

Report to Municipal Services Committee  
Meeting Date: September 9, 2024  
**Report Title: Tourism Growth Program**

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### RECOMMENDATION:

Be it resolved that the Municipal Services Committee recommends to Council that staff be authorized to submit an application (either alone or in partnership with RTO 9, Leeds Grenville Economic Development, etc.) to the Tourism Growth Program in an amount up to \$250,000 (to be shared with all partners) with at least 50% funding being included in the 2025/2026 budget, as presented in MSC Report ADM-2024-12.

### BACKGROUND:

The deadline to apply to the Tourism Growth Program is September 17, 2024. Since the regular meeting of the Economic Development Committee on September 3 was cancelled due to lack of quorum, this report is being brought forward to the Municipal Services Committee in order to meet application deadlines.

Through FedDev, the Tourism Growth Program (TGP) provides \$108 million over 3 years (2023-2024 – 2025-2026) to support communities, small- and medium-sized businesses and not-for-profit organizations in developing local tourism products and experiences. The RDAs are working in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments and tourism partners to ensure the program is complementary to other supports for the tourism industry, helping to diversify regional economies and contributes to Canada's economic growth.

The TGP contributes to the [Federal Tourism Growth Strategy](#), which charts a course for long-term growth, investment, and stability in Canada's tourism industry, from coast to coast.

### **Eligible applicants include:**

- incorporated small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in the tourism industry
- Indigenous-owned businesses (including Indigenous sole proprietors) or Indigenous tourism organizations
- not-for-profit organizations (including tourism associations and economic development organizations)
- governments (municipal/provincial/territorial and related entities)

Please note: Preference may be given to SMEs this intake.

To benefit as many tourism operators as possible, FedDev Ontario is focusing this intake on new applicants only. Those who have already received funding under the Tourism Growth Program will not be considered for another project.

### **Eligible activities**

Eligible projects should provide added value to existing activities in the tourism industry and focus on business and economic growth. Priority may be given to projects that:

- support the Indigenous tourism industry
- increase tourism benefits for communities by driving visitation from urban areas to rural areas
- support economic, environmental and cultural sustainability
- support active outdoor experiences
- extend the tourism season (e.g., new or expanded tourism offerings outside of the traditional high season)
- complement support provided through provincial programs

### **Financial assistance**

- For small- and medium-sized enterprises contributions will normally be repayable
- For not-for-profit organizations contributions will normally be non-repayable

Other activities could be eligible. Please contact us directly / consult How funding works for additional information on the types of project activities that could be supported and the program's funding parameters.

### **Ineligible applicants**

**\*New\*** Applicants that have been approved for funding under a prior Tourism Growth Program intake.

Businesses or organizations that are not primarily focused on the tourism industry or whose services are not primarily for public use or benefit are normally not eligible applicants. This includes those in the following industries:

- restaurants / food services
- hotel chains
- retail sector
- private leisure facilities/event venues

## **Funding priorities**

We may prioritize funding to projects that focus on one or more of the following program priorities:

- supporting the Indigenous tourism industry
- increasing tourism benefits for communities by driving visitation from urban areas to rural areas
- supporting economic, environmental and cultural sustainability
- supporting active outdoor experiences (e.g., projects that provide more opportunities for physically active tourism offerings such as rock-climbing, trails, watersports, etc.)
- extending the tourism season (e.g., projects that promote and/or develop product, services or experiences with an aim of increasing tourism activity outside the traditional high season or extending their services year-round)
- complement support provided through provincial programs

## **Eligible activities**

The TGP supports communities, small- and medium-sized businesses and not-for-profit organizations to grow and develop local tourism projects that will position Canada as a destination of choice for domestic and international travellers.

If you are a tourism business, examples of supportable activities could include:

- improving/creating new or innovative tourism offerings or products
- investing in digitization or technology integration to enhance productivity, sustainability, efficiency and/or competitiveness
- developing and delivering new products, services or experiences to increase tourism activity outside of the traditional high season or to extend services year-round
- enhancing accessibility, creating a welcoming environment for diverse clientele

If you are a not-for-profit tourism organization, examples of supportable activities could include:

- developing/implementing long-term tourism plans, based on research and market analysis
- improving local assets, facilities, and/or planning for key active outdoor tourism experiences (e.g., projects that provide more opportunities for physically active tourism offerings)
- facilitating the growth of off-season tourism (e.g., promoting tourism products, services and experiences outside of the traditional high-season, supporting the expansion of seasonal tourism to year-round service)
- supporting the delivery of local community festivals and events that attract tourists to a destination

- developing/increasing capacity for tourism businesses to provide inclusive tourism experiences

### **Funding parameters**

Funding is project-based and must result in incremental and measurable outcomes and add value to the existing activities already being undertaken by the applicant.

