Indigenous Economic Development Fund

Regional Partnership Grant

Application Guide

2027-28

Ontario

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU APPLY

Before completing the 2027-28 Indigenous Economic Development Fund's Regional Partnership Grant Program (RPG) application in Transfer Payment Ontario, please read the entire application guide.

Purpose of the Guide

This guide provides information on the RPG for applicants and funding recipients. The guide describes the application and transfer payment requirements for the RPG and provides specific information on eligibility criteria and eligible activities. All applications will be assessed, evaluated and approved using requirements outlined in this application guide.

This application guide is valid for projects approved through the 2027-28 intake. Updates to this guide may be released during this period and will be made available on https://www.ontario.ca/page/funding-indigenous-economic-development. Any updates will be communicated in writing within three (3) business days to funding recipients.

Overview

The RPG improves access for Indigenous people to the skills training required to gain sustainable employment and further support Indigenous business development and economic growth in Ontario. Projects are approved through a competitive process.

Applicant Eligibility

You may apply to the RPG if:

1. You are a:
    - First Nations community in Ontario;
    - Métis community in Ontario;
    - Political Territorial Organization (PTO) in Ontario;
    - Tribal Council in Ontario;
    - Indigenous business in Ontario; or
    - Indigenous organization recognized by the Province of Ontario;

AND

2. You are applying in partnership with one or more of the following partner organizations:
    - First Nations community in Ontario;

- Métis community in Ontario;
- Political Territorial Organization (PTO) in Ontario;
- Tribal Council in Ontario;
- Indigenous business in Ontario;
- Indigenous organization recognized by the Province of Ontario; or
- Non-Indigenous business and/or organization.

Note: a partner organization is referred to as a "Delivery Partner" for the purposes of this guide.

In addition to the above, to be eligible to receive RPG funding, the Applicant must meet all the following criteria:

1. Be a legal entity (e.g., established by or under legislation; federally or provincially incorporated; First Nation in the province of Ontario).
2. Hold governance structures and accountability processes to properly administer and manage public funds and to provide the services for which transfer payments are made. The following should be considered as part of the eligibility criteria:
    a. Expertise and experience necessary to conduct/carry out its responsibilities in compliance with Ministry requirements; Appropriate governance and control structure in place (e.g., Board of Directors, Chief and Council, Membership Processes, Annual Report, etc.);
    b. Reliable and up-to-date financial reporting;
    c. Establishment of a Canadian bank account; and
    d. Use funds for activities taking place in Ontario and benefiting Indigenous peoples.

3. Not be in default of the terms and conditions of any grant or loan agreement (i.e., reports due or surplus owed) with any ministry or agency of the Government of Ontario.
4. If the primary Applicant is a business, the business must be at least 50.1% Indigenous owned.
5. Relevant funding history disclosure: applicants/entities may be required to provide information on their funding history, including funding received from federal, provincial/territorial, municipal, and other public-sector sources, upon request. The following information regarding past funding will be required:
    a. level of government (federal, provincial)
    b. specific ministry and department/division
    c. grant reference number
    d. dates funding was received

Approved funding is contingent upon meeting the eligibility criteria. However, meeting eligibility criteria does not guarantee funding. Approved funding and entering into a Transfer Payment Agreement is at the discretion of the Government of Ontario.

PROGRAM DETAILS

The RPG is one of three grants under the IEDF umbrella. For more information on other IEDF grants please reach out to RPG@ontario.ca.

Objectives

The RPG improves access for Indigenous people to the skills training required to gain sustainable employment and support Indigenous business development and economic growth in Ontario.

Funding Amounts

Funding will support up to 50% of eligible project costs, with a maximum contribution of $250,000 per fiscal year. Applications may be submitted for a single-year funding term or a two-year funding term. Successful applicants will only be approved for one grant per fiscal year. All Delivery Partners represented in an application are also limited to receiving funding for one project per fiscal year through the RPG.

Funding Terms

RPG can support projects over a one-year funding term or a two-year funding term, where funding terms align with the Government of Ontario's fiscal calendar.

Eligible Activities

To be eligible for funding, a project must:

- Be regional or provincial in scope;
- Improve access to and provide training for Indigenous people in Ontario;
- Involve the Applicant and one or more eligible Delivery Partner; and
- Have potential to result in jobs, training and/or business opportunities for Indigenous people in Ontario.
- Projects should be linked to an existing economic development plan within the geographic area of the proposed project.

