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## Visitor Services Innovation Fund

Apply for funding if your non-profit organization is recognized as an official visitor services provider for your community or region.

### **Important dates**

*Applications will be accepted by Alberta Culture and Tourism from November 21, 2018 to January 17, 2019.*

*Successful Applicants will be notified in February 2019 and funds distributed to execute projects in time for the upcoming summer season.*

## Overview

Visitor Services Innovation Fund provides support to community-based visitor services providers across the province to enable the delivery of innovative and forward-thinking multi-channel visitor services.

## Goals of the fund

- Support the development of innovative and relevant multi-channel visitor services.
- Ensure visitor services are available when, where and how visitors want them, and that these services respond to the needs of the visitor.
- Increase productivity and effectiveness of visitor services in the community, the region and the province.
- Foster a collaborative approach to visitor services to maximize the visitor experience across all channels.

## Funding

Your organization can receive up to 75% of the project costs to a maximum of \$7,000.

Initiatives involving two or more regional partners are eligible for 75% of the project costs to a maximum of \$16,000.

You are responsible for securing the remaining 25% of the project costs.

## Eligibility

### Eligible applicants

All eligible applicants must:

- be a legal entity
  - a not-for-profit organization under the Alberta's Society Act or Companies Act and have been in operation for at least one year
  - a Chamber of Commerce formed pursuant to the Boards of Trade Act (Canada)
  - a municipality
- not have outstanding reporting or repayment obligations in relations to another Government of Alberta Grant
- be able to demonstrate that the organization is the official visitor services provider for the municipality or region
- be able to demonstrate community, local government and industry support
  - for example, letters of support, committee participation
- make a contribution of at least 25% of the total project cost (cannot include other Alberta Government funding or in-kind contributions)

### Ineligible applicants

- those with outstanding reporting or repayment obligations with another Government of Alberta grant

### Eligible projects

Eligible projects and activities may include, but are not limited to:

- mobile visitor services:
  - purchase of a tent or kiosk
  - signage for mobile centre
  - uniforms for mobile visitor services staff
  - brochure displays for mobile visitor services
  - mileage of \$200 maximum based on \$0.35/km

- information kiosks that provide visitor information outside of the visitor information centre (VIC), which is accessible 24 hours
- support staff to increase community presence for activities provided outside the existing VIC through:
  - street teams
  - ambassador programs
  - roaming counsellors - for activities outside of the existing VIC only and up to a maximum of \$15/hr wage
  - staff support cannot exceed 60% of the total grant amount requested
- technology:
  - upgrading technology to improve visitor experience outside the VIC
  - mobile friendly web enhancements
  - purchase of iPads for use outside of the VIC and digital kiosks
- community engagement:
  - community/regional product knowledge sessions
  - organizing and hosting a tour of your community or region
- social media:
  - fees related to social media training
  - tracking tools, analytics and dashboards
- trip planning tools:
  - route descriptions in other languages
  - fees related to the development of trip planning/travel itinerary builders on websites
- accessibility:
  - restroom accessibility enhancements and wheelchair ramps
  - braille information services

## **Ineligible projects, activities and costs**

Ineligible projects include:

- projects unrelated to tourism industry or visitor services
- consumer-focused asset development, such as:
  - written content
  - photography
  - video production
  - landing pages
  - microsites
- consumer, travel trade and travel media shows

Ineligible activities include:

- new corporate and brand identity or content development

- signage in the visitor centre, unless it is to improve accessibility
- online marketing initiatives
- promotional and retail items
- incentives such as prizes and contests
- print/online collateral unless it improves accessibility, such as:
  - brochures
  - rack cards
  - flat sheets
  - guides
  - maps
- market research
- consumer, travel trade and travel media shows

Ineligible costs include:

- costs associated with developing and submitting applications
- non-visitor services website development and site hosting fees
- travel costs, such as gas and mileage
- operating/staffing costs to operate the existing VIC
- staffing costs over and above \$15/hr wage
- expenses incurred prior to the signature of the grant agreement
- paid advertising

## How to apply

### Step 1. Read the guidelines

[Visitor Services Innovation Fund application package](#)

### Step 2. Complete the application package

Include the following in your application package:

- cover letter from the organization to the Visitor Services Innovation Fund, Tourism and Recreation Division, Alberta Culture and Tourism
- completed application form
- letter(s) of support:
  - for not-for-profit organizations and Chamber of Commerces:
    - letters of support from the community and municipality
    - a letter from the municipality recognizing the organization as the official visitor services provider for the community

- not required if the organization is an accredited visitor services provider through the AVIP Accreditation and Signage Program
- for municipalities:
  - letters of support from the community integral to the project's goals and outcomes

### Step 3. Submit the application package

*Electronic/Paper Applications must be submitted no later than 4:30 pm on January 17, 2018.*

Submit applications to:

Mail:

Robin Luini

Manager, Visitor Services

Alberta Culture and Tourism

6th Floor, Commerce Place

10155 102 Street

Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L6

Email: [AVIP@gov.ab.ca](mailto:AVIP@gov.ab.ca)

Subject: Visitor Services Innovation Fund Application

### After you apply

We will review and evaluate all applications based on merit. General timelines for submission and selection is as follows:

- November 21, 2018 to January 17, 2019, applications received from eligible organizations.
- Beginning mid January 2019, we will review applications and make funding recommendations for final approval.
- Mid-February 2019, you will be notified of funding decisions.
  - Grant agreements will be signed.
  - All decisions are final and appeals will not be considered.

A project may start once you sign the Grant Funding Agreement.

### Reporting/Conditions

- All projects must begin by May 1, 2019 and be completed with all grant funds spent by December 31, 2019.
- You must submit a progress report to Alberta Culture and Tourism no later than July 31, 2019.
- All successful applicants will be required to submit a final report upon completion of the project, including full accounting for the funds received as well as other reporting requirements as specified in the formal agreement.

## Contact

To contact the Visitor Services:

Hours: 8:15 am to 4:30 pm (open Monday to Friday, closed statutory holidays)

Phone: [780-415-6264](tel:780-415-6264)

Toll free: [310-0000](tel:310-0000) (before the number)

Fax: 780-427-0778

Email: [AVIP@gov.ab.ca](mailto:AVIP@gov.ab.ca)

## Related

[Alberta Visitor Information Providers Program](#)