



AcceleratiON

*An Entrepreneurship Initiative¹ for
Black- and Indigenous-Owned Music Businesses*

Program Guidelines

Overview and Objectives:

As an economic development agency for the creative industries, Ontario Creates' priority is to support the growth and development of business entities focused on driving commercial growth and creating job opportunities within the province of Ontario. The core objective of the **AcceleratiON** program is to invest in new and emerging Black- and Indigenous-owned music businesses that demonstrate high potential for economic and cultural impact.

The key goals of this time-limited program are to:

- Enhance capacity for emerging Black- and Indigenous-owned music businesses.
- Strengthen support at critical stages in the careers of Black and Indigenous entrepreneurs in Ontario's music ecosystem.
- Enable the next generation of Black and Indigenous music industry professionals to create high quality content and retain intellectual property (IP) ownership and control over their own narratives.

Deadline: Thursday, November 13, 2025

Decisions will be communicated to applicants approximately 14 weeks after the deadline

Eligible Timeframe for Activities:

Spending must be incurred between January 1 and December 31, 2026

Eligible applicants must be:

- Self-identifying Black- and Indigenous-owned businesses that generate the majority of their revenue from music-based activities;
- Incorporated or a registered business (with a Master Business Licence);
- In operation for a minimum of one year; and
- A legal resident of Canada, and must have been a resident of Ontario for at least one year at the time of application.

Businesses and organizations that have received support through any other Ontario Creates investment program are **not eligible** for AcceleratiON.

¹ Time-limited initiative, subject to available funding.

Self-Identification:

Black: people who trace their roots to Sub-Saharan Africa, including those with origins in Canada, the United States, the Caribbean and Latin America

Indigenous: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples

For applicants with more than one owner, at least 50% of the ownership must identify as Black or Indigenous.

*Examples of eligible music businesses include: record labels, music publishers, artist managers, concert promoters, festival presenters, booking agents, recording studios, music production businesses, podcasters & owners of original content platforms, music publicists, and music marketing businesses. Artist-entrepreneurs (this may include producers) that are expanding their vision to incorporate any of the above business models **by investing in other artists** may also be considered.*

Funding Available:

The minimum funding amount that may be requested is \$2,500 and the maximum funding amount that may be requested is \$20,000. Funding amounts awarded may be smaller than the amount requested depending on program demand (number of applications received) and available funding.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to request a level of investment that aligns with their track record, capacity and stage of growth. The feasibility of the proposed budget will be considered as part of the assessment process.

Investment will be provided to successful applicants in the form of direct grants towards up to 100% of the total activity costs for budgets of \$10,000 or less, and up to 75% for budgets of more than \$10,000.

See **Summary of Application Materials** section below for more detail on the supporting documentation required.

Eligible Activities & Costs:

- Business Development (e.g. HR capacity expansion, fees for professional development courses, business planning consultants, accounting and legal services)
- Creative Development (e.g. recording and production, content creation, production costs for live music events)
- Marketing and Promotion (e.g. brand development, advertising, publicity)
- Strategic business travel and/or conference attendance
- Operations (e.g. staffing, administrative and overhead costs)

Note: capital expenditures (i.e. purchase of equipment, materials and/or software) and in-kind expenses may not exceed 10% of the total budget.

Professional development activities run by not-for-profit entities (e.g. workshops, song camps, panel sessions, etc.) are not eligible for funding.

Please refer to the budget template for details and guidance on eligible and ineligible line items.

When responding to the application questions and filling out the budget template, applicants must provide a business case and rationale for the types of costs for which they are seeking investment. Please keep in mind the **economic development** focus of the program (as outlined at the beginning of these guidelines) when preparing your budget.

All costs must be incurred in Ontario (except for marketing and business travel).

Costs must be incurred between January 1, 2026, and December 31, 2026.

Application Process:

Applications are due by 5:00 pm ET on **Thursday, November 13, 2025**.

We *strongly* encourage applicants to thoroughly review the guidelines, attend an information session and/or contact the Ontario Music Office before applying. The *AcceleratiON* Program Coordinator may be reached at acceleratiON@ontariocreates.ca.

All requested documentation **must** be submitted by the program deadline. The Ontario Music Office is not obligated to follow-up with applicants to request missing documentation.

Late applications will not be considered for funding. Prior discussion with Ontario Creates regarding the eligibility of an applicant or activity does not guarantee funding.

- Applicants **must** submit their applications electronically through the Ontario Creates Online Application Portal (OAP) at <https://apply.ontariocreates.ca>.
- Applicants that do not have a user account on OAP should go to <https://apply.ontariocreates.ca/> and click on “Register.” For assistance, please see the “OAP Quick Start Guide”.
- For technical assistance, please contact the OAP Helpdesk at applyhelp@ontariocreates.ca.