Eligible Expenses

Costs that can be funded under the RPG include:

- Staff salary and mandatory employer related costs (MERCs) such as CPP, EI, WSIB directly related to the project.
- Staff training that is project-specific.
- Skills development/ training for community members
- The purchase (to a maximum of $5,000.00) of eligible office computer and equipment, software updates, and equipment repairs, to support positions funded by the RPG.
    - May include lease of equipment necessary for delivering a skills training project. The terms of the lease must only be for the duration of the project.
- Rent for premises used to deliver the project. If the project occupies only a portion of the building for which rent is paid, the rental charge in the budget must be fairly apportioned.
- Professional fees for consultants and/or technicians providing technical expertise relating to the project. Please note that it is expected that a community/organization will be building their internal technical capacity. For this reason, large consultant fees within budgets are strongly discouraged. Applicants must provide strong justification for use of any consultant.
- Travel and accommodation expenses for activities directly related to the work plan.
- Community outreach activities such as community meetings, presentations and workshops related to the work plan.
- Honoraria payments to Elders for their attendance at a meeting/event or to individuals for their Indigenous ceremonial participation at a meeting/event. This includes payments made to Elders for their specialized knowledge (e.g., on cultural sites, traditional knowledge).
- Publicity requirements of the RPG, including for websites, promotional material and signage.
- Administration costs directly related to the work plan. Eligible costs include: utilities; telephone/fax charges; network charges; postage/courier charges; photocopying charges; financial institution service fees; office supplies and the preparation of audited financial schedules. A maximum of 10% of the total budget (pre-administration) may be allotted to administration.

  Note: Ontario reserves the right to determine the eligibility or non-eligibility of any proposed project delivery costs.

Ineligible Expenses

Costs that cannot be funded include:

- Annual general meetings, budget deficits, membership fees, fundraising activities, committee and political meetings.
- Costs covered by other government funding or private funding.
- Costs not incurred in Ontario, including activities and travel that take place outside of Ontario.
- Costs outside the scope of the RPG or are not related to economic development.
- Honoraria to individuals already salaried with the Applicant and/or Delivery Partner.
- Stipends for project participants.
- Contingency or unexplained miscellaneous costs.
- Infrastructure or large capital expenses including the renovation, construction or transformation of permanent spaces, parks or grounds; furniture, fixtures or other non-portable equipment other than the purchase of eligible office equipment for staff funded by the RPG.
- Acquisition or leasing of motorized vehicles and other forms of transportation.
- Hospitality-related costs.
- Costs associated with the development of an RPG proposal and/or application.
- Debt reduction costs.
- Litigation or other legal costs.
- Costs related to the Government of Ontario's consultation or engagement initiatives.
- Costs related to other provinces' consultation or engagement initiatives.
- Research undertaken for the purposes of pursuing land claims or litigation.
- Activities that could be deemed discriminatory, as defined by the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- Portion of harmonized sales tax (HST) costs that are refundable.
- Insurance fees necessary for the project, including Commercial General Liability Insurance.

Applicants are discouraged from incurring any costs for activities anticipated to be funded by the RPG until an application has been approved. Any expenses incurred prior to the agreed effective date or after the agreed end date in the Transfer Payment Agreement will be ineligible.

In-Kind Contributions

Eligible in-kind contributions (for the purpose of being calculated towards match funding) include the following:

- Donations of travel services (e.g., vehicles, airfare).
- Time donated by various relevant contributing organizations in the development and/or delivery of the project or for consulting and professional services required for

the project. This must be valued at the individual's actual salary for the time spent on the project, and not any other value.
- Donation of Applicant's premises to deliver the project on a pro-rated basis.
- Donation of space at a location other than the Applicant's premises necessary for the Applicant or another participant to conduct the project.
- Discounts greater than or above regularly discounted prices.

The following will not be considered as in-kind contributions:

- Donations in the form of knowledge, goodwill and other such intangibles.
- Guest speakers that would normally not be paid for services.
- Costs for roles that would traditionally be filled by volunteers.
- All remunerations and fees paid to the Board of Directors.
- Opportunity costs.
- Standard discounts.
- Interest charges.
- Any items or services not directly related to the project.

