliverables or budget must be pre-approved by RTO 9 prior to changes being made.

Acknowledgements

In entering into partnership with RTO 9, all recipients are required to acknowledge the support received by RTO 9 and the Ministry, with the use of:

- The Ontario Yours to Discover logo (in Basecamp), on all consumer related materials
- The Ontario Trillium logo (in Basecamp), on all industry related materials
- RTO 9 reserves the right to approve all logo placements prior to public release or production
- Any public announcements/media releases require pre-approval of RTO 9

Documentation Requirements

- Contract and supporting payment are required by May 30 2021
- Invoice payments will not be processed until the supporting payment, signed contract and supporting documents are received.
- Notify RTO 9 by September 30, 2021 if all the funding will/will not be used.
- Only ask for the amount of funding you require.
- All Invoices and documents must be uploaded into the partners Basecamp folder provided by RTO 9.

Safety is the primary concern of Canadians, with 75% of respondents indicating that clear communication of protection measures is the top factor for selecting travel.



Procurement Policy



RTO's are expected to meet Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries procurement guidelines as follows:

- Good value for money spent is a priority for RTO 9.
- The Transfer Payment Agreements with the Ministry requires that RTO 9 must undertake a competitive process for purchases of any value.
- The intent of a good tendering process is to ensure:
 - Value for money;
 - The receipt of appropriate services; and,
 - The use of a transparent competitive process to identify the best person/organization to deliver the services/supplies required.
- In carrying out a competitive process RTO 9 will:
 - Develop a clear description of the product/service sought which includes sufficient information up front; and,
 - Apply consistent and objective evaluation criteria to all quotes.
 - Consider best value criteria including bid/project cost, experience, quality, services, etc. The lowest price does not always mean the best value.
- All processes around any procurement will be documented.
 - Under \$5,000 requires a note to file indicating a 'search' for best value for dollar was completed – i.e.: phone, web, committee review, etc.
 - Where the purchase price exceeds \$5,000, RTO 9 must obtain a minimum of three written quotes.

Request for Proposals (RFP's) should be posted and distributed as widely as possible to ensure multiple submissions by qualified vendors are received by the closing date. RFP closing deadline dates should allow for as much time as possible to encourage qualified vendors to make a submission. RTO 9 considers the RFP period should be no less than 10 - 14 days and preferably longer.

The partner will permit RTO 9, if required, to verify/audit information submitted (at the discretion of the Province) to ensure that it is complete and accurate and that funds were used for the purpose intended.

Project Evaluation Criteria

Mandatory for all projects:

- Partner agrees to compliance with RTO 9 procurement policy
- Partner agrees to incorporate the provided Ontario Logo into their project where applicable
- Compliance with acknowledgements
- Proposal is consistent with RTO 9's Business and Operational Plan
- Compliance with the program accounting, submittal of invoices for payment, documentation and reporting procedures
- Maximum of two applications per business

Project Reports

The mid-year and final report (where applicable) will follow the guidelines/ templates provided by RTO 9. The reports will include but are not limited to:

- Partner submitting their report by the date indicated by RTO 9
- Description of the activities linked to the project description as outline in the application
- Digital copies of the marketing materials and links to social media marketing/mentions
- Proof of acknowledgement of RTO 9/MHSTCI funding support
- Explanation of any variance between the application and the report
- Final report for the project is due 30 days after the projects is completed
- Budget forecasting by December 1, 2021 for the remaining expenses of the project until March 31, 2022. RTO 9 reserves the right to re-allocate remaining funds to other projects





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