- Applicants can request up to a maximum of \$250,000 per project. Exceptions may apply.
- Funding is normally offered in the form of a **non-repayable** contribution.
- Eligible project costs are shared between FedDev Ontario and the applicant. Preference may be given to projects that maximize funding from other sources (i.e., where FedDev Ontario's contribution is 50% or less).
  - An applicant's portion of the cost-share (i.e., 50% of eligible project costs) may be comprised of cash contributions and in-kind contributions from other project partners.
- Total government assistance (federal, provincial and municipal) cannot exceed 100% of total eligible project costs.

### **Key funding conditions**

(Excerpt from <https://feddev-ontario.canada.ca/en/funding-southern-ontario/tourism-growth-program-southern-ontario-how-funding-works> )

- An application does not constitute a commitment from FedDev Ontario for financial assistance.
- The contribution amount is subject to availability of funding, and FedDev Ontario reserves the right to make the final determination on the value of the contribution.
- New costs essential to the project. Refer to the Application Guide (For-Profit Applicants) or the Application Guide (Not-for-Profit Applicants) for details.
- Project start and end dates may vary by project but cannot begin prior to September 17, 2024, and must be completed by no later than March 31, 2026.
- Projects that are underway but not yet complete or substantially completed by the time of your application may be considered for support.

An application does not constitute a commitment from FedDev Ontario for financial assistance.

The contribution amount is subject to availability of funding, and FedDev Ontario reserves the right to make the final determination on the value of the contribution.

## DISCUSSION:

The Municipal Services Committee may recommend to Council that an application be submitted for the Tourism Growth Program. The project budget and timeline are for discussion. Projects must be completed by no later than March 31, 2026.

Applications are being accepted until September 17, 2024.

Staff have identified the following subject for consideration, according to grant criteria.

### **Proposed Project Objective**

It is proposed that the project's main objective be to illuminate the history of Rideau Lakes in preparation for the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rideau Canal from 2026 to 2032 by creating a learning experience around the indigenous peoples that inhabited the area before the canal, and by developing authentic experiences for visitors that will support the growth of the indigenous tourism industry and the local economy through increased visitation to small rural communities from nearby urban centres. Itineraries will highlight environmental features, cultural heritage assets and active outdoor experiences to extend the shoulder season.

- Research, content development, placemaking and experience development will support the Indigenous tourism industry
- Experiences will be developed to increase tourism benefits for communities by driving visitation from urban areas to rural areas
- Tourism Packages will support economic, environmental and cultural sustainability
- Placemaking design and implementation, investment in technology, equipment, software, and the investment in renovation, site improvements and experience development products will support active outdoor experiences including speed skating, nature walks and farm tours
- Experience development will extend the tourism season with new and expanded tourism offerings outside of the traditional high season
- Complement support provided through provincial programs in partnership with RTO9

Anticipated outcomes include documented research, developed content, landscape designs, three to six experiential itineraries, at least one indigenous tourism experience, at least one off-season experience highlighting outdoor activity, year-round interpretation of the area's history, and brand merchandise.

Potential Themes that align with the Federal Tourism Growth Strategy:

- Leverage Canada's Brand (Business, Sport & Culture)
- Focus on rural Canada
- Emphasize geography, biodiversity, wilderness on the edge of cosmopolitan cities, environmental assets
- Promote extensive shoreline
- Feature UNESCO World Heritage Site – Rideau Canal (anniversary in 2026)
- Highlight links to the TransCanada Trail (Catarauqui Trail)
- Include winter sports (speed skating, cross-country skiing, hockey)

- Incorporate museums including Parks Canada’s Chaffeys Lockmaster’s House and The Old Stone Mill – a National Historic Site
- Build on Farm to Table experiences
- Mention ice rinks (outdoor)
- Encompass major events such as the Lombardy Fair and the Delta Fair – the Oldest continuously operating agricultural fair in Ontario (since 1830)
- Involve Wineries

**Proposed Project Partners:**

- Leeds Grenville Economic Development
- RTO9 Southeastern Ontario
- Frontenac Arch Biosphere (FAB)
- Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA)
- Friends of the Cataraqui Trail
- Trans Canada Trail
- Rideau Waterway Land Trust
- Small Halls Festival
- Environment Canada / Fullard Nature Reserve
- Experience providers in Rideau Lakes
- Parks Canada

