Experience Ontario 2023
Application Guide
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What You Need to Know Before You Apply

Before Filling Out the Application

1. Read the Experience Ontario 2023 Application Guide.
2. You may consult with your Regional Advisor if you wish to discuss your festival or event proposal before applying, or email ExperienceOntario@ontario.ca with questions.

Program Overview

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) supports destination and product development and investment in Ontario’s tourism industry.

The Experience Ontario 2023 program provides support for festivals and events with a tourism economic impact to motivate visitors to rediscover Ontario, reconnect people with local experiences, and increase tourism spending.

Experience Ontario is a competitive program. Applications will be measured against program criteria and, as such, there is no guarantee of funding.

Definitions

For the purposes of this program, the ministry defines:

A festival or event as a public celebration (in-person) that is promoted to tourists and takes place over a minimum of two consecutive days*, supports local businesses, performers, and artists, and has a broader tourism economic impact involving local sponsors, suppliers, and services.

*One-day festivals or events held on Canada Day are eligible for funding.

A Francophone festival or event as an event that delivers programming celebrating Francophone culture at the local, regional, or provincial level. The applicant organization must have a clear mandate to develop initiatives benefiting Francophones in Ontario

An Indigenous festival or event as an event that delivers programming celebrating Indigenous culture at the local, regional, or provincial level. The applicant organization must be a band council established under the Indian Act, or an incorporated Indigenous organization

A northern festival or event as an event located in the Northern Ontario districts of Algoma, Cochrane, Kenora, Manitoulin, Nipissing, Parry Sound, Rainy River, Sudbury, Thunder Bay or Timiskaming

A rural festival or event as an event in a community that meets either of the following criteria:
• has a population of fewer than 100,000 people
• has a population density of 100 people or fewer per square kilometre

Ontario’s urban municipalities as urban municipalities including Ajax, Barrie, Brampton, Burlington, Cambridge, Guelph, Hamilton, Kingston, Kitchener, London, Markham, Milton, Mississauga, Oakville, Oshawa, Ottawa, Richmond Hill, St. Catharines, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Vaughan, Waterloo, Whitby, and Windsor
A tourist as an individual (including an Ontario resident) who travels 40 kilometres or more (one-way) or crosses a border into Ontario to attend an event.

Partnerships as tourism organizations, hospitality or local businesses, and sponsors with whom the applicant is collaborating to develop tourism offers, incentives, packages, or marketing/promotional collaborations, that contribute to the community economic impacts or financial success of the event. Partners do not include paid supplier relationships.

Fiscal year as the period from April 1 of one calendar year to March 31 of the next calendar year.

Program Objectives
The Experience Ontario 2023 program aims to support festivals or events in Ontario that will:

1. Offer programming that encourages people to travel, experience events in-person and celebrate Ontario.
2. Draw tourists and increase visitor spending through innovative programming in partnership with businesses and community partners.
3. Provide job opportunities for Ontarians in the tourism, culture, and entertainment sectors.
4. Increase Ontario’s profile through media, social media, or broadcast exposure.

Program Priorities
Applicants must demonstrate the following in their application:

- Strong organizational capacity for producing successful festivals or events.
- A solid rationale for the festival or event and its capacity to provide a positive economic impact.
- How the festival or event supports job opportunities for Ontarians in the tourism, culture, and entertainment sectors.
- An evaluation plan to report on tourism economic impact and performance metrics, including tourist attendance, revenue, and spending.

Eligibility Requirements
Applications that do not meet the following eligibility requirements will be deemed ineligible and will not be considered. Incomplete applications are not eligible for funding.

Eligible Organizations
Eligible organizations must:

- Be Ontario-based entities in existence since January 1, 2022 or before, including those that are established by or under legislation; are federally or provincially incorporated; or are band councils as defined under the Indian Act.
- Not be in default of the terms and conditions of any grant or loan agreement with any ministry or agency of the Government of Ontario.
• Have a Canadian bank account in the legal name of the applicant at a Canadian financial institution conducting business in Ontario

Ineligible Organizations
• Sole proprietorships, limited partnerships, limited liability partnerships and general partnerships
• Federal or provincial governments and/or their agencies

Eligible Festivals or Events
Festivals or events must meet all the following eligibility requirements:
• Take place between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, over a minimum of two consecutive days*
• Occur in the province of Ontario
• Be open to the public at large without membership in a club or group
• Be promoted to tourists (see Definition)
• Follow all municipal and provincial guidelines, including health and safety guidelines.

*One-day festivals or events held on Canada Day are eligible for funding.

