

# TOURISM RELIEF FUND - FAQs

**April 25, 2022**

RTO 9 is administering the [Tourism Relief Fund](#) and following the rules as established by the Government of Canada and Federal Development Agency of Southern Ontario. Please read through the Application Guide [RTO 9 Application Guide](#) carefully before referencing the FAQ's. These questions are subject to update and change.

## APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

### **1. What is the goal of the Tourism Relief Fund?**

The Tourism Relief Fund program is designed to enhance and create tourism experiences and support destination development. The applicant must also be a key supplier of the visitor experience, anchor destination or part of a tourism dependent community or cluster.

### **2. Can I apply for a project that I'll do in the next year (2023)?**

No. For this intake, projects must be completed between the dates of April 19, 2021 and December 31, 2022.

### **3. Can I apply using another format other than the digital application provided by RTO 9?**

No.

### **4. My business is not located in the RTO 9 region, can I apply to the RTO 9 TRF?**

No. Verify if your business is in the RTO 9 region here: [Map of South Eastern Ontario Region](#)

Please reach out to the RTO that represents the region that your business is located in.

### **5. I have an Indigenous, First Nation, Metis and/or Inuit owned Tourism Business. Should I apply through the program run by RTO 9 or directly to Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO)?**

Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO) is also delivering 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 the [ITO TRF 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 RTO 9 work together to support the growth of Indigenous tourism in the South Eastern Ontario region.

Therefore Indigenous, First Nation, Metis and/or Inuit owned Tourism Businesses should submit their application through ITO directly. Please do not submit through both organizations, as the ITO application and program differs from RTO 9's application and program.

**6. Are Indigenous, First Nation, Metis and/or Inuit owned Tourism Businesses required to be Incorporated?**

No

**7. Would we be eligible as a registered charity?**

If the registered charity is an Incorporated Not-For-Profit, you would be eligible.

**8. Can municipalities apply to this fund?**

Yes.

**9. What businesses are NOT ELIGIBLE for the TRF?**

The funding provided through the Tourism Relief Fund excludes Restaurant chains, the Retail Sector, Hotel chains, Sole Proprietors and Partnerships, and Crown Corporations as per directives of the Federal Development Agency Southern Ontario.

Independent restaurants and hotels are also not eligible, unless they are an anchor destination as a tourism draw to the area. An example would be a restaurant at a winery; culinary experiences and events, or a spa with overnight accommodations. Resorts, cottage resorts, and campgrounds may also be eligible if they are an anchor destination.

**10. Would a hair salon/spa qualify?**

Although not specifically mentioned in the Tourism Operator definition, large tourism focused spas (e.g., Tourism Destination Spa) would be eligible. Salons or spas that are not tourism destinations for at least 50% of their revenue are not eligible for this fund. Another quick test to determine if you may qualify as a tourism destination salon or spa – do you advertise regularly to locations further than 40 km from your location? Performing salon or spa services for the occasional wedding does not make you a tourism destination salon or spa.

**11. Do I qualify if I work out of my home?**

No. The Tourism Relief Fund is for expenditures for facilities/services that require the visitor and tourism employees to attend in order to experience or service the product/experience.

**12. My business is a start-up, am I eligible?**

Yes. Start-up businesses will be required to supply a business plan to verify the risk in awarding the non-repayable reimbursement.

**13. I can't afford to do this project unless I am successful in my application for funds. What should I do?**

We recommend that you do not expend any funds prior to reviewing all documentation, and if your project is accepted, you are in receipt of the signed Contribution Agreement with RTO 9. Note that reimbursement of this intake will not occur until sometime in July and August for the first instalment of 50%.

**14. I have multiple projects that I have done (or am interested in doing) – can I submit more than one application?**

No. Applicants are allowed to submit one application only. We recommend you combine your projects into an umbrella project with multiple components and outline each clearly in your project description.

If you have received funding from FedDev after April 19th, 2021, you are not eligible to submit an application to the RTO. After the intake period is over on May 15, 2022 the RTO 9 will be providing a list of applicants to FedDev Ontario. FedDev will review the list and determine if any applicants have applied directly to FedDev Ontario.

**15. I have multiple tourism businesses within the Region – can I submit multiple applications?**

Yes if each tourism business is a separate entity and incorporated. Each application will be subject to the adjudication process and the amount of funding available.

**5. If my project costs exceed \$200,000, can I submit a second application?**

No. You cannot submit more than one application.

**ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES & COSTS**

**1. What types of projects are eligible?**

Eligible Projects include the following:

- 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; Supporting businesses with the local promotion of tourism products, including digital and virtual reality experiences;
- Developing capacity for more inclusive tourism experiences (e.g., staff training to ensure welcoming, inclusive environments to diverse clientele, gender-neutral washroom facilities)
- Providing support to local communities to develop sustainable 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.
- Entities that have previously received or have confirmation that any of their previous Tourism Relief Funding applications (from April 19, 2021 onwards) have been approved.

**2. I've been wanting to expand my facility for a long time – could I do that through this fund?**

Funding is intended for projects that meet the spirit of the guidelines and applications for the Tourism Relief Fund-RTO 9. Please review the applications and guidelines to determine if your project is eligible. Please contact RTO 9 directly if you still have questions.

**3. As an artist/musician or specific tourism festival/event management company, am I eligible for this fund?**

Although not specifically listed, in some instances the above may be eligible if entities are incorporated.

**4. Are labour costs eligible e.g., training costs for Diversity Training?**

Labour is an eligible cost, but you will need to prove the additional labour, hours, wages, etc., were directly related to the project. Be aware that in documenting the extra labour incurred you

may encounter privacy issues as RTO 9 is subject to Freedom of Information requests.

**5. Are labour costs eligible when you've received wage subsidies for a portion of the labour?**

Yes, but only for the portion not already covered by the wage subsidy. Up to 50% of this portion may be covered.

**6. Are summer students an eligible expense?**

No

**7. Are fees paid to consultants to provide training eligible?**

Yes. Receipts and or invoices will need to be provided as proof of the expense.

**8. Is a vehicle or mechanical equipment an eligible expense?**

No, vehicles are not an eligible expense. Any self-propelling machine or equipment are also not permitted.

**9. Can I submit for rental expenses (e.g., patio heater rentals)?**

No. The program is for the purchase of items such as patio heaters not the rental.

**10. Is the purchase of land an eligible expense?**

No.

**11. What amount is the 50% calculated on for Incorporated Private Sector and Indigenous, First Nation, Metis and/or Inuit owned Tourism Businesses?**

For Incorporated Private Sector and Indigenous, First Nation, Metis and/or Inuit owned Tourism Businesses, e.g., to submit the maximum application of \$200,000 to be reimbursed for 50% (\$100,000), your project would cost \$200,000 pre-tax.

For Incorporated-Not-for-profit, Indigenous Bands and Municipalities to collect the maximum \$100,000, your project would cost \$100,000 pre-tax.

**12. Can I use these funds to promote local?**

Local Promotion, e.g., Shop Local, is an eligible expense. The applicant must be a tourism entity, not a retail outlet.

## **APPLICATION, EVALUATION, and REWARDING**

### **1. What are the criteria for a successful application?**

The selection committee will use a criteria-based model for decisions including: Eligibility, Financial Viability, Alignment with Federal and RTO 9 Priorities, Impact of project (benefits) including jobs, visitor numbers and visitor spending.

### **2. Do RTO's have the discretionary ability to adjust the funding amount downwards from the applicant's requested contribution amount?**

Yes the approved funding amount for each project is determined by the RTO.

### **3. Do I have to sign any agreement if I am an approved applicant?**

Yes. A signed partnering agreement, including specific program deliverables and reporting requirements is necessary for successful participants.

### **4. When do I receive funding?**

50% of funding will be disbursed to successful applications upon signature of ultimate recipient agreement, and the remainder will be made in two payments, the final payment being on receipt of the final report.

## **EVIDENCE & DOCUMENTATION**

### **1. What are the eligible dates for invoices on the approved project?**

Invoices dated between April 19, 2021 (when the RTF program launched last year with FedDev) and December 31, 2022 are eligible to be submitted. (It is understood your project may have been completed and it is eligible for funding if you have not received any previous government funding for the project.

### **2. What documentation will I need to provide to prove payment of project expenses.**

You will need to provide a listing of all the receipts and/or invoices with proof of payment.

Example of List

Purchase Date   Supplier   Item Purchased   Cost before tax   Proof of Payment

### **3. I am filling out the application and I only have estimates/quotes of the cost to complete the work, how do I submit the application.**

Please produce a listing of the estimated/quoted cost using the format below, as long as all

expenses occur between April 19, 2021, and December 31, 2022 they are considered eligible. Please remember that the project has to be completed by December 31, 2022.

Example of List

Purchase Date   Supplier   Item Purchased   Cost before tax   Proof of Payment

**4. I do not have the documentation/receipts/invoices required; do I need the documents?**

Yes. Please get copies of documents/receipts/invoices before submitting your Final Report, failure to provide proof of purchase and payment will prevent you from receiving funds.

**5. Can I use receipts/invoices that I've already used (or will use) to receive government funding?**

No. Those receipts/invoices are not eligible.

**6. Will I need incorporation papers and financial statements?**

Yes. Only 1 year of financial statements is required by RTO 9. Please submit these documents separately from your application to [khobbs@tourismregion9.ca](mailto:khobbs@tourismregion9.ca) so they may be filed with your application.

**7. Will I be subject to an audit?**

At the Minister's discretion, FedDev Ontario may conduct audits or review engagements as needed.

**Please read through the application carefully before submitting it.**

**Email Incorporation Documents and financial statements directly to:**  
[khobbs@tourismregion9.ca](mailto:khobbs@tourismregion9.ca)

**If you have questions or require clarification email Katherine Hobbs at**  
[khobbs@tourismregion9.ca](mailto:khobbs@tourismregion9.ca) or call at 613-325-8927