

TOURISM SPRINT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

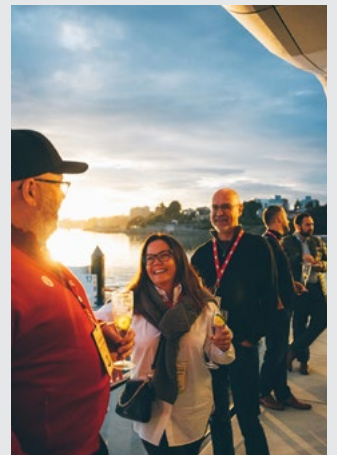
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BACKGROUND

Canada's tourism sector is a major economic driver, generating over \$130 billion in revenue in 2024 and supporting over 5,000 communities across the country. However, the sector is facing a significant challenge: a lack of investment in tourism infrastructure, assets, and experiences. In order for Canada to develop world-class tourism assets and destinations and become a more competitive global destination, investment conditions need to be addressed.

In 2024, Destination Canada piloted Sprint Projects including the Sustainable Journeys: Prairies to Pacific Sprint, which builds on the momentum of the 2023 Corridor Strategy, advancing its implementation through targeted action. This initiative assessed the strategy's recommendations and identified four high-impact development projects that offered strong potential for both community benefit and return on investment. In close collaboration with Corridor partners, each project was vetted and endorsed by local communities, ensuring alignment with regional priorities. The selected projects are packaged into compelling investment proposals, ready to attract funding and support long-term corridor development.





Overview

The Tourism Sprint Program (TSP) is an application-based, cost-sharing program designed to provide non-capital investments to short term projects that encourage the development of innovative new tourism products and, support tourism investment to foster new tourism products. The program aims to quickly address barriers to investment through targeted funding over a limited project timeline to unlock broader tourism opportunities.

Funding

Funding for the program is limited and will be highly competitive

- › This cost-sharing program will cover up to 50% of total eligible expenses (as listed in the approved project budget), to a maximum of \$25,000
- › The lead applicant must contribute at least 10% of the total project cost in cash
- › The remaining contribution (beyond the program funding and the lead applicant's cash contribution) can be provided by project partners or as in-kind support
- › Funding will be dispersed in two intervals:
 - 1) 90% upon execution of the partnering agreement
 - 2) 10% upon acceptance of the Final Report

Priorities

- › Development of innovative new purchasable tourism products and experiences within Canada
- › Increases private sector tourism investment
- › Diversifies the seasonality of product offering for the operation/region
 - › Priority will be given to projects that contribute to product and experience development outside of the traditional high season, grow off-season tourism or extend services year-round.
- › Contributes to measurable job creation and economic growth
- › Supports the Indigenous tourism sector
- › Supports regenerative practices within the tourism operations
 - › Priority will be given to projects that encourage travel to lower-traffic regions and destinations

Objective

The Tourism Sprint Program supports destination development by investing in initiatives that will incentivize investment in demand generating tourism assets, products and experiences and align with existing strategic plans or similar documents. Through these investments, Canada's visitor economy will be more resilient, diversified, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable, creating quality jobs, attracting new investments, empowering Indigenous communities, and offering year-round innovative experiences across the country.

Eligible Organizations

- › Local Governments, Regional Districts, Municipalities, Provincial and Territorial Governments
- › Indigenous Communities and Organizations
- › Not-for-Profit Organizations (with a clearly defined tourism mandate)
- › For-Profit Tourism Businesses and Organizations

In addition, you must meet all the following requirements to be eligible for the Tourism Sprint Program:

- › Have consulted with Destination Canada to confirm project and expense eligibility
- › Be Canada based, incorporated or legislated entities, in existence for a minimum of 1 year or more as of the date of application deadline. This includes those that are established by or under legislation; are federally or provincially incorporated; or are band councils as defined under the *Indian Act*
- › Have a Canadian bank account in the legal name of the applying organization, at a Canadian financial institution conducting business in Canada
- › Not in default of the terms and conditions of any grant or loan agreement with any ministry or agency of the Government of Canada or Provincial and Territorial governments
- › Be able to begin your project within 30 days of notification to ensure performance metrics will be met



If successful, you will enter into a Partnering Agreement with Destination Canada. As part of the Partnering Agreement, the organization that applies must also be the organization that will incur and pay the project expenses and report back to Destination Canada on the project.