**Concept: “The Story of Life on this Land - Before and After the building of the Rideau Canal” – An Experience Development Project**

Content development may illustrate the following storyline for visitors to the region. Through the careful research and verification of approximately 35 sites along the Rideau Waterway within the Township of Rideau Lakes that are expected to have evidence of indigenous life and burial sites dating back thousands of years, together with the findings of archeologists and previous studies noting hundreds of indigenous artefacts found in Rideau Lakes, a formal storyline may be developed. Selected site locations may be mapped and storyboard-style plaques on boulders or a series of murals may be designed, produced and installed to develop a learning experience, while appropriate reconciliation gardens and pedestrian pathways or trail expansion can be designed and created to provide access to and from the Rideau Canal – all in close partnership with the Indigenous community.

- **Before the Canal** – Indigenous Peoples (4000+ years ago)
  - Early First Nations - Social Organization, Food Resources, Homes, Modes of Transportation, Clothing, Spiritual Beliefs
- **First Encounters** – History of First Nations – Newcomer Relations
  - Military and Commercial Alliances (First Contact to 1763)
  - The Royal Proclamation of 1763
- **A Changing Relationship** – From Allies to Wards (1763–1862)
  - Treaties and a Growing Colony

- **The War of 1812** – Fighting together and Military Settlement
- **After the War** – Legislated Assimilation – Development of the Indian Act (1820–1927)
  - “Civilizing the Indian” -1820-1927
- **Building the Canal** - 1826-1832
- **After the Canal** – New Immigrants and Colonists, Mills and Agriculture 1832-1882
- **New Perspectives** – First Nations in Canadian Society – 1814-1892
- **With 50 years on the Canal** - Sport Fishing and Tourism 1882-1932
- **100 years ago** – Waterways and Outdoor Spaces host sport and recreation (1932-1982)
- **Towards a New Relationship** 1982–2008
- **50 years to present** –Celebrating History and Cultural Heritage -1982-2032

**Example Storyline:**

Before the Canal –Indigenous Peoples (4000+ years ago). Early First Nations - Social Organization, Food Resources, Homes, Modes of Transportation, Clothing, Spiritual Beliefs										
First Encounters –History of First Nations –Newcomer Relations, Military and Commercial Alliances (First Contact to 1763), The Royal Proclamation of 1763										
A Changing Relationship –From Allies to Wards (1763–1862), Treaties and a Growing Colony, The War of 1812 –Fighting together and Military Settlement										
After the War –Legislated Assimilation –Development of the Indian Act (1820–1927), “Civilizing the Indian”										
Building the Canal - 1826-1832										
After the Canal –New Immigrants and Colonists, Mills and Agriculture 1832-1882										
New Perspectives –First Nations in Canadian Society–1814-1892										
With 50 years on the Canal - Sport Fishing and Tourism 1882-1932										
100 years ago –Waterways and Outdoor Spaces host sport and recreation (1932-1982)										
Towards a New Relationship 1982–2008										
50 years to present –Celebrating History and Cultural Heritage -1982-2032										

## Proposed Project Activities

- **Research**

Hire local researcher and local archivist to work with retired and professional archeologists and members of the Indigenous community to verify sites identified as places of Indigenous life and burial along the Rideau Canal within the Township of Rideau Lakes. Conducting and documenting this research will be shared with and directly support the Indigenous tourism industry.

- **Content Development**

Retain a content development team or individual to work with the indigenous community and other partners to formulate compelling stories from research compiled together with oral histories and video assets as content for digital and print materials. Development of this content will be shared with and directly support the Indigenous tourism industry through existing networks and new media.

- **Placemaking**

Enlist a landscape designer and/or engineer to create a plan for appropriate reconciliation gardens, plaques, and pedestrian pathways or trail linkages between the Rideau System, Indigenous sites, and experience providers or historic villages

- **Experience Development**

Engage a tourism experience development firm or consultant to work with local businesses / experience providers in Rideau Lakes (excluding restaurants, retailers and accommodations) as well as helicopter and cruise companies that can bring visitors to Rideau Lakes, to facilitate the development, marketing and promotion of packaged experiences highlighting small rural villages and communities along the Rideau Canal Waterway for online booking to draw people from urban centres to visit rural Ontario (targeted to increase tourism benefits for communities by driving visitation from urban areas to rural areas) in partnership with DMO 1000IslandsRideauCanalWaterway, RT09 Southeastern Ontario and Landsby.

