

Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO)
Tourism Recovery and Investment Program (TRIP) – Capital Projects
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1. What is the definition of a “tourism business”?

A: Businesses who rely on visitor revenues to sustain their business can apply for this funding. A visitor is considered anyone who travels greater than 40km to specifically transact at an establishment for tourism purposes. Eg. accommodations, restaurants, meeting and event venues, attractions, transportation, tour operators.

2. What determines if a tourism business is small to medium sized?

A: For the purposes of this program businesses whom employ less than 25 full time staff are considered small to medium sized. *Exceptions may apply for seasonal businesses whose staff levels fluctuate throughout the year.*

3. Do I have to be a member of OHTO to apply?

A: Due to limited available funds, our funding agreement, and the tourism sector-specific nature of this program, TRIP – Capital Projects funding is open to all eligible applicants within the Ontario's Highlands geographic boundary ([See Map](#)) with priority given to members of OHTO.

4. How do I become a member of Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO)?

A: [Click here](#) to learn how an OHTO membership can benefit your business.

5. I already spent the money on the eligible activities supported through this program. Can I still apply?

A: Yes, this program provides reimbursement for eligible costs incurred between June 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021. Proof of purchase will be required.

6. The program provides funding up to 80% of the project costs to a maximum of \$20,000. Is there a minimum project cost amount?

A: Correct. Our program requires applicants to cover 20% of the submitted eligible expenses and the maximum we may award is \$20,000. This means that while total projects costs can exceed \$25,000 the applicant may only be reimbursed for up to \$20,000. We have not set a minimum threshold for project costs. However; applicants may only apply once. It is important to lump any of your eligible costs together in one application.

7. I am receiving other COVID-19 related government funding to support my business (RRRF, CEWS, CECRA, CEBA and TWSE). Can I still apply to TRIP – Capital Projects?

A: Yes, businesses who are receiving other COVID-19 related funding can apply to TRIP – Capital Projects as long as the funds that have already been/are to be received through these other

programs do not overlap with the items that are being requested for reimbursement/advance in your TRIP application. Any violations in relation to this criterion will result in automatic cancellation of your application and may require your business to pay back awarded TRIP funds and/or require legal action to be taken.

8. What are the “applicable government laws, rules, regulations, guidelines and other legally binding measures (Laws)” that the Applicants must be in full compliance with?

A: Upon awarding of TRIP – Capital Projects funds, applicants will be required to enter into a formal Funding Agreement with OHTO. Please refer to our sample [TRIP – Capital Projects Funding Agreement](#) to review the applicable terms and conditions.

9. What if I am a seasonal tourism business that won’t be in operation through to December 31, 2021? Am I still eligible to apply to TRIP?

A: Yes, you are eligible for TRIP funds as long as you indicate your current operating dates and provide an explanation in the Business Details under “Seasonality” and in the Funding Request summary in the application form. For further clarity, your business may not be open to the public past a certain seasonal date, but this doesn’t mean that your business has ceased operating. There is a difference between “off-season” and business closure. A business that is likely to see closure before December 31, 2021 is unfortunately not eligible for these funds.

10. Why am I being asked to provide proof of commercial general liability insurance of at least \$2,000,000?

A: This requirement is aligned with the conditions of the agreement in place to make this funding available through our funder.

11. Is there someone I can talk to about this program or get help applying?

A: We are anticipating a high volume of applications and have designed our portal to provide you with a very straight forward way for you to apply and provide feedback on your eligibility. Additionally, we have created this FAQ document that will be updated regularly to answer any questions you may have about the program. We encourage you to read through the FAQs and even if you are uncertain about your eligibility, please proceed with your application. If your questions are not covered by the application process or our FAQ’s please send an email to OHTO through the application portal. This can be found by clicking on the “i” icon on the top right-hand side and select “Contact Site Administrator”. We aim to respond within 2 – 5 business days.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

12. The “Eligible Activities and Costs” list doesn’t include the items I am seeking to purchase or receive reimbursement for. Can I still apply for TRIP – Capital Projects?

A: Yes, you are still able to apply for TRIP, however your eligibility will only be determined once you have completed the application process and provided further details in the Funding Request section of the application form. Once your application is submitted it will be reviewed by our team to determine if it meets the TRIP eligibility criteria. You will be notified once a decision has been made.

13. Can I use TRIP funds to purchase digital hardware (such as a laptop or computer) or e-commerce software?

A: This program does not cover the cost of electronic hardware (such as a laptop or computer) or e-commerce software. Should you be interested in launching an online store, we encourage you to apply to the [Digital Main Street Program](#). Implementation of digital tools and transformations for tourism operators that ARE eligible for TRIP project funding include:

- Virtual queues;
- Timed entry ticketing; and
- E-commerce tools aimed at contactless purchase of tourism experiences.

14. Are there any other activities and costs which are considered ineligible?

A: Yes, the following are costs which are not covered through the TRIP-Capital Projects program:

- Expenses already claimed through other government support programs.
- Renovations and/or purchases not related to COVID-19 requirements
- Expenses not exclusive to a businesses' needs arising from the pandemic such as:
 - Cost of electronic hardware (as noted above)
 - Taxes
 - Consulting fees
 - Business plans/strategic plans/feasibility studies/strategies, etc.
 - Inventory costs
 - Employee wages
 - Existing operating costs
 - Office furniture
 - Third party delivery transaction fees
 - Social media advertising, posts, marketing, etc.
 - E-Commerce tools for online stores
 - Items purchased for resale
 - Costs of land, building or vehicle purchase
 - General cleaning services
 - Recurring subscription fees/services implemented pre-COVID-19

EVIDENCE AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

15. Other than a receipt of purchase, what counts as “proof of purchase”?

A: For the purposes of this program, eligible “proof of purchase” includes either an itemized cashier’s receipt or a paid invoice. We cannot accept internal accounting documents as proof of payment.

