



2024-25 Partnership Program Guidelines

The Regional Tourism Organization (RTO) program was developed to partner or assist organizations that act in the best interest and promote and coordinate tourism activities with the entirety of the region. RTOs enhance the economic impact of the tourism sector by leveraging partnerships and collaboration across the entire industry. RTOs cannot budget funds proportionally among participating Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) or communities and must be used to support the region as a whole.

The Province strongly encourages RTOs to work with all tourism partners including other regions, sector-based organizations, municipalities, and other organizations on matters of mutual interest. Strong partnerships and a coordinated approach are vital to the future sustainability of tourism across the province.

TPN will provide an opportunity to all tourism related businesses in the Niagara Region to participate in the Partnership Program. TPN will consider applications from all organizations and highlight projects that promote tourism activity and employment in the Niagara Region, whilst ensuring there is a diversity of program initiatives and geographic representation. TPN will focus on the development of investments that support innovative, scalable, and long-term sustainable activations.

Tourism Partnership of Niagara

Our Mandate. Our North Star.

TPN plays a leadership role in the Niagara Tourism and Hospitality ecosystem shaping the Niagara narrative to attract business and leisure consumers to the Region. Our job is to increase awareness of Niagara Region and influence consumers at the intent & consideration phase of their path to purchase. We coordinate those efforts with our stakeholders and partners to help them convert the transaction to deliver a best-in-class Niagara experience.

Strategic Direction:

We will create best-in-class, consumer-centric hospitality experiences that drive multiple overnight stays, support sub-regional development objectives, and build high value, sustainable (Niagara) brand relationships. We will ensure those experiences deliver both business and leisure consumers to the region all year round.

Partnership Funds

The Tourism Partnership of Niagara (TPN) is eligible to receive partnership funds from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming in addition to the TPN's standard funding agreement.

The partnership funding approach is guided by the following set of objectives:

- Enhance tourism (and tourism employment) across the province.
- Support the TPN 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 the TPN to engage industry partners to broaden their financial base to extend reach.
- Alignment with TPN Business Plan objectives

- Assure the transparency and accountability of funding support through the transfer payment agreement process.

The value of partnerships among industry sectors cannot be overstated. Regardless of the partnership allocation of funds, the TPN can maximize support for tourism in their regions by expanding the breadth and diversity of their partners. Strong partnerships and a coordinated approach to product development, regional planning and marketing are essential to the future sustainability and increased competitiveness of tourism across Ontario.

The TPN is expected to use ministry funding to develop and deliver strategies to support the following destination management priorities or pillars:

1. *Product Development*
2. *Investment Attraction/ Investor Relations*
3. *Workforce Development*
4. *Marketing*

What does Partnership Funding Mean?

The TPN will support **up to 50%** (with a maximum of \$100,000) of an approved application, with the Partner (hereafter referred to as “The Applicant”) providing the remaining project funding. The value of funds provided will be at the discretion of the TPN and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming. The TPN will deposit and manage the Applicant’s funds together with TPN partnership funds and will co-manage the project.

TPN Role and Responsibilities:

The TPN will:

- Consult and co-manage the project development process and compliance considerations at the onset of the project conception, i.e., before the project begins.
- Optimize the project by helping to define and align strategies.
- Ensure financial commitments and payment obligations are met as the primary financial comptroller of the project.
- Review any procurement consideration and participate in fulfilling any procurement requirements.
- Review and approve any TPN marketing recognition and/or benefits.