Eligible Projects

Projects must meet
the following eligibility
requirements:

- › Occur in Canada
- › Minimum 10% total cash contribution of the project from the lead applicant organization
- › Be substantially complete within 1 year of project approval
- › Demonstrate alignment with an existing strategic plan, master plan, feasibility study or similar plan
- › Supported by the respective Provincial or Territorial Ministry or Marketing Organization and one of the following: local or regional municipalities, provincial or territorial governments, Indigenous governments or governing organizations, or established tourism organizations, demonstrated through two letters of support
- › Reflect a well-developed and substantiated concept, having surpassed the feasibility stage and demonstrate readiness for strategic planning or investment preparation



Current market trends
should be considered
including the following:

**Regenerative &
Sustainable Tourism**



Projects that restore ecosystems, support communities, and leave destinations better than before

**Indigenous Tourism
Growth**



Projects led by, or in meaningful partnership with, Indigenous communities will be highly prioritized

**Seasonality & Shoulder
Season Expansion**



Projects that extend tourism outside of peak seasons and encourage shoulder season visitation, supports employment stability and better infrastructure use

**Experience-Based &
Experiential Travel**



Projects that offer immersive, personalized, “bucket list” experiences

**Wellness & Nature-Based
Tourism**



Projects that offer health, wellness, and nature immersion

**Small-Group & High-Value
Low-Impact Travel**



Projects that encourage high-spend, low-volume visitation to support both economic and environmental goals

**Inclusive, Accessible &
Equity-Focused Tourism**



Projects that improve physical, cultural, and economic accessibility

Examples of eligible projects:

- › Business Case and Investor Prospectus to present a compelling, investor-facing rationale for funding or financing a project
- › Financial projection modeling and Proforma development and support
- › Development of an investment prospectus with asset mapping and infrastructure gaps
- › Market Demand Study to validate visitor interest in a tourism product
- › Site Suitability or Land Use Assessment that assess land, zoning, access, and servicing capacity for tourism infrastructure
- › Sustainability or Climate Risk Assessment that evaluates climate vulnerabilities, water use, carbon impact, etc.
- › Financial assessments for the development of new tourism products and experiences

Eligible Expenses

Expenses must be incurred after notification of project approval. Eligible expenses only include expenses incurred for the delivery of the project and must not include costs related to ongoing costs of operation. If funds are not fully utilized within the stipulated timelines the applicant will be required to repay unused funds.

Eligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- › Consulting fees and project management services (i.e. financial, environmental, market research, etc.)
- › Professional Services directly related to the project (architects, designers, sustainability experts, etc.)
- › Other costs deemed reasonable and directly attributable to the project, that have been approved in writing by Destination Canada



Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- › Capital costs, including materials, motorized vehicles, land acquisition or purchase of equipment
- › Operating costs for organizations, including administration, salaries for permanent or full-time contract staff and on-going maintenance costs: Rent, telephone and communication lines/services, utilities, maintenance costs, card processing fees, membership, printing and subscription fees
- › Travel, hospitality or incidental expenses for staff or volunteers
- › General legal, audit or interest fees
- › Insurance, buyouts, restructuring costs, refundable goods and service tax (including Harmonized Sales Tax)
- › Fees relating to grant writers procured for preparing government funding applications
- › Marketing costs, including paid advertising, promotion, branding, website and mobile applications
- › Festival and event costs related to programming, operations and marketing
- › Costs related to food, alcohol or cannabis

Application Intake

Applicants must consult with Destination Canada to confirm project and expense eligibility in advance of submitting an application form.

