



2025-26 INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Deadlines: April 2, 2025 – 5:00 PM ET
August 7, 2025 – 5:00 PM ET

The Ontario Creates Industry Development Program documentation includes:

- Ontario Creates Industry Development Program Guidelines (this document)
- [Ontario Creates Program Policies](#)

Applicants must review ALL of the documents listed above prior to submitting an application.

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1. Introduction:

The Ontario Creates Industry Development Program provides support to Ontario’s established trade and event organizations to offer initiatives, events and activities (“the Project”) that stimulate the growth of the cultural media industries. A Project includes all preparation, planning and delivery of an activity or an event with a defined timeline and outcome.

The program will provide funding to eligible organizations that are delivering strategic projects with long-term impacts towards expanding skills, business capacity, market share, sales, and innovation. Projects must demonstrate the potential for measurable results for Ontario companies that create and sell content in the book, magazine, film, television, and interactive digital media sectors or collaborations between Ontario Creates-supported sectors.

Ontario Creates has identified two priority areas for the 2025-26 Industry Development Program:

- Professional development and strategic initiatives related to:
 - Environmental Sustainability
 - Accessibility
- Mentorship and training opportunities for mid-career professionals, particularly those from equity-deserving communities

Funding is provided in the form of direct grants towards the costs of eligible projects. Contributions are non-refundable. Funding may not exceed 75% of the total approved budget.

Applicants must demonstrate clear, sustainable outcomes, which align with the objectives of the applicable Industry Development Program.

Ontario Creates is committed to:

- supporting diversity and gender parity;
- providing enhanced accessibility support to people with disabilities, people who are Deaf, and people who face barriers in accessing technology to complete an application; and
- fostering respectful workplaces in all the sectors and companies we support.

Please see the [Program Policies](#) for more details.

2. Eligible Applicants

- Applicants must be incorporated not-for-profit Ontario or national organizations offering significant benefit to Ontario participants. At least 60% of a national organization's membership must be Ontario-based;
- Applicants must be recognized as a trade or event organization that serves the interests of one or more of the book, magazine, film, television or interactive digital media sectors. Music industry applicants are directed to the [Ontario Music Investment Fund](#), Music Industry Initiatives program; and
- Applicants must be established organizations in operation for at least one full year.

3. Eligible Projects and Activities

Program Streams

There are two program streams.

1. **Business Development** – supports business to business (B2B) industry projects and business to consumer (B2C) audience development projects that create business leads, sales and relationships.

Projects and activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Facilitating access to new markets and business opportunities, new channels, niche markets, exploiting new geographic targets; structured group or one-on-one meetings between buyers and sellers; business and/or content incubators with market participation; forums that connect buyers or investors with Ontario companies;
- Sales office and strategic export activities at global industry markets

Projects must provide targeted business opportunities relevant to the commercial interests of Ontario companies and can include potential for commercial transactions to take place.

2. **Capacity Building** – supports strategic projects that address challenges, opportunities or environmental changes that expand company capacity:

Projects and activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Well-defined learning activities for industry professionals;
- Industry events at conferences, markets, and festivals and activities that a trade organization has clearly identified as a key priority for its members and stakeholders;
- Activities that provide strategic and organizational efficiencies that benefit the applicant organization's members and stakeholders;
- Mentorship and training opportunities targeted to underrepresented groups within the applicant organization's stakeholder group.

The Industry Development Program may support projects that fit in both Business Development and Capacity Building streams. Please consider the primary focus of your project to determine which stream is most appropriate. If you are unsure of the stream, please contact the program consultant.

Overall Eligibility Criteria

- Projects must be targeted at Ontario Creates' clients in the book, magazine, film, television or interactive digital media sectors and/or any combination of these sectors;
- Projects should take place in Ontario; however, activities may take place elsewhere provided the project will have significant benefit to Ontario companies;
- **Applicants must begin their project no later than 3 months after the deadline at which they submit their application, and have a total of 12 months to complete the project.**
- **Applications must include measurable targets and outcomes to determine the success of the project.** Priority results include the number of Ontario participants; the number of new business leads and opportunities generated; and the value of

actual and anticipated sales, pre-sales and licensing agreements generated by the project;

- Applicants must demonstrate the feasibility of their financing plan.

Annual projects must reapply for subsequent funding. Previously supported projects are not guaranteed future funding.

Ontario Creates expects applicants who host event-based projects to choose accessible venues and offer accommodations to Deaf persons and persons with disabilities. More information on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act can be found here:

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11>

4. Funding Level and Budget

Contributions are non-refundable. Funding may not exceed 75% of the approved budget and will generally range from \$5,000 to \$35,000. Requests for higher amounts must be discussed with the program consultant (see page 12) prior to application.

For projects that include participation of and benefit to industry stakeholders outside of Ontario, the funding request must be in direct proportion to the percentage of Ontario stakeholders involved. E.g. for a project where only 50% of the participants are Ontario-based, funding can be provided for up to 75% of one half of the budget. Therefore if the total project budget of your activity is \$30,000, and 50% of the participants will be Ontario-based, you are eligible for a request of \$11,250 ($\$30,000 \times 0.75 \div 2 = \$11,250$).