The application can be worked on over time and information can be saved as it is entered. Once saved, the applicant can go back to edit and/or add information up until the time when the application is actually submitted.

Please start the application process as early as possible (and ideally no later than at least two weeks ahead of the deadline) in order to allow ample time to complete the registration process, compile the required information and complete the application questions.

Summary of Application Materials

Applicants must supply the following information in their application (per the **Application Process** section above, applications must be submitted through the OAP):

- Applicant contact and self-identification information
- Applicant type (based on the list of eligible music businesses described above)
- Requested funding amount (ranging from \$2,500 to \$20,000)
- Responses to the following five application questions:
 1. Explain what your business does in 100 words or less.
 2. Provide a brief overview of the track record of the business owner(s). You may skip this question if providing resumes/CVs/letters of support in the Supporting Documents section.
 3. Provide a company overview including previous industry experience, profiles of key individuals, critical and commercial success and any other relevant achievements. This should include: a description of your business model; an outline of successes achieved to date; and profiles of mentors, board/committee members, business partners and/or team members. What makes your business unique in the marketplace?
 4. What are your corporate goals for the next 12 months (e.g. clients that you are/anticipate working with, revenue targets you hope to hit, and other accomplishments you hope to achieve)?
 5. Provide a detailed description of the activity/activities (including timelines and objectives) for which you are looking to fund through this program. How would this investment help you achieve your corporate goals and build towards long-term growth and sustainability? Describe how your company will measure success by identifying projected quantitative (e.g. # of jobs created, # of artists supported, % increase in social media audience, etc.) and qualitative (e.g. potential for critical success/award nominations, increased employee satisfaction, etc.) outcomes.
- The following Supporting Documents:
 - Articles of Incorporation or Master Business Licence
 - Budget template (provided by Ontario Creates, which will include guidance on eligible and ineligible costs)
 - Financial statements (Mandatory for requests of more than \$10,000. Notice-to-Reader statements are preferred, but internally prepared profit & loss statements will be accepted)
 - Applicants requesting more than \$10,000 must supply statements for the most recently completed fiscal year. Applicants may also choose to provide statements for the previous fiscal year should they wish to show additional business activity.
- **At least three different types** of the following pieces of supporting documentation:
 - Resumes/CVs of founders or key management personnel
 - Marketing materials/press clippings

- Streaming/social media metrics (to demonstrate audience reach/growth potential)
- Letters of support
- Corporate slide deck or business model canvas
- Business/marketing/strategic plan
- Back up documentation to support the proposed activity costs (e.g. supplier quotes) and/or to support the financing of the proposed activities (e.g. bank statements, letters of confirmation from applications to other funding bodies).

Application Assessment:

Applications will be reviewed and evaluated by Ontario Music Office staff and an external jury comprised of Black and Indigenous music industry representatives that have been selected by the Ontario Music Office through an open Call for Jurors process.

Applications will be assessed on the following criteria:

Track record of the business and/or its founders	20%
Feasibility of the budget and proposed activities	15%
Innovation, quality and creativity presented in the proposal	25%
Degree to which the proposed activities will contribute to the growth, capacity and sustainability of the business	20%
Potential for critical and commercial success as a result of the investment	20%

Responses to application questions and supporting documentation should demonstrate the applicant's ability to meet the above criteria in terms of tangible outcomes/metrics.

All Ontario Creates decisions are final. Ontario Creates reserves the right to alter program guidelines with general public notice to all potential applicants and to refuse any application for any reason. The number of awards and amount awarded is contingent on confirmation of Ontario Creates' annual budget. Ontario Creates is not required to make any minimum number of awards. Subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, all information contained in the application will remain strictly confidential. All inquiries pertaining to Ontario Creates Funds are to be directed to Ontario Creates staff only.

Obligations of Successful Applicants:

Upon approval of a successful application, business entities will be required to sign a transfer payment agreement with Ontario Creates that outlines the terms of their participation in the AcceleratiON program.

Successful applicants will receive the following funding installments:

- 70% upon funding approval;
- the remaining 30% following the approval of the recipient's final report and all deliverables outlined in the funding agreement

For more information:

Program inquiries should be directed to 416-642-6696 or acceleratiON@ontariocreates.ca.

Online Application Portal (OAP) inquiries should be directed to applyhelp@ontariocreates.ca.

Ontario Creates

Ontario Creates is an agency of the Government of Ontario that facilitates economic development, investment and collaboration in Ontario's creative industries including the music, book, magazine, film, television and interactive digital media sectors.

ontariocreates.ca