This is initiated by submitting an **Expression of Interest** form <https://forms.gle/MH3mhxXhumE1u17S9>. Expressions of Interest will be accepted until **5 PM Pacific Time, September 12, 2025**.

Applications will be accepted until 5 PM Pacific Time, October 1, 2025.

To ensure timely disbursement and alignment with Destination Canada's funding cycle, the Tourism Sprint Program will operate under two distinct streams. Applicants must select the stream that aligns with their project delivery schedule and ability to expend funds.

Stream 1

2025 Initiation

Projects in this stream must expend Destination Canada's portion of the approved funding by December 31, 2025. Projects must demonstrate a high level of readiness and the ability to initiate and substantially complete project activities within established timelines.

Stream 2

2026 Initiation

Projects in this stream must expend Destination Canada's portion of the approved funding by December 31, 2026. This stream is suitable for projects requiring a longer planning or implementation horizon, while still meeting program eligibility and performance requirements.

The Tourism Sprint Program is a discretionary and non-entitlement 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. Destination Canada reserves the right to fund or not fund a project submitted to the program, as well as provide additional funding to projects that are deemed nationally significant.

Project Evaluation Criteria

#	Criteria & Description	Score Range	Weight
1	Innovation in Tourism Products & Experiences Degree to which the project introduces new, unique, or creative tourism products that are purchasable and ready or near-ready for market within Canada.	1–5	10%
2	Private Sector Investment Leverage Extent to which the project attracts or secures private sector investment (financial or in-kind), enhancing sustainability, scalability, or long-term value.	1–5	15%
3	Seasonality Diversification Contribution to reducing peak season dependency by offering experiences during off-season or shoulder periods, with potential to generate stable year-round benefits.	1–5	10%
4	Economic & Employment Impact Projected impact on job creation, visitor spending, business development, or tourism sector resilience at the local or regional level.	1–5	10%
5	Support for Indigenous Tourism Involvement of or benefit to Indigenous tourism operators, governments, businesses, or communities, including through respectful cultural storytelling or governance partnerships.	1–5	10%
6	Regenerative Tourism Practices Integration of regenerative or sustainable practices that enhance environmental and social value, particularly in lower-traffic regions or vulnerable ecosystems.	1–5	5%

#	Criteria & Description	Score Range	Weight
7	Partnerships & Collaboration Evidence of meaningful partnerships (e.g., local governments, Indigenous organizations, tourism operators, community groups) that support co-delivery, alignment, or investment.	1–5	5%
8	Budget & Financial Feasibility Clarity, completeness, and realism of the budget; appropriate use of funds; strength of financial plan and evidence of cost control or matching contributions.	1–5	10%
9	Alignment with Destination Canada Strategies & Initiatives Degree of alignment with Destination Canada's national strategies, such as regenerative tourism, international readiness, corridor development, Indigenous tourism growth, or equity-focused access.	1–5	10%
10	Organizational Capacity & Project Delivery Ability Applicant's experience, internal capacity, governance, and timeline readiness to complete the project successfully within program parameters.	1–5	10%

Scoring Guidelines (1–5 Scale)

1 – Very Poor: Fails to meet the criterion; no clear evidence or relevance.

2 – Poor: Minimally addresses the criterion; unclear or weak rationale.

3 – Adequate: Satisfactorily meets the criterion; standard approach.

4 – Good: Strong and clear alignment with the criterion; above average.

5 – Excellent: Outstanding response with strong innovation, impact, or alignment.

Reporting Requirements

- › All funding recipients are required to submit a mid-term progress report and final report
- › Reports should demonstrate progress toward the approved project outcomes, financial accountability, and alignment with program objectives
- › Templates and reporting forms will be provided by the program administrator
- › Additional ad hoc reports may be requested for audit or evaluation purposes