Ontario reserves the right to determine the eligibility or non-eligibility of any proposed in-kind contributions.

Match Funding

Applicants should identify any match funding leveraged (planned or actual) from other provincial, national or local public funders and/or private funders that would complement RPG funding. Any match funding identified in the application should be confirmed with supporting documents in the form of official correspondence between the funder and the Applicant or Delivery Partner, such as a letter of approval or commitment.

Applicants must match RPG project funding via financial and/or in-kind contributions from other provincial, federal and local funders and/or private funders. The amount of match funding should equal 50% of total project costs. In exceptional circumstances, the Ministry may consider proposals that include less than 50% match funding.

APPLICATION DETAILS

The following section provides additional information on what to include in an RPG application. Proposed projects must be consistent with the requirements outlined in Program Details of this guide. Information on how a proposed project meets RPG requirements must be included in the proposal details and project plan.

Project Information

Proposed deliverables in the application must be consistent with and contribute to the objectives of the RPG. Specifically, the application must show how funding and the proposed project will advance the following objectives:

- Increased training opportunities for Indigenous people;
- Increased employment opportunities for Indigenous people;
- Increased business opportunities for Indigenous people;
- Increased participation of Indigenous people in high-potential sectors (e.g., resource development, social enterprise, cultural industries and tourism).

Project must focus on regional or province-wide projects related to training. Project proposals that are aimed at addressing community-level capacity or other business development needs may be accepted if a sound market need or gap analysis and evidence is provided. If the application is to expand on an existing project, the proposal must clearly show the market need for expansion.

The application must provide information on the proposed geographic area and industry sectors that may be supported. Information should also be provided on anticipated jobs, training positions and/or businesses that could be created and/or sustained with support. The proposal should outline any links to other government supports where the RPG would add value or increase the impact. Proposals must include information on Delivery Partners and information on how projects will continue once RPG support concludes. Preference will be given to projects that demonstrate sustainability, where appropriate.

The proposal should also include information on any linkages to existing economic development plans or strategies, as well as existing or planned economic development projects or opportunities within the geographic area of the proposed project.

Proposals involving skills and training projects should also indicate support from industry employers to ensure that training leads to existing or anticipated employment opportunities.

The proposal must detail how the project will align with provincial and/or federal regulations. Projects must ensure that any training is recognized by employers and the Province, and complies with any applicable legislation.

Project Workplan

Proposals must include a project workplan showing that the Applicant has the capacity and infrastructure required to implement the proposed project.

Project workplans must include:

- Roles and responsibilities of Delivery Partners;
- Information on the selection process used to identify training participants;
- Viable and innovative approaches for supporting training participants' access to offered training programs;
- Methods to capture and report on the performance of training participants, including milestones and targeted performance measures;
- Process used to identify and engage beneficiaries of the training programs. Beneficiaries include an Indigenous business and/or organization in Ontario;
- Financial viability and the appropriate fiscal management systems to ensure accountability of public funds, including appropriate board experience and management structure;
- Proven ability to deliver success (e.g., the identification of any organizational experience that would be applicable to the project); and
- Appropriate conflict of interest guidelines.

All activities must be completed by March 31, 2028 for one-year funding term proposals and by March 31, 2029, for two-year funding term proposals.

SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

Required Documents Checklist

All RPG applications must include the "Required Documents" set out below. It is recommended that you gather these documents **in an electronic format** before beginning the Transfer Payment Ontario application process.

Information/Document Requirements for a Complete Submission
For all Applicants:
Completed Application Form in Transfer Payment Ontario.
Letters of commitment or support from the Delivery Partner(s).
Letter of commitment or approval letters for match funding demonstrating that all remaining project costs will be covered by other funders.
If the Applicant is a First Nation, a Band Council Resolution in support of the application.
If the Applicant is a Métis community, a resolution or motion in support of the application.

Information/Document Requirements for a Complete Submission
If the Applicant is an Indigenous business or organization, a board motion in support of the application.
For new Applicants only (i.e., Applicants without Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation funding agreements within the past three years)
Complete and unabridged audited financial statements from the previous fiscal year.
Contact list(s) of the Executive Committee, Chief and Council or Board of Directors (as applicable) with portfolio information.
If the Applicant and/or Delivery Partner is a corporation that has been incorporated for less than two years, a copy of the organization's by-laws, constitution and mandate; information on the governance structure; and information on the membership requirements.
If the Applicant and/or Delivery Partner is a corporation, a copy of letters patent/certificate of incorporation.