Focusing on packages that will support active outdoor experiences for all ages including speed skating, cross country skiing and forest walks. Experience development will support economic, environmental and cultural sustainability.

- Lease or employ technology firm with equipment and software to collect new and transcribe existing oral histories housed on cassette by the Rideau Lakes Archives for use in AI storytelling technology at various sites along the waterway and to be made available online. The purchase or lease of these specialized assets and equipment is directly related to the project.



- Acquire storytelling equipment and software such as solar audio benches or solar hologram projectors (fully in line with the contemporary low-carbon, environmentally friendly green concept) to provide outdoor audio interpretation to enhance your visitor's experience using narration, interviews, oral histories, animal noises, music or other audio visuals that can be made available in multiple languages. The purchase and installation of this specialized equipment is directly related to the project.



Figure 1- Solar powered Audio Bench by blackbox-av

*(Inclusion of underrepresented groups)*

- Work with project partners to activate federal lands operated by Parks Canada and Environment Canada for interpreted experiences. These site improvements are directly related to the project.
- Renovate the Newboro Blockhouse and conduct a structural/electrical review of the Gallagher property for accessible use by visitors. These renovations are directly related to the project. *(Inclusion of underrepresented groups)*
- *Visitor Information Tools: Interpretive Murals.* These renovations are directly related to the project. *(Inclusion of underrepresented groups)*
- Reconstruction of the Historic replica of the passenger shelter at the Portland Harbour (may not be eligible)

- **Brand Development**

*Labour/Expertise/Talent* – Equipment and Software – Marketing and Outreach: Arrange for new online merchandising portal to increase revenues to support heritage preservation in Rideau Lakes and build a reserve to maintain assets and equipment acquired during the project (For example, sales of art prints and illustrations). Contributes to the sustainability of project activities following the program funding.

- **Tourism Development**

Build fall, winter and spring experiences to extend the tourism season, elevate and leverage major attractions, historic sites and heritage events such as the Lombardy Fair, Delta Fair, Skate the Lake, the Small Halls Festival and Doors Open by incorporating newly developed history telling using AI technology or including them in tourism experience offerings/

- **Reporting**

Enlist the project management firm or consultant to produce reports on the results of the project.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Should the application be successful, matching dollars of up to \$125,000 would be placed in the 2025 and/or 2026 budget. Contributions may be received from partners. Options to be discussed.

## **Proposed Project Budget**

The Township of Rideau Lakes would budget to contribute 50% or \$125,000 over the next two fiscal years: \$100,000 in 2025 and \$25,000 in 2026.

<u>2024-2025</u>	<u>2025-2026</u>	<u>2026-2027</u>
\$0	\$200,000	\$50,000

<b>Project Facilities and Infrastructure \$73,400</b>	
• 6 Murals (\$10,000 each)	60,000
• Renovate Newboro Blockhouse – Stairs	13,400
• Renovate Portland Coach house – Visitor Information Centre & Washrooms	n/a
• Reconstruction of replica Passenger Shelter at Portland Harbour	n/a
<b>Labour \$5,600</b>	
• Installation of 10 plaques/storyboards (\$500 each)	5,000
• Installation of 6 Solar Benches (\$100 each)	600
<b>Expertise \$72,000</b>	
• Research / Archivist	5,000
• Archaeologists	10,000
• Content Development	5,000
• Landscape Architect / Engineer (Site Development Plans/Placemaking)	24,000
• Transcription of oral histories from cassette to digital	20,000
• Design of map, plaques, storyboards or murals	8,000
<b>Machinery and Equipment \$66,000</b>	
• 6 Solar Benches (\$5,000 each)	30,000
• Solar Lighting	30,000
• Software	6,000
<b>Project Management \$12,000</b>	
• Experience Development Consultant	10,000
• Reporting (2026)	2,000
Funding for further redistribution	0
<b>Materials \$1,000</b>	
• Art prints, Merchandise	1,000
<b>Training and Talent \$20,000</b>	
• Brand Development Marketing and Outreach (2026)	15,000
• Merchandising Portal Design with online payment options and shipping	5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>250,000</b>

## ATTACHMENTS:

- None.

e-signed

September 3, 2024

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Marie White  
Economic Development & Cultural Heritage Coordinator

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DATE

e-approved

September 4, 2024

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Shellee Fournier  
CAO

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DATE