



Visitor Services Innovation Fund

Information and Application

Application Information

Deadline

No later than 4:30 p.m. on February 7, 2018

Submissions

Applications may be mailed to:
Visitor Services
Alberta Culture and Tourism
6th Floor, Commerce Place
10155-102 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 4L6
or emailed to: AVIP@gov.ab.ca

Contact

Cecilia Neath
Tourism Development Officer
Destination Development and
Visitor Services
Alberta Culture and Tourism
AVIP@gov.ab.ca

Questions

Please contact AVIP@gov.ab.ca with any questions you may have about the Visitor Services Innovation Fund.

Alberta Culture and Tourism's 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.

How visitors access information, make travel decisions and purchase travel experiences have changed dramatically and will continue to change at an even faster pace. The purpose of this initiative is to encourage and support visitor services providers to expand outside of the traditional realm of information delivery by creating new and innovative approaches to engage more visitors by their preferred method of engagement.

The goals of the fund are to:

- 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.

Who Can Apply?

All eligible applicants must:

- Be a legal entity
- Be a not-for-profit organization under Alberta's Societies Act or Companies Act and have been in operation for at least two years
- Not have outstanding reporting or repayment obligations in relation to another Government of Alberta grant
- Be able to demonstrate that the organization is the official visitor service provider for a municipality or region
- Be able to demonstrate community, local government and industry support (e.g., letters of support, committee participation)
- Make a contribution of at least 25 per cent of the total project cost (cannot include other Alberta government funding or in-kind contributions)

Applicants are encouraged to discuss their proposal with other visitor services providers in the region, and with other tourism organization or business stakeholders, to explore opportunities to collaborate on a joint application.

What projects and activities are eligible?

The Visitor Services Innovation Fund is intended to support new or enhanced visitor information service focused projects that expand delivery channels for visitor services to reach more visitors, improve accessibility for visitors and increase community and industry engagement providing an improved visitor experience.

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

- Mobile Visitor Services (e.g., purchase of a tent or kiosk, signage for mobile centre, uniforms for mobile visitor services staff, brochure displays for mobile visitor services)
- Information Kiosks that provide visitor information outside of the visitor information centre (VIC) and is accessible 24 hours
- Support staff (e.g., increased community presence, street teams, ambassador programs, roaming counsellors - for activities provided 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 (e.g., upgrading technology to improve visitor experience outside the VIC, enhancing websites for mobile compatibility, purchase of iPads for use outside of the VIC and digital kiosks)
- Community Engagement (e.g., community/regional product knowledge sessions including organizing and hosting a familiarization tour of your community or region)
- Social Media (e.g., fees related to social media training, tracking tools, analytics and dashboards; fees for social media policy and procedure development; fees related to the development of social media trip planning help pages)
- Trip planning tools (e.g., providing touring route descriptions in other languages; fees related to the development of trip planning tools on websites)
- Accessibility (e.g., restroom accessibility enhancements/wheelchair ramps; Braille information services)

What projects and activities are ineligible?

Ineligible Projects, Activities and Costs

Ineligible projects, activities and costs include, but are not limited to:

- General administrative costs such as office expenses, business cards, rent
- Costs associated with developing and submitting applications
- New brand or content development
- Non-visitor services website development and site hosting fees
- Travel costs (gas, mileage)
- Operating/staffing costs to operate the existing VIC
- Projects unrelated to tourism industry or visitor services
- Signage in the visitor centre, unless it is to improve accessibility
- Staffing costs over and above \$15/hr wage

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- Expenses incurred prior to the signature of the grant agreement
 - Online marketing initiatives
 - Paid advertising
 - Promotional and retail items
 - Incentives (e.g. prizes, contests)
 - Print/online collateral including brochures, rack cards, flat sheets, guides, maps, etc., unless it is to improve accessibility
 - Consumer-focused asset development including written content, photography, video production, landing pages and microsites
 - Market research
 - Consumer, travel trade and travel media shows

Applications

Applications will be accepted by Alberta Culture and Tourism between **December 13, 2017** and **February 7, 2018**. All applications received by **February 7, 2018** will be reviewed collectively and evaluated based on merit. General timelines for applicant submission and selection is as follows:

- December 13, 2017 to February 7, 2018 Applications received from eligible organizations
- Beginning mid February 2018, Tourism Division staff will review applications and make funding recommendations for final approval.
- Early March 2018, Applicants will be notified of funding decisions. Grant agreements will be signed. All decisions are final and appeals will not be considered.

Late or incomplete grant applications will not be processed.

Grant application packages **must** include the following documentation:

- Cover letter from the organization to the Visitor Services Innovation Fund, Tourism Division, Alberta Culture and Tourism.
- Completed Application Form
- Letter(s) of support from the community, local government
- 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)



Evaluation

The following categories will assist Alberta Culture and Tourism in evaluating applications. While applicants are not required to address each category, these should be considered when developing the project proposal.

New or enhanced initiative

- Is the project new to your community or current visitor services program/model?
- Is the project an enhancement of a previously tested or piloted program?
- Does the project promote services outside of the current VIC physical structure?

Supports the development of innovative and relevant multichannel visitor services

- How does this project demonstrate creativity and innovation?
- How does this project promote services outside the current VIC physical structure?
- How will this enable your organization to engage with visitors more effectively and help maximize their visitor experience in the community, region and/or province?
- How does this project respond effectively to gaps in visitor services delivery for visitor touch points in your community?

Increase community engagement and relationship building

- How will this project lead to increased visitor services awareness and potential partnerships with the local business and community?
- How does your project have support from your local regional Destination Marketing Organization, other relevant community organizations and stakeholders?
- Is this project part of a partnership with another visitor services provider?