Eligible Administrative Costs

- Capped at 15% of the budget, costs may include:
 - Office space/rent and corporate services directly related to the project; including utilities, payroll service costs, couriers, photocopying, use of office equipment, rental of office space and other organization overhead costs. The definition of an administrative cost is at the discretion of Ontario Creates;
 - Labour that supports the administration of the activity (management oversight, accounting etc.).

Eligible Labour Costs

- Labour directly related to the execution of the activity (in-house and contract positions calculated at a fair market rate).

Eligible Capital Costs

- Capped at 15% of the budget, costs may include:
 - Equipment and Materials: if purchased, amortization must be calculated using the straight-line method with a prescribed useful life of 24 months; if rented, actual rental cost;
 - Software: 50% of the cost or the amortization expense using the straight-line method with a prescribed useful life of 12 months (whichever is less).

Other Important Information

- All costs with the exception of labour and administration must be paid to unrelated parties.

Ineligible Expenses

The following expenses are ineligible:

- Expenses incurred outside of the approved activity period;
- Expenses that were not in the original budget and which did not receive pre-approval by Ontario Creates;
- Expenses incurred prior to the application being submitted;
- Labour costs not directly related to the activity;
- Staff benefit costs;
- Real estate costs and leasehold improvements;
- Capital costs related to permanent structures (e.g., materials, labour, land acquisition, purchase of equipment for project construction, any rehabilitation or retrofit of existing infrastructure assets);
- Cost of alcoholic beverages;
- Fees relating to the compilation (notice-to-reader), review, or audit of applicant financial statements;
- Cost of General Liability insurance (however, the cost of specific event insurance is eligible);
- Sales Taxes: Taxes that are recoverable by the recipient may not be claimed as an eligible cost on the Activity Budget. Examples of taxes that are recoverable include GST/HST, PST, VAT;
- Related party transactions which did not receive pre-approval by Ontario Creates.

Budget and Financing Plan

Applicants are required to submit a budget and financing plan on the [template](#) provided.

Applicants must begin their project no later than 3 months after the deadline at which they submit their application, and have a total of 12 months to complete the project.

The funding from the Industry Development Program can represent up to a maximum of 75% of the total budget, with the remaining 25% of the budget from the applicant and/or third parties including other government sources, and/or partners. Applicants bringing a higher percentage of non-government funding will be considered more favourably.

If outside services are required for the activity, it is advisable to include quotes as backup.

The financing plan must match the budget. Funding from other sources, including the applicant, must be identified in the financing plan.

Specifically, the financing component of the budget must indicate all sources and amounts from:

- Corporate investment (cash in the bank);
- Financed investment (e.g., line of credit, investors);
- Projected revenue derived from execution of the activity;
- Confirmed funding from government or other private funding bodies; and
- Anticipated funding from government or other funding bodies – including the request for Industry Development Program funding.

Confirmed funding from other sources should be supported by appropriate documentation (i.e. letter of commitment or contract from the funding source).

Financing from public/private funding agencies/bodies does not need to be confirmed at the time of application. However, unconfirmed funding from these sources should be supported with information, timelines and documentation to demonstrate the applicant's level of confidence in receiving such funding. For example, a company would include the last approval letter from the funding body, along with a projection of how much the company hopes to receive in the next round and an estimated date of notification from the funding body.

5. Application Process and Evaluation

Applications must be submitted to Ontario Creates by 5:00 pm ET on the applicable deadline* via the Online Application Portal (OAP) at <https://apply.ontariocreates.ca/>.

A list of required application materials is outlined in the OAP. Applications must include all requested documentation and adhere to word counts when answering questions.

Applicants will not have the opportunity to add or replace information or documentation after the deadline.

*There are two application deadlines for this program. Applications should be submitted by the deadline prior to the start date of the proposed activity.

- Applications will be reviewed by Ontario Creates for eligibility and completeness.
- If the application is incomplete or ineligible it will not be further evaluated and applicants will be notified via the OAP.
- Eligible applications that include all the required documents will be reviewed and assessed by a jury of industry professionals and/or Ontario Creates.
- Decisions will be communicated to applicants within 16 weeks of the deadline.
- Organizations can only include one project per application, however an organization may submit more than one application per deadline, and may submit applications at both deadlines depending on the start time of their project activities;

- Applicants are strongly encouraged to begin the application process early to allow ample time to compile and complete the necessary information;

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

Summary of Application Requirements

The project plan submitted for review must contain, at minimum, the components below. A complete list of required information is outlined in the application form on the Online Application Portal (OAP).

- Profile of applicant organization including:
 - Overview of general business activities, short/long-term goals;
 - Profile and capabilities of key personnel;
 - Demonstration of diversity among senior leaderships and employees;
 - Explanation of company policies and/or activities that support diversity, equity and inclusion;
 - Track record delivering the same or similar projects.
- Detailed description of project including:
 - Objectives;
 - Targeted participants including equity-deserving communities;
 - Outreach and marketing strategy;
 - Risks and challenges;
 - Alignment with IDP objectives;
 - Relevance to Ontario Creates stakeholders;
 - Timeline/Action Plan with Key Milestones;
 - Expected results;
 - Research to support the activity.
- Schedule with milestones and resources;
- Budget and Financing Template (including evidence of confirmed financing and information demonstