The Tourism Growth Innovation Fund (TGIF) is a project-based funding initiative to strategically support the economic, socio-economic, and community goals of the tourism sector in Alberta. The TGIF focuses on providing financial assistance to bolster the tourism industry as a contributor to Alberta's economic diversification through growing the visitor economy. As an outcome-driven program, the TGIF will ensure tourism industry stakeholders have access to information and resources, and can be supported in projects that contribute to the responsible development of Alberta's destinations and experiences.

Grant applications to the TGIF are evaluated through a competitive process and funding is awarded to successful applicants through two (2) separate grant streams:

- **Destination Development Support**: facilitates tourism growth through research-based studies, surveys, strategies, and plans for tourism organizations and Alberta municipalities to create new product and destination development opportunities and experiences.

- **Product Development Support**: facilitates programming and capacity building projects to offer and grow tourism experiences among nonprofit operators of tourism attractions.

Preference will be given to applications that highlight opportunities:

- For Destination Development Support projects focusing on:

  o   Regions outside of the urban centres of Edmonton and Calgary, and the Rocky Mountain Parks.

- For Destination Development Support and Product Development Support projects focusing on:

  o   The winter and shoulder seasons (spring/fall).

  o   Product lines that support Alberta Culture and Tourism outcomes such as:

  o   Nature-based tourism that emphasizes principles of sustainable tourism, where economic benefits are balanced with environmental priorities.

  o   Cultural tourism that builds authentic experiences and a sense of place.

  o   Indigenous cultural tourism that demonstrates a respect for the perspectives of Indigenous peoples, inclusiveness, and cross-cultural understanding through tourism.

  o   Agricultural and culinary tourism that emphasizes the use and promotion of Alberta-grown and sourced products.

Destination Development Support

Eligible Entities

- Incorporated nonprofit organizations, associations, societies, chambers of commerce, and Destination Marketing and/or Management Organizations in good standing that have been in existence for one year or longer, and whose mandate/function includes tourism development.[1]

- Municipalities (cities, towns, villages, summer villages, municipal districts, specialized municipalities, improvement districts, and special areas), Métis Settlements, and First Nations.

- Partnerships between two or more combinations of the above entities.

- Organizations (formed as noted above) that do not have outstanding reporting or repayment obligations in relation to another Government of Alberta grant.

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[1] Organizations must be incorporated under the *Companies Act* (Alberta), *Societies Act* (Alberta), or *Boards of Trade Act* (Canada).

Eligible Projects and Expenses

Studies, surveys, strategies, and plans for developing or enhancing tourism products or destinations. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, the development of strategic and other planning documents such as:

- Tourism opportunity assessments and product feasibility studies.
- Tourism gap analyses.
- Destination management plans.
- Community/regional brand development.
- Community/regional Visitor Friendly assessments and surveys.

Ineligible Projects and Expenses

Ineligible projects include the development or implementation of:

- Business plans, marketing plans, or investment prospectuses for the sole benefit of a private operator.
- Community/regional/product strategic marketing plans.[2]
- Community/regional/product marketing campaigns and associated advertising, promotion, or collateral.[2]
- Websites, including web-based marketing and promotion-based activities.[2]

Ineligible expenses include:

- Costs associated with developing and submitting applications.
- Capital infrastructure including construction and upgrading costs.
- Operating costs of organizations including administration, permanent staff salaries, and on-going maintenance costs.
- Travel expenses not directly related to project execution.
- Legal, audit, or interest fees.
- Insurance, buyouts, restructuring costs, refundable goods and service tax.
- Retroactive funding for costs that have already been incurred prior to application approval.

Funding and Cost Sharing

Funding will be awarded up to a maximum of $75,000 for one (1) project per applicant per fiscal year, regardless of the length of the grant term. Applicants are required to contribute a minimum twenty-five (25) per cent of the total project cost.

Funding from other Government of Alberta grants[3] and in-kind contributions will not be considered as part of the applicant contribution.

- Nonprofit applicant cash contributions must be supported by current financial statements (statement of revenue and expenses, and balance sheet) signed by two signing authorities of the organization, or current bank records to confirm that the cash is available.
- Cash contributions by municipalities, Métis Settlements, or First Nations must be confirmed with a letter of support.
- Cash available from federal or private foundation grant programs is to be confirmed with a letter from program representatives.

Application Process

A PDF application must be completed for each submission and is available on the [TGIF website](#).

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[2] For support of marketing initiatives, interested applicants are encouraged to explore the Cooperative Marketing Investment Program from Travel Alberta: https://industry.travelalberta.com/programs-tools/coop-investment.

[3] Cash contributions from Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) funding are permitted to be used towards applicant cash contributions.

The following information is required in the grant application:

- Project proposal:
    - Project overview including outcomes, scope, work plan, roles and responsibilities for project delivery, performance metrics, and risk mitigation measures.
    - If applicable, prior funding history and implementation efforts.
- Project budget.
- Supporting financial documentation.
- Letters of support from relevant stakeholders integral to the project's development or achievement of outcomes.

Application Deadlines

Refer to the TGIF webpage for information on intake dates.

Review Process

All applications will be reviewed to confirm basic eligibility requirements are met and the application is complete.

Applications will be evaluated through a competitive, merit-based process by a committee of tourism development professionals.

Release of Funding

If successful, applicants are required to enter into a formal agreement. Specific terms and conditions of grants are provided once approved. Applicants should **not** undertake any expenditures for their project until the commencement of the grant term indicated in the executed grant agreement.

Grant funding will be disbursed following the execution of the grant agreement. In the case of multi-phased projects, grant funding increments may be disbursed on mutually agreed upon milestones and interim reporting requirements.

Reporting and Performance Measurement

Within the term of the grant agreement, grant recipients are required to submit:

1) A copy of the final project report.
2) A financial report certified by:
    a) For nonprofit applicants, the organization's financial/signing authority and one other board member other than the treasurer.
    b) For municipal and Métis Settlement applicants, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).
    c) For First Nations applicants, a registered accounting professional or a representative of the First Nation whose position has been authorized by band council resolution to provide financial reporting.
3) A concise grant completion report, detailing:
    a) Achieved milestones and accomplishments, risk mitigation (strategies/tactics that were taken to overcome project hurdles and constraints), lessons learned or observed, and, if applicable, how the recommendations and findings of the report will be implemented.
    b) Partnerships/collaboration created, tourism operator/visitor knowledge gained, and project legacy (outcomes that will benefit the organization in the short and long term).

A PDF reporting template is available on the TGIF website.

Product Development Support

Eligible Entities

Incorporated nonprofit organizations, associations, and societies in good standing that have been in existence, and have supported an attraction, for three years or longer.[4] Organizations must not have outstanding reporting or repayment obligations in relation to another Government of Alberta grant.

Provincially owned and operated facilities are ineligible to apply.

To be eligible for product development funding, consideration will be given to attractions that:

- Demonstrate admissions to their attraction (for gated venues) by visitors travelling at least forty (40) kilometres outside of their home community; and/or

- Demonstrate marketing of their attraction to audiences at least forty (40) kilometres outside of the host community or venue.

Eligible Projects and Expenses

Capacity building projects will vary and may include development of new tourism experiences or programming, or expansion into complementary tourism products or niches (e.g., addition of a farmers' market to a cultural event on site), that can contribute to the growth of an attraction's appeal to visitors. Eligible project activities include the contracting of expertise to design and deliver this new programming.

In recognition of the time commitments required to develop and implement programs, project work may extend over a maximum of three (3) years. Interim reporting will be required.

Eligible costs include:

- Project-based staffing costs.

- Material and equipment costs associated with the enhancement project.

  - **Note**: material and equipment costs may not exceed fifty (50) per cent of total project costs.

- Other costs as may be deemed necessary for the completion of the project.

Ineligible Expenses

- Costs associated with developing and submitting applications.

- Administrative or operational costs outside of the project and normally considered the responsibility of the applicant, including but not limited to: rent, insurance, telephone, internet, and office equipment costs.

- Land acquisition.

- Capital infrastructure including construction and upgrading costs.

- Marketing costs including advertising and promotion.

- Website development, including web-based marketing and promotion-based activities.

- Gifts, contests, prizes, awards, trophies, and plaques.

- Non-arms' length transactions (payments to an affiliated organization, payments to Directors/Board Members or their families).

- Fundraising and similar activities not related directly to the project.

- Travel expenses not directly related to project execution.

- Membership fees.

- Debt reduction.

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[4] Organizations must be incorporated under the *Companies Act* (Alberta), *Societies Act* (Alberta), or *Boards of Trade Act* (Canada).

- Legal, audit, or interest fees.
- Insurance, buyouts, restructuring costs, refundable goods and service tax.
- Retroactive funding for costs that have already been incurred prior to application approval.

Funding and Cost Sharing

Funding will be awarded up to a maximum of $75,000 for one (1) attraction per applicant per fiscal year, regardless of the length of the grant term. Applicants are required to contribute a minimum fifty (50) per cent (1:1 matched contribution) of the total project cost.