Outcomes/Project Measurements

- How does this project support the goals of the visitor services innovation fund?
- What metrics and targets are being used to evaluate the success of the project? (e.g., attend 5 events with the mobile kiosk)
- How will this project become sustainable and self-funding?

Submissions

Electronic/Paper Applications must be submitted no later than **4:30 p.m. on February 7, 2018** and may be submitted to:

Mail: Robin Luini
Manager, Visitor Services
Destination Development and Visitor Services
Alberta Culture and Tourism
6th Floor, Commerce Place
10155 - 102 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 4L6

or Email: AVIP@gov.ab.ca
Subject: Visitor Services Innovation Fund Application

Funding

Eligible projects can be awarded up to **75 per cent** of the total cost of the project to a maximum of up to **\$7,000** to one organization from a single community. Those who demonstrate partnerships by applying as paired or multiple organizations from multiple communities may be awarded up to **75 per cent** of the total project costs of up to **\$16,000** from the Fund.

All successful applicants are required to enter into a formal agreement with the Minister upon approval of their application, which outlines the obligations of each party. Funding will be provided based on the terms set out in the Grant Funding Agreement.

Applicants will be evaluated and assessed against the criteria specified in this document. Submitting an application does not guarantee an award of grant funds.

Alberta Culture and Tourism reserves the right to select and approve project proposals which best meet the goals and objectives of the grant initiative. Alberta Culture and Tourism also reserves the right to fund only specific components of a proposed project.

Project Timelines and Accountability

A project may be initiated upon signing of the Grant Funding Agreement. All projects must begin by **June 1, 2018** and be completed with all grant funds spent by **December 31, 2018**. A progress report must be submitted to Alberta Culture and Tourism no later than **September 14, 2018** for presentation at the Alberta Visitor Information Providers (AVIP) Conference. 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.

Visitor Services Innovation Fund Application Form

Applicant Information

(Legal) Name of Organization:

Common Name of Organization (if different from legal name):

Address of Applicant Organization:

City/Town:

Province:

Postal Code:

Mailing/Delivery Address* (Same as above? If no, please provide details below):

City/Town:

Province:

Postal Code:

*All correspondence will be mailed to this address

Project Information

Project Manager (This is the person we will call for project information):

Mr.

Mrs.

Ms.

Other

Name:

Title:

Phone:

Extension:

Email

Signing Authority Contact (This is the legal/financial signing authority):

Mr.

Mrs.

Ms.

Other

Name:

Title:

Phone:

Extension:

Email

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Has your organization received any Government of Alberta funding in the past?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide the following information (past three years):

Year	Amount	Name of Funding Program	Purpose of Funding	Do You Have Any Outstanding Reports? (Yes/No)

Please indicate whether the project will be implemented by a:

Single community

Partnership of communities

Name	Organization	Community	Project Role	Contact Information

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Outline of Proposal

Project Name:

Is this a new project or an enhancement of an existing or piloted program?

Project Description:

Please provide a detailed overview of the project including the purpose and geographical area.

Goals and Objectives:

Please identify the goal(s) of your project and describe how they each support the goals of the Visitor Services Innovation Fund.

Please identify the objectives of your project. (What steps your organization will take to reach the goal(s) of your project that are measurable and time bound.)

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Innovation:

Please describe how this project demonstrated innovation in visitor services.

Please describe how this project fills any identifiable gaps in visitor service delivery.

Please describe how this project promotes services outside of the current VIC setting to engage with more visitors effectively.

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Community Engagement:

Please describe how this project will enable you to reach out within your community and how it will increase visitor services awareness with local businesses and tourism operators.

Benefits and Risks:

Please identify all the benefits associated with this project.

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Please identify any risks associated with this project, and how you plan to mitigate those risks.

Project Schedule and Implementation:

Please provide a detailed timeline including:

- the project start and completion dates
- important project milestones
- supporting details on how you plan to carry out this project (dates of events, activities, etc.)

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Project Sustainability:

Please describe any strategies you have in place to ensure the long-term sustainability of this project.

Budget:

Please provide a detailed project budget clearly indicating:

- the requested grant amount
- the applicant's minimum 25 per cent contribution to the total project cost
- all estimated costs of supplies and purchases

Feel free to use the provided budget template or create your own.

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Project Measurement:

Please describe how you will determine if this project is successful? What metrics will be implemented to measure and evaluate the project's progress and overall success?

Project Learnings:

How will your organization share learnings with other visitor service providers?

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Checklist

Please check all supporting documents included as attachments.

- Cover letter
- Letters of Support from community, local government
- Letter from municipality/region recognizing the organization as the official visitor services provided (For non-accredited VIC only)
- Others (please specify)

If you have questions or require assistance with this application, please contact The Visitor Services Unit of Alberta Culture and Tourism at AVIP@gov.ab.ca.

Applications must be submitted to Alberta Culture and Tourism no later than **4:30 p.m. on February 7, 2018**. **Incomplete applications will not be considered**. Please send your completed application, including all supporting documents to:

Mail: Robin Luini
Manager, Visitor Services
Destination Development and Visitor Services
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I certify that all information contained within this application to the Visitor Services Innovation Fund is true and correct and that all Visitor Services Innovation Funds will be used in accordance with the Visitor Services Innovation Fund guidelines. I certify that the grant will be applied in the year(s) and manner described within this application should it be accepted by the Minister of Alberta Culture and Tourism.

Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Personal information collected on this grant application form will be used for the purpose of administering the Visitor Services Grant Initiative. It is collected under the authority of section 33(c) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and is protected by the privacy provisions of the Act. If you have any questions about the collection, use or disclosure of your personal information, please contact Robin Luini at Robin.Luini@gov.ab.ca.