All “proof of payment” documents that are provided to OHTO must include the:

- Date of purchase(s);
- Description of the item(s) purchased;
- Quantity of item(s) purchased;
- Cost of item(s); and
- Document(s) must be clearly legible.

16. What file format am I able to use to upload the “Acceptable documents including receipts

of purchase and/or proof of payment; photographs of installed items”?

A: The following document formats are able to be uploaded:

- Microsoft Word Document (*.docx) or Word 97-2003 Document (*.doc)
- Microsoft Excel (*.xls, *.xlsx)
- Adobe PDF Files (*.pdf)
- JPEG (*.jpg, *.jpeg, *.jpe)

17. How will I be notified if I have been approved, waitlisted or declined for funding?

A: We understand the desire to receive a decision related to your application in a timely manner. While we cannot guarantee timeframes, we are aiming to provide you with a response within 5-10 business days of submitting your application. You will receive an email to the email address provided in your application. Please ensure you check your junk and spam folders for our response.

18. Why is the funding amount less than the costs I submitted for support?

A: Applications are reviewed against a number of assessment criteria, including but not limited to the impact of COVID-19 on business operations, availability of other financial support, applicant viability and the economic benefits of TRIP-Capital Projects support. Due to anticipated high demand, funds may be limited. The funding amount may also be reduced for recipient costs that are available through other government support measures and to exclude ineligible costs. You will be provided with comments from our team to reflect the reduction in funding requested.

TRIP – CAPITAL PROJECTS APPLICATION, REVIEW AND AWARDING PROCESS

19. How do I apply for TRIP – Capital Projects?

A: We have created an application portal using Survey Monkey Apply. Anyone interested in applying must first register for a Survey Monkey Apply account. Once registration is complete, simply select the *TRIP – Capital Projects Program* from your dashboard to begin the process. This portal is your one stop shop for everything related to your application. You can login and out of your account as you progress through the steps without losing any of your saved work. Total time to complete the application is anticipated to be approximately 30 min.

20. How was my application reviewed?

A: Submitted TRIP – Capital Projects applications will be assessed using the following criteria:

- Eligibility of applicant (including geographic and tourism-facing);
- Eligibility of activities and expenditures for funding;
- Completeness of the application;
- Date the application is received and availability of remaining funding;
- Ensuring a broad number of tourism businesses benefit from the program;

Please note there is no guarantee that you will be approved for funding even if you meet all the necessary eligibility requirements. There is also a set amount of funds available for this program. As such, applications will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Due to the high volume of applications anticipated, an offer less than the full requested amount may also be awarded.

The assessment process for funding is comprised of two rounds:

1. First round applicant assessment will be completed by Reviewer Teams which have been established based on the geography of the applicant and with a collaborative approach, will be able to maintain transparency and clarity throughout the assessment process.

2. Second round applicant assessment is conducted by the OHTO Approval Team and will confirm an applicant's details and funding request and be responsible for making the final decision based on the feedback provided by the Reviewer Teams. The OHTO Approval Team then activates the next procedure, whereby the applicant is notified of their status and will follow the awarding process dependent on whether they have selected reimbursement or future spending options.

21. My TRIP – Capital Projects application was successful and I have been approved for funding. How will I receive my payment?

A: If your application has been approved for funding you will receive an approval email sent to the email address provided in your application requesting the necessary Electronic Funds Transfer information. If you have applied to be reimbursed for expenses and have provided the necessary proof of purchase, and completed your brief final report, we aim to have the funds transferred to you within 30 business days. If you have successfully applied for funding for future purchases, a portion of the funding will may be awarded in advance of the purchase with the remaining reimbursed once proof of purchase and final report documentation has been submitted. **Note:** the timing of this disbursement is not guaranteed and is dependent on first receiving the funds from our funder. We will notify you of any anticipated delays.

22. I have been awarded funding- what if I don't have a void cheque to include in my EFT?

A: It is always best to include a void cheque to ensure all information provided is clear, however this is not a mandatory field. As long as all information provided is correct, this will not affect your funding disbursement.

23. Agreement terms - if I am not the authorized signer, what is the process to set my authorized signer up?

A: Please note if you are NOT the authorized signer (AS), you can invite your AS to collaborate on your application for them to sign. Login to the application portal. Click on "View" your application - located on the left-hand side > Click "Add Collaborator" > Follow the instructions.

24. I received an Email that says at the end "If you have any questions, concerns, or updates about your application, please do not hesitate to reach out to us through the online application portal." where do I go to do this?

A: Emails are automatically generated as you progress through the steps of the application process. Replying to these emails is not possible. Instead, simply login to the portal through the link provided in the email and click the "i" button located in the top right-hand side of the dashboard. Select "Contact Site Administrator" and an email will automatically be generated. Ask your question and click send. Please allow for up to 2 - 5 business days for one of our administrators to respond.

25. My application was not approved, why not?

A: Unfortunately, not all businesses that apply will be deemed eligible for the program due reasons including, but not limited to:

- Not meeting the criteria of being a tourism dependent business;

- Not having a registered business number; or HST number
- Expenses claimed are not considered eligible costs.
- Missing documentation: not filling out the proper paperwork and not submitting all forms required to meet the eligibility (could include budget, COVID plan or declaration).

Throughout the funding application and review process, the TRIP team will communicate with all businesses as required to help guide them through the process and provide clarity on all decisions.