General Criteria

1. The Ministry strictly prohibits ‘flow through’ funding to any Applicant. *Flow through involves the applicant invoicing TPN for the requested funds.* Cheques **will not** be issued to an Applicant.
2. The partnership project **cannot** start and the TPN cannot enter into agreements with potential partners prior to receiving approval from the Ministry. (Applications for past or current activities will not be considered).
3. **Funding may not be used to offset existing operational and marketing activities of an Applicant.**
4. The activities being funded by the TPN must be completed and invoiced (in full) prior to March 31st 2025.
5. Generally, the TPN is the lead and has the project management responsibility for any given project.
6. Under exceptional cases, should the TPN be approved by the Ministry to proceed where it is not the lead or project manager, it must be actively involved in the planning, governance and oversight of the project which will ensure that the project is strategically aligned with the TPN business plan and the Ministry accountability requirements.
7. Procurement, whether goods or services, should follow all Ministry & TPN purchasing guidelines. Where the purchase price exceeds \$5,000, the TPN and/or Applicant, will at a minimum, obtain at least, three written quotes.
8. Projects/events to be aligned with activities in TPN’s business plan (see appendix).
9. Projects/events must align to the corresponding DMO’s overall marketing strategy (where applicable).

10. The project/event/activity must represent:
 - Something new, or
 - Adding an enhancement or something incremental to an existing project/event/activity
11. Maximum amounts – Individual projects will be restricted to a maximum TPN contribution of 50% of the projects overall budget, with a limit of \$100,000 being contributed by the TPN.
12. The Partner (Applicant) must be in good standing with the TPN in respect to any outstanding invoices or outstanding reports due.
13. Applicant submissions must clearly disclose if the proposal will benefit any private business interests of any TPN Board, Committee members or staff.
14. The application must demonstrate the long-term tourism objectives and financial sustainability. Applications for a project/initiative that has previously obtained TPN funding, must identify a clear 3-year exit strategy to ensure the Applicant is not dependent on TPN funding.
15. Where applicable, Applicants should indicate the intention to reapply for 2025/26.

BUDGETS and INTAKE DATES

TPN will accept applications at any time, however the following the guidelines will be applied for the fiscal period of April 01, 2024 – March 31, 2025.

Intake Date - beginning July 15th 2024

- TPN will accept applications commencing July 15th 2024 for the current fiscal period ending March 31, 2025.
- All applications received by August 14th will be reviewed, and successful projects (pending Ministry approval) will be selected no later than August 31st
- 100% of the overall budget will be accessible, and applications will continue to be accepted until all available funds are allocated, with a final submission deadline of no later than December 1, 2024.
- Following the initial intake (closing on August 14th) Applications will be reviewed and approved in the order they are submitted. The current fiscal intake period will close once all available funding has been allocated.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications must clearly define project deliverables, roles, responsibilities, resource requirements, timelines, and relevant key performance metrics in addition to a detailed budget outlining all sources of funding and which expenses are to be supported by the TPN. The submission of an application does not guarantee funding.

STEP #1 – Applicant

1. Meet with the TPN to discuss and review any potential project ideas.
2. Complete and submit application forms and budget.
 - 2.1. The budget must clearly indicate which expenses the TPN will be supporting.

STEP #2 – TPN

1. Meets and consults with the Applicant on any potential projects before the application is submitted.
2. TPN staff will review and evaluate each application and recommend those projects to the Marketing and Partnership Committee for alignment.
3. Ensures that the project/event/activity is on strategy for the TPN using the Ministry's Evaluation Criteria. Projects will be vetted on the strength of the submission.
4. Continues to consult with the Applicant to identify and document roles and activities.
5. Works with the Applicant to undertake a procurement process for any expenses in excess of \$5,000, which must be in place prior to the project starting.
6. Establishes 'Terms and Conditions' as part of the Funding Agreement
7. Consults with MTCG Regional Advisor to review and evaluate applications for eligibility.
8. Submits application to MTCG Regional Advisor for final approval.

STEP #3 – Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming

1. Reviews application
2. Approves application, which may have additional 'Terms and Conditions' or comments.
3. Advises the TPN in writing. The Ministry requires at least 7 business days, after the application is received by them to evaluate each application.