Ineligible Festivals or Events
Ineligible festivals or events include:
• One-day festivals or events (except for those held on Canada Day)
• Virtual/broadcast festivals or events
• Events that are receiving funding through the Ontario Sport Hosting Program, the Reconnect Ontario Marquee Event Fund or the Ontario Music Investment Fund (OMIF)
• Sporting events offering programming that is of primary benefit to event participants/athletes only (e.g., sport tournaments/competitions, marathons), with no ancillary programming for visitors, and is not marketed to, or does not attract tourists
• Events that seek to attract only a special interest audience, restrict audiences (e.g., students only), or recruit new members (e.g., religious, or political gatherings and workshops)
• Events of a primarily commercial nature, where the main intent of the event is to sell or promote one or multiple products, services, or sponsorships (e.g., trade fairs and shows, business events, consumer shows, artisan, and craft fairs)
• Fundraising events or events with a primarily charitable purpose
• Symposia, conventions, meetings, conferences, seminars, clinics, workshops, contests, and events that solely consist of an award show

A Maximum of One Application per Organization
The ministry will only consider one application per organization to the Experience Ontario 2023 program or the Marquee Event Fund 2023.
Funding Formula and Maximum Funding Amount

Applicants are eligible to apply for a grant of up to 50% of total eligible costs to a maximum of $125,000. See the Eligible Expense list, Evaluation Process and Assessment Criteria.

There is no appeal process for unsuccessful applicants. Unsuccessful applicants are encouraged to reach out to the Experience Ontario Team if they have any questions.

Eligible Expenses

Expenses must be incurred between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024.

Eligible expenses only include expenses incurred for the delivery of the festival or event and must not include costs related to ongoing costs of operation.

Eligible expenses must be linked to programming activities and other services accessible to the public (i.e., not for expenses benefiting VIPs or invitation-only guests)

Examples of eligible expenses include but are not limited to the following:

Programming and Production

- Performance and appearance fees paid to artists, performers and presenters, including travel, accommodation, hospitality (not including alcohol or cannabis-related products) and booking costs
- Programming costs, including interactive, experiential and/or accessible programming
- Ontario-based production costs, including audio and visual support (e.g., rental of sound and lighting equipment and rental of event venue)
- Wages for temporary/contract event staff directly related to programming and production for the festival or event
- For eligible sporting events, programming costs related to attracting and engaging spectators

Marketing

- Targeted paid media or advertising buys (e.g., broadcast, digital, social, print, out-of-home)
- Distribution/shipping costs for printed materials
- Mobile application and website development and upgrades if promoting or supporting the festival or event
- Wages for temporary/contract event staff directly related to marketing for the festival or event

Other

- Translation costs directly related to the programming or marketing of the festival or event
- Costs related to volunteer training for the event, site/visitor services, or event security
- Accessibility services and improvements to comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) directly associated with the event programming (e.g., ramps, accessible viewing areas)
- Non-capital costs related to strengthening health and safety measures at the event (e.g., technology for digital contactless payment and admission, PPE necessary for the event operation and for employees to safely carry out their duties, installation of temporary health and safety equipment such as plexiglass and barriers to ensure physical distancing)
• Economic impact studies
• Other costs deemed reasonable and directly attributable to the project that have been approved in writing by Ontario.

**Ineligible Expenses**

Ineligible expenses include those not directly related to the festival or event programming or marketing, including — but not limited — to the following:

- Expenses incurred outside of the eligibility period of April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024

**Programming and Production**

- Production costs incurred outside of Ontario
- Costs for festivals or events held outside Ontario
- Costs related to the creation of permanent creative assets (e.g., sculptures)
- Competition prizes, prize money, and monies paid to competition participants, as well as awards, trophies, and medals, or costs for gifts, gratuities, honoraria, or other items of personal benefit
- Costs related to participants in eligible sporting events (i.e., uniforms, travel, hospitality)

**Marketing**

- Creative, production, and associated staff costs
- Printing of publications
- Booking/packaging costs, corporate sponsorship events
- Merchandise (e.g., for inclusion in takeaways for attendees)

**Staffing and Administrative**

- Salaries and wages for permanent staff and full-time contract staff
- Administrative and overhead costs and any other operational or capital expenses related to an organization’s activities:
  - Rent, telephone and communication lines/services, insurance, computers, utilities, maintenance costs, credit/debit card fees, membership, printing, and subscription fees
  - Travel costs, meal and incidental expenses for all staff (permanent, contract, and event) and volunteers
  - Capital costs (construction materials, motorized vehicles, land acquisition, purchase of equipment, stages, fixed or portable seating, computers/notebooks, depreciable assets)
  - Charitable donations
  - Labour costs not directly related to the event.
  - Legal, audit or interest fees
  - Fees relating to grant writers procured for preparing government funding applications
  - Fees related to audit or engagement review financial statements
  - Budget deficits, capital repayments or any repayments to other funding programs
- Hospitality costs, excluding those for Canadian or International artists, performers, and presenters.
- Volunteer costs (e.g., t-shirts), other than those specifically for volunteer training for the event.
Other

- Cost of alcohol or cannabis-related products.
- Harmonized Sales Tax or refundable expenses (e.g., security deposits).
- Any expenses not directly paid by the recipient organization or that will be covered by in-kind revenues, in-kind services, or funded by another source.
- Any costs related to transactions by organizations directly affiliated with the applicant or between enterprises under common ownership or control.

Application Deadline and Decisions

Applications will be accepted until April 28, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. EDT.

Applications must be submitted through the Transfer Payment Ontario System. It is your responsibility to ensure that your application has been successfully submitted. If you do not receive a confirmation notice by email within 24 hours of submitting your application, please contact Transfer Payment Ontario Client Care.

Applications and materials submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Funding Status Notification

Applicants will be notified of funding decisions in summer 2023.

There is no appeal process for unsuccessful applicants to the program.

How to Apply

The Transfer Payment Ontario (TPON) system is your one-window access to apply for funding, check the status of your application and submit reports. The Government of Ontario is changing the way public users access secure government services, including TPON.

- The first step is to create a ONe-key account and GO Secure ID, if you do not already have one.
- Effective April 17, 2023, users who currently have a ONe-key or GO Secure ID will be required to create a My Ontario Account for secure access to TPON.
- Creating a new account may take up to several days, so please begin early.
- Further information, including instructional guides and videos, are available on the “Get help” section on Get Funding from the Ontario government.

NOTE: TPON requires Adobe Acrobat Reader to fill out the PDF application form.
How does this impact users?

- New users to TPON will create a My Ontario Account profile, or can use a previously created My Ontario Account.
- Existing TPON users will have the opportunity to migrate their profile to My Ontario Account by creating an account with their TPON associated email.

Transfer Payment Ontario Client Care

Technical questions related to TPON must be directed to Transfer Payment Ontario Client Care.

Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (EDT, excluding statutory and government holidays)

- Telephone: 416-325-6691 or 1-855-216-3090
- TTY/Teletypewriter (for the hearing impaired): 416-325-3408 / Toll Free: 1-800-268-7095
- Email: TPONCC@ontario.ca

Submission Checklist: Mandatory Documents

For an application to be considered complete and eligible for assessment, all mandatory documents listed below must be attached to your file in the Transfer Payment Ontario (TPON) system.

1. **Application Form** - completed, electronically signed, dated, and uploaded.

2. **Incorporation documents** - for your organization. Must match your organization’s legal name as registered in Transfer Payment Ontario (not required from municipalities).

3. **Financial statements** (not required from municipalities)
   - **Applicant organization’s most recent, audited financial statements or review engagement report.** The statements must include: income statement, balance sheet, and the notes. Audited financial statements must include the auditor’s opinion on the statements; for review engagement reports, a professional assurance that the financial statements are free of material misstatements. The statements should be final and signed by the Board of Directors.

   If audited financial statements or review engagement reports are not available, please submit:

   - **Application organization’s most recent financial statements (balance sheet and income statement),** which must include a dated and signed, board-endorsed or treasurer-certified, statement that verifies the accuracy and approval of all the information contained therein.

If approved for funding, applicants will enter into a transfer payment agreement (TPA) with the province and must agree to binding terms and conditions in connection with the grant, including an obligation to repay up to the full amount received if any terms are not complied with.

Applicants that receive funding will be required to carry at least $2 million commercial general liability insurance coverage, with “His Majesty the King in right of Ontario, His ministers, agents, appointees, and employees” as the additional insureds.
Evaluation Process and Assessment Criteria

Every application will be evaluated according to how well it demonstrates alignment with program objectives and priorities, and will be scored in accordance with the following assessment criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Criteria</th>
<th>Application Form Section</th>
<th>Scoring Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational capacity</td>
<td>E + Financial Statements</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event description, alignment with program objectives, risk management and contingency plans</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing plan</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact: performance measures + tracking of results</td>
<td>J, K</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event budget</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An additional five (5) bonus points will be allocated in the evaluation for priority events, including rural, Northern, Francophone, Indigenous, or 2SLGBTQIA+ (see the Definitions section).

To be considered for funding, applicants must obtain a minimum score of 50%.

Experience Ontario 2023 is a discretionary and non-entitlement program. As such, notwithstanding that an applicant has submitted a complete application and met all program criteria, there is no guarantee that the applicant will be approved for funding.

The ministry reserves the right to fund or not fund a project submitted to the program. The decision to fund all or part of an applicant request will depend on its fit to the program objectives and priorities, assessment criteria and the availability of funds in the program.

Successful applicants may receive up 50% of eligible costs to a maximum of $125,000 based on how closely the application meets program evaluation criteria.

There is no appeal process for unsuccessful applicants to the program.

Recipient Obligations

Acknowledgement

Applicants are expected to comply with the Ontario Human Rights Code (the “Code”) and all other applicable laws. Failure to comply with the letter and spirit of the Code will render the applicant ineligible for a grant and, in the event a grant is made, liable to repay the grant in its entirety at the request of the ministry.
Applicants should be aware that Government of Ontario institutions are bound by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c.F.31, as amended from time to time, and that any information provided to them in connection with your Experience Ontario 2023 application may be subject to disclosure in accordance with that Act. Applicants are advised that the names and addresses of organizations receiving grants, the amount of the grant awards and the purpose for which grants are awarded is information made available to the public.

**Successful Applications**

If an application is successful, the recipient organization will be required to:

- Sign a transfer payment agreement (TPA) with the ministry, outlining the terms and conditions for receiving funding.
- Carry at least $2 million commercial general liability insurance coverage for the recipient organization for the duration of the TPA and add “His Majesty the King in right of Ontario, His ministers, agents, appointees and employees” as the additional insured on this coverage before the TPA can be executed (refer to the Certificate of Insurance).
- Report back to the ministry within 90 days following the event on the use of funds, deliverables and outcomes achieved using the final report form.
- Permit the province 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(s) intended.
- Agree that if the funds were not used or will not be used for the intended purpose(s), or if specified services were not delivered, or if the intended outcomes were not achieved, the province has the right at a future date to recover parts or all of the funds transferred.
- Obtain prior written consent from the ministry for any change to the event once funding is approved.
- Acknowledge Ontario's support in electronic, print, or social media as part of a visibility campaign, and in a form and manner directed by the province.
- Comply with all federal, provincial, and municipal laws and regulations (e.g., health and safety, environmental approvals, zoning by-laws, human rights, animal welfare, accessibility).

**Reporting Requirements and Accounting**

In addition to completing the final report form, recipients will be expected to provide the following materials as part of the mandatory post-event reporting process:

1. A confirmation of actual event expenses. A template will be provided.
2. A summary of all invoices for eligible costs associated with your event. The summary should include the invoice date and expense amount (not including tax), the payee and a specific description of each expense.
3. Any other reports and publications produced as part of your event, including media summaries, visitor surveys and event results presentation that support the actual performance metrics reported in your final report.
4. Financial Statements as follows:

   a. *For grants of less than $100,000:*
      
      o A board-endorsed or treasurer-certified financial statement confirming the revenues and expenses for the Experience Ontario funded project. The document must clearly outline, in a Note or Schedule, the amount of the Experience Ontario program grant and the expenses funded.
      
      o A representation letter from the recipient’s Chief Financial Officer or most senior official confirming that the funding was used only for eligible expenses.

   b. *For grants of $100,000 or more:*
      
      o Audited statements of revenues and expenditures for the funded expenses prepared by a third-party Licensed Public Chartered Professional Accountant. The statement must clearly outline, in a Note or Schedule, the amount of the Experience Ontario grant and the expenses funded and include the auditor’s opinion of assurance.
      
      o A review engagement report providing the same information as above may also be accepted.

5. Any other details that may be requested by the province.

Failure to provide a complete final report may result in the retention of the final grant payment, and recovery of all or a portion of funding may be requested. Failure to meet any reporting requirements may impact an organization’s ability to receive future funding.
Appendix 1

Certificate of Insurance Instructions (not required at time of application)

- All grant recipient organizations are required to carry at least $2 million commercial general liability (CGL), per occurrence insurance coverage before the legal grant agreement can be executed.
- The insurance must be in the legal name of the recipient organization.
- The required insurance coverage limit can be made up of a primary CGL policy with a limit of $1 million and an umbrella liability policy (commercial) with a limit of $1 million for a combined limit of $2 million.
- It is mandatory that “His Majesty the King in right of Ontario, His ministers, agents, appointees and employees” be added as an additional insured.
- The insurer must have a secure A.M. Best rating of B+ or greater, or the equivalent.

A certificate of insurance must:

1. State that the Named Insured is the legal recipient organization with whom the ministry has contracted.
2. Identify the dates of coverage. Recipients must carry the required insurance for the duration of the TPA and will be required to provide a renewed certificate if it expires before the TPA’s expiration date.
3. Identify the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport as an additional insured, represented in the following language, “His Majesty the King in right of Ontario, His ministers, agents, appointees and employees.” This phrase should appear on the certificate face under a memo heading or special note box.
4. The Certificate of Insurance must evidence (show on the certificate) CGL insurance on an occurrence basis with a limit of no less than $2 million dollars and shall include:
   i. “His Majesty the King in right of Ontario, His ministers, agents, appointees and employees” be added as an additional insured; and
   ii. A cross-liability clause; and
   iii. Contractual liability coverage.
5. List the ministry as the Certificate Holder and include the ministry’s mailing address in this section of the policy:
   Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport
   Investment and Development Office
   400 University Avenue, 5th Floor
   Toronto, ON M7A 2R9
6. Include a statement that the certificate holder (the ministry) will be notified of any cancellation or material change within 30 days.
7. Include the signature of an authorized insurance representative.
Appendix 2

Tax Compliance Verification Instructions (not required at time of application)

Some organizations are required to confirm their good standing with tax laws to receive transfer payment funding from the province. Confirmation of good standing must be shown through the completion of an attestation and separate tax compliance verification (TCV), which will both be considered before funds are provided.

An attestation and TCV must be submitted if the following apply:

- If your organization received cumulative transfer payment funding of $10 million or above from the province in the previous fiscal year or is entering into a transfer payment agreement with a contract value of $10 million or above; and
- Prior to entering into a net-new agreement, an existing agreement that is being renewed or an existing agreement that is being amended to include new time-limited discretionary funding.

Please note that your organization is only required to submit this to the province once prior to entering into a new transfer payment agreement, renewing an agreement or amending an agreement to receive new discretionary funding; and the attestation is valid one year from the date of submission.

That means, if you had submitted an attestation a year ago, you will only need to re-submit (after the previous attestation has expired) if you intend to enter into another transfer payment agreement with the province (new, renewed, or amended).

Organizations may choose to complete and submit this form voluntarily.

Completing the TCV

For steps and information on how to verify your tax compliance status, please go to the Check your tax compliance status webpage; additional information can be found by visiting the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – Tax Compliance Verification Program (TCV) webpage.

Completing the Attestation on Transfer Payment Ontario (TPON)

1. For New Users
   - New users will need to create a ONe-key account or My Ontario account and log in to TPON.
   - The attestation is part of the registration process. Completion of the attestation can be done at any time and requires the organization to input information from a completed TCV check. Once the completed attestation is submitted, it will be reflected within your organizational profile.

2. For Existing Users
   - Log into TPON with your ONe-key or My Ontario account
   - Update your organization's information and move to the attestation section
   - Complete the attestation. Completion of the attestation can be done at any time and requires the organization to input information from a completed TCV check. Please check with your funder if the attestation is required.
Appendix 3

Good Standing with All Applicable Ontario Environmental and Labour Laws

Organizations are required to confirm their good standing with all applicable Ontario environmental and labour laws to receive transfer payment funding from the province.

Confirmation of good standing must be shown through the completion of an attestation before funds are provided.

Applicants must undertake that (i) if selected for the contract award, will be in good standing with all applicable Ontario Environmental and Labour Laws at the time of entering into an Agreement and (ii) that they will take all necessary steps prior to entering into an Agreement in order to be in full compliance with those Environmental and Labour Laws at the time of entering into the Agreement.

For the purposes of this Attestation, “Environmental Laws” means all statutes and associated regulations administered by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, and “good standing” with environment laws means that the organization has not been convicted by a court within the last year, and has no ongoing appeals.

For the purposes of this Attestation, “Labour Laws” means all statutes and associated regulations administered by the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, and “good standing” in respect of labour laws means that the entity has not been convicted of an offence under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and the Employment Standards Act, S.O. 2000, c. 41 in a proceeding commenced under Part III of the Provincial Offences Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P. 33, during the preceding year.

Failure to make that Attestation may result in the Applicant’s disqualification.

To complete this Attestation on Transfer Payment Ontario (TPON), follow the instructions outlined in Appendix 2 above.