APPLICATION EVALUATION

After the application form has been submitted and all required documents have been uploaded through Transfer Payment Ontario, the Ministry will initiate the evaluation phase. The evaluation process for RPG funding has two stages.

Stage 1: Preliminary Assessment

A preliminary assessment will be undertaken by the Ministry to ensure each application is complete. This assessment will determine compliance and suitability with the program. The Ministry will confirm Applicant and Delivery Partner eligibility and undertake a risk assessment and financial review of Applicants and Delivery Partners to confirm that they have the capacity to undertake and complete the proposed project.

The Ministry may request additional information if an application is deemed incomplete. Applicants must provide the requested documentation within the time provided or the application will be deemed ineligible.

Stage 2: Full Assessment

During the second stage of the evaluation process, all eligible applications will be reviewed and scored by an inter-ministry review panel. The review committee will consider:

- The project, including the project management approach and governance structure;
- Overall need and demand for the project;
- The anticipated results of the project within the proposed timeframe;
- Applicant's history of managing projects funded by the Government of Ontario;
- The extent to which the project contributes to increased economic activity for Indigenous communities;
- The extent to which project training participants would gain access to employment opportunities;
- The extent to which project training participants that would obtain or be eligible to obtain recognized provincial certification; and,
- The extent to which the project budget demonstrates value for money, budget accuracy and eligible project costs.

Notification and Confirmation

Each Applicant will be informed of the funding status of their application and, if approved for funding, will be provided with copies of the Transfer Payment Agreement to sign. Applicants will be advised of any changes required to the project prior to finalizing the Transfer Payment Agreement. Ineligible or unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing. The Applicant may request a debrief on why their proposal was not approved.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Transfer Payment Agreement

In order to receive funding, successful applicants will be required to:

- Sign a Transfer Payment Agreement with the Province of Ontario outlining the terms and conditions for receiving funds;

- Have or seek at least $2 million commercial general liability insurance coverage, and to add "His Majesty the King in Right of Ontario" as an additional insured on this coverage before the Transfer Payment Agreement can be executed; and

- Identify the project management structure/staffing model which has been agreed to and implemented.

OVERSIGHT AND REPORTING

Funding recipients will be required to report back to the Ministry on the use of funds, deliverables and outcomes achieved. Funding recipients must submit a Final Report to provide this information. Funding recipients must also 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.

Reporting

A final report is required at the end of the project. The final report includes financial information on the use of funds as well as information on outputs and results of the project, as outlined in the Funding Agreement.

Any unspent funds must be returned to the Ministry at the end of the project. The final report must also include data on performance measures for the project.

The Ministry will analyze reports for accuracy and eligibility of expenditures. During the review of any reports or visits, the Ministry will verify that expenditures and outputs are eligible and compliant with the RPG. Funding recipients may be asked to provide copies of invoices or other documentation for any expenditure item.

Record Keeping

Compliance may be checked at any point during the life of the project by the Ministry. Checks may also be undertaken after project completion. Checks may include the review of financial information and other documentation related to the project. The Ministry may request documentation as part of its reporting and monitoring processes. Funding recipients must maintain records to support expenditures and demonstrate compliance with the RPG.

Examples of documentation that should be maintained include:

- Documents related to work carried out during project development, the application process, and during and after the project.
- Any invoices and bank statements to show payments were made for work done.
- Records of eligible beneficiaries and the steps taken to determine their eligibility, including proof that a beneficiary is eligible.
- Evidence of match funding, such as copies of funding acceptance letters and bank statements showing receipt of match funding.

- Copies of all promotional and publicity materials, including press releases and marketing to demonstrate the correct use of the RPG identifier logo and any required text.
- The Transfer Payment Agreement including any amendments.
- Correspondence between the Ministry and the funding recipient.
- Claim forms for RPG-related expenditures and financial reports.
- Documentation showing how RPG-related expenditures were calculated, including any flat rate and pro rata methodologies for indirect overhead costs and salaries allocated to the project.
- Documentation related to any procurement undertaken for the RPG project, such as proof of invitation to suppliers to bid or advertising of procurement opportunities, procurement submissions received from suppliers and the scoring methodology used for selecting a supplier.
- Documentation and evidence related to any claims or statements made regarding outcomes of an RPG-funded project, such as evidence of the number of jobs created because of support from the RPG.