STEP #4 – Funding Agreement

If all the steps above have been approved, the Applicant will be required to sign a TPN Funding Agreement, which will outline the “*Terms and Conditions*” as well as the defined roles between the TPN and Applicant to undertake project/event/activity partnership.

Disbursement cannot take place until both parties sign the Funding Agreement and all conditions are met.

Standard Conditions

1. Confirmation and proof of other funding (if applicable) needs to be in place *within 30 days* of the project/event.
2. Confirmation and proof of insurance requirements (if applicable) need to be in place before funds are released.
3. TPN will develop a project schedule with key milestones (from the application details) and dates to be achieved by the applicant. Failure to comply to the agreed upon timelines, will render the agreement null and void.
4. A copy of the approved Budget indicating the expenses which TPN will be supporting.
5. A copy of the Performance Measurements/ Metrics, as agreed to in the application form.
6. Detailed list of opportunities and participation for TPN
7. The Applicant will seek written approval, prior to public distribution, of all:
 - a. TPN & Ministry logo placements
 - b. Acknowledgement of support from
 - i. TPN
 - ii. Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming
8. Procurement documentation must be completed and on file prior to starting the project.

Supplier Information

The Applicant is responsible to ensure confirmation and proof that any supplier connected with this project has:

- (a) A valid registered HST number
- (b) WSIB coverage as required by provincial regulations.

STEP #5 – PARTNERSHIP FUNDING FINANCIAL PROCESS

Partner (Applicant) Invoicing

1. The TPN will invoice the Applicant for their portion of the project/event **PLUS HST**
2. Funds must be on deposit with the TPN one day in advance of work starting and before the payment of any invoices submitted.
3. TPN Invoices are due when issued.

PAYMENT OF INVOICES

Disbursement cannot take place until both parties sign the Funding Agreement and all conditions are met.

- The TPN will only fund those items agreed to and specified in the approved budget.
- The TPN will not manage the supplier directly. Invoices are to be directed to the Applicant for approval (with signature) prior to submission to the TPN for payment. Scanned copies are acceptable.
- All Invoices must be addressed to “The Tourism Partnership of Niagara”.
- TPN will pay invoices in full or partial to the **maximum** of the Funding Agreement
- Should there be an overpayment, the Applicant agrees to repay the TPN to ensure the project stays within the approved maximum project funding.
- TPN will ensure prompt payment of invoices and within standard 30 days of invoice.

HST REBATE

The TPN is eligible for HST rebate and receives 50% refund of GST and 82% refund of PST.
The project budget is the **NET after the HST** rebate.

As an example:

Supplier Invoice Amount	\$ 10,000.00
Plus 13% HST	\$ 1,300.00
TOTAL Supplier Invoice	\$ 11,300.00
TPN Rebate	\$ 906.00
Amount charged to project	\$ 10,394.00

FINAL REPORT

The Final Report will follow the guidelines/templates provided by the TPN and will include but not be limited to:

1. Applicant to complete TPN's *Final Report* within 30 business days following the project/event/activity.
2. Description of the activities linked to the Project Description as outlined in the application.
3. Proof of acknowledgment of TPN and Ministry funding support
4. Signed Attestation that the project was completed as outlined in the Funding Agreement.
5. Report on performance measures/metrics as indicated in the application and agreement.
6. Final expenditures and revenues
7. Explanation of variance between anticipated expenditures/achievements and actuals
8. **Copies** of all marketing collateral produced using the funds, including hard copies of materials developed, URLs etc.
9. Number and types of activities
10. Any other details that may be requested by the TPN.
11. The Applicant will not be eligible for future funding if a report is not submitted.

CHANGES, DELAYS, CANCELLATIONS

Should there be any changes after the application has been approved, the following will apply:

- The Applicant will submit, in writing, the project changes.
- The TPN will seek Ministry approval of any proposed changes.
- If an approved project is delayed or cancelled, the DMO is requested to advise the TPN as soon as possible. This may allow other projects or DMOs to access surplus funds.
- Any unused project funding up to \$2,500 will be reassigned by TPN management.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

Eligible costs are those deemed reasonable and necessary by the Ministry for the successful implementation of deliverables.

Ineligible Contributions and Expenses

1. Grants and flow-through to other organizations
2. Charitable fundraising
3. Donations to political parties or lobby groups
4. Capital expenses
5. Prize money
6. Expenses that do not relate directly to the delivery of the Funding Agreement
7. Funding from Ontario government programs, such as Experience Ontario, or Ontario government agencies, such as the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation, or other RTOs

8. In-kind donations
9. Funds used for advocacy work, fundraising, or hiring a lobbyist
10. Funds given to other organizations for operational funding, such as salaries and wages
11. Alcohol expenses (wine, beer, spirits) as part of any hospitality or special event are not eligible unless the primary objective of the event is to promote Niagara region's wine, beer, and spirits products

OTHER GENERAL

The Applicant will permit the TPN, 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 purpose(s) intended.

Applicants should be aware that the TPN, through funding agreements with the Province, is 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 the TPN in connection with their application may be subject to disclosure in accordance with the requirements of that Act.

PROCUREMENT

Ministry Procurement Rules

The TPN is expected to meet Ministry procurement guidelines as follows:

Tendering for Goods and Services and Disposal of Assets

1. The TPN will manage the Initiative wisely and prudently achieving value for money.
2. The TPN will supervise the purchase of all supplies, equipment, and services, including any advertising-related services, purchased with the Funding through an appropriate competitive process.
3. Where the purchase price exceeds \$5,000, the Applicant/TPN will, at a minimum, obtain at least three written quotes unless the TPN can demonstrate that the supplies, equipment or services the TPN is purchasing is specialized and is not readily available.
4. Where the purchase price exceeds \$25,000, the Applicant/TPN will issue a Request for Proposal.
5. In carrying out a competitive process, the Applicant/TPN must:
 - a. Develop a clear description of the product/service which includes sufficient details concerning the requirements; and
 - b. Apply consistent, transparent and objective evaluation criteria.

The TPN will not, without the Province's prior written consent sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any assets purchased with the Funding, the purchase price of which exceeds \$5,000.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In accepting public funding from the Government of Ontario, all recipients are required to acknowledge the financial assistance they receive with the use of:

- The **"Ontario Yours to Discover" logo on all consumer materials, including all materials produced as a part of partnership projects** (such as consumer websites, social media sites, advertising campaign materials, brochures, etc.)
- The **Ontario trillium logo on industry only related materials** (such as industry websites, newsletters, training sessions and materials, image bank, reports, etc.)

Ontario Yours to Discover logo



OTMPC has a logo for Canadian (domestic) audience that is available in both English and French and a logo for international audiences. Versions of the Ontario Yours to Discover logo can be requested and downloaded for free from the OTMPC's image database at www.imageontario.com. Low resolution versions of the logo can be found using the search word "logo." Higher resolution versions required for print must be ordered through the site and upon check out you will be asked to outline the purpose of its use.

The guidelines for the use of the Ontario Yours to Discover logo are available on pages 22-24 in [OTMPC's Brand Toolkit](#).

Ontario trillium logo



When using the Ontario trillium logo please note the following:

1. The Ontario logo should be used only as provided. The visual or structural relationship may not be changed in any way.
2. There is no colour version of the logo. In most applications, the Ontario logo appears in a black against a white or light background.
3. When accompanying other corporate logos, the Ontario Logo should be the same size.
4. The two most commonly used recipient tag lines are: "Funded by the Government of Ontario" or "Funding provided by the Government of Ontario". These examples are provided for consideration purposes only. Using a tag line is not a requirement.

In addition, the "**The Tourism Partnership of Niagara**" logo is to be displayed on all consumer materials (such as consumer websites, social media sites, advertising campaign materials, brochures, etc.)