Funding from other Government of Alberta grants[5] and in-kind contributions will not be considered as part of the applicant contribution.

- Nonprofit applicant cash contributions must be supported by current financial statements (statement of revenue and expenses, and balance sheet) signed by two signing authorities of the organization, or current bank records to confirm that the cash is available.
- Cash contributions by municipalities, Métis Settlements, or First Nations must be confirmed with a letter of support.
- Cash available from federal or private foundation grant programs is to be confirmed with a letter from program representatives.

Application Process

A PDF application must be completed for each submission and is available on the TGIF webpage.

The following information is required (in varying detail) in the grant application:

- Project background:
  - If available, evidence of the importance of the attraction to tourism in the region that can be verified with economic impact analysis and visitor statistics.
  - Demonstrated measures in place to ensure that the attraction is accessible to diverse groups of visitors from the local community and the larger domestic and international market.
- Project proposal:
  - Project overview including outcomes, scope, work plan, roles and responsibilities for project delivery, performance metrics, and risk mitigation measures.
  - Strategies to build long-term sustainability from the capacity building project.
- Project budget.
- Supporting financial documentation.
- Letters of support from relevant stakeholders integral to the project's development or success.

Application Deadlines

Refer to the TGIF website for information on intake dates.

Review Process

All applications will be reviewed to confirm basic eligibility requirements are met and the application is complete.

Applications will be evaluated through a competitive, merit-based process by a committee of tourism development professionals.

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[5] Cash contributions from Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) funding are permitted to be used towards applicant cash contributions.

Release of Funding

If successful, applicants are required to enter into a formal agreement. Specific terms and conditions of grants are provided once approved. Applicants should **not** undertake any expenditures for their project until the commencement of the grant term indicated in the executed grant agreement.

Grant funding will be disbursed following the execution of the grant agreement. In the case of multi-phased projects, grant funding increments may be disbursed on mutually agreed upon milestones and interim reporting requirements.

Reporting and Performance Measurement

Within the term of the grant agreement, grant recipients are required to submit a financial report certified by the organization's financial/signing authority and one other board member other than the treasurer. In addition to a concise grant completion report will be required, detailing:

- Achieved milestones and accomplishments, risk mitigation (strategies/tactics that were taken to overcome project hurdles and constraints), and lessons learned or observed.

- Partnerships/collaboration created, visitor knowledge gained, and project legacy (outcomes that will benefit the organization in the short and long term).

A PDF reporting template is available on the TGIF website.

Procedural Considerations

- Funding provided in one fiscal year (April through March) does not imply any commitment by Alberta Culture and Tourism to provide funding in subsequent years.

- Program funding is limited and not every eligible application will receive funding. The amount approved for each project, initiative, or opportunity may be less than the amount requested and is based on how closely the application meets grant criteria and eligible expenses, and in accordance with the number of requests received per intake period. Alberta Culture and Tourism also reserves the right to fund only specific components of a proposed project.

- Grant stream criteria, such as eligibility and application requirements, are subject to change in response to Alberta Culture and Tourism priorities.

- Although each grant stream is limited to one application per fiscal year, organizations may apply to both grant streams. Applicants must disclose all partners in each application to ensure transparency.

- All funding decisions are final and appeals will not be accepted. However, applicants are able to seek feedback on their application and re-apply in the next intake period.

- Extensions on project completion and changes to project scope from what is outlined in a Grant Funding Agreement may be requested by submitting a written request to the Tourism Division a minimum of thirty (30) days prior to the originally-stated project completion date. The request must include an explanation of why the extension and/or change in scope is necessary to fulfill the grant's approved purpose. Alberta Culture and Tourism will inform the applicant of the Ministry's decision on the extension.

- Inability to meet agreed upon grant reporting requirements and timelines may prohibit future TGIF funding under any stream. For grant recipients with delinquent reporting, Alberta Culture and Tourism will re-assess the applicant's eligibility following reporting being brought into good standing and may permit applications in future intake periods.

- Once an application has been approved and funding issued to an organization, the community/city, grant recipient, project and amount funded and fiscal year become a matter of public record.

- The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* ("FOIP Act") applies to any information that is provided to Alberta Culture and Tourism. This information may be disclosed in response to an access request under the FOIP Act, subject to any applicable exceptions to disclosure under the Act. The personal information that is provided on the grant application form(s) will be used for the purpose of administering the TGIF. It is collected under the authority of section 33 (c) of the FOIP Act and is protected by the privacy provisions of the Act. Questions regarding FOIP can be directed to the Program Administrator through contacting TGIF@gov.ab.ca.