Corrective Action

When a project is found to be non-compliant with RPG requirements, the Ministry may act in accordance with the Transfer Payment Agreement. This may include requiring funding recipients to take corrective action to resolve any breach in funding conditions, poor management, or inadequate control of the project.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND OUTCOMES

Funding recipients are required to track and report on RPG performance measures as part of the reporting process.

Performance measures will help ensure the RPG is meeting its objectives, will inform program changes to improve the delivery and administration of the program and will track the progress of the program in achieving results.

PROCUREMENT

If purchasing goods or services, funding recipients are encouraged to select suppliers through an open and transparent tendering process. Value for money must be sought when purchasing any good or service.

Funding recipients are encouraged to promote the participation of Indigenous suppliers in their projects. Funding recipients may accomplish this using evaluation criteria or competitive processes involving eligible Indigenous suppliers (i.e., a “set aside”). A “set aside” competition is a procurement process for only Indigenous suppliers and should only be undertaken when enough capacity exists among suppliers to successfully deliver procurement requirements, as determined by the funding recipient.

DISCLAIMER

Please Note:
Any payment by the Ministry under the RPG is subject to there being an appropriation from the Ontario legislature for the fiscal year in which the payment is to be made and there being funds available.

Consideration of an application by the Ministry does not guarantee funding. Funding is dependent on the availability of funds, the Ministry’s review of the application, and on the recipient’s entering into a Transfer Payment Agreement.

Approved funding is contingent upon meeting the eligibility criteria. However, meeting eligibility criteria does not guarantee funding. Approved funding and entering into a Transfer Payment Agreement is at the discretion of the Government of Ontario.

Funds received in a given funding year may only be spent on eligible activities carried out during that funding year and specified in the budget and work plan attached to the Transfer Payment Agreement.

All projects must comply with relevant Canadian and Ontario laws, regulations, standards and policies.

All applications submitted to the Ministry are subject to the access to information provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (the “Act”). The Act provides all persons with a legal right of access to information in the custody and/or control of the Ministry, subject to a limited set of exemptions. One such exemption is information that reveals a trade secret or scientific, technical, commercial, financial or labour relations information supplied in confidence, where disclosure could reasonably be expected to result in certain harms. If an applicant believes that any of the information it submits in connection with its application is confidential and wishes to protect the confidentiality of such information, the applicant should clearly mark the information “confidential.” If the Ministry receives a request for access to the

information marked “confidential”, the Ministry will contact the applicant so that it may, if it wishes, make representations concerning the release of the requested information. Marking the information “confidential” does not mean that the information will not be released if and as required under the Act.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Email enquiries about program guidelines may be directed to:

The Program and Services Branch Office, Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation
Email: RPG@ontario.ca

Appendix A: Transfer Payment Ontario Information

About Transfer Payment Ontario

Transfer Payment Ontario is the Province of Ontario's online application system for grant funding. It is important that you understand the steps for registering with Transfer Payment Ontario prior to submitting your application.

Since applicants must register with Transfer Payment Ontario to access application forms, most of the information requested in the first few sections of the application form (such as address, contact information, etc.) should be automatically filled in using data from the registration process.

Once an application has been started it may be saved or downloaded at any point and returned to later. Please refer to the Transfer Payment Ontario System Reference Guide for Applicants for instructions on how to save and submit the application.

All applications will be assessed, evaluated and approved using requirements outlined in this Application Guide.

Creating an Account

Please visit Transfer Payment Ontario at https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-funding-ontario-government for information on how to set up an account.

Tips on Submitting Your Application

Please take a look at this short video to assist with successfully uploading your application: How to submit for funding.

Quick Reference Guides and steps on submitting for funding are posted here: https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-funding-ontario-government

Technical Concerns

Technical issues with accessing TPON or submitting your application should be directed to Transfer Payment Ontario.

Please contact TPON Client Care, available Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time:

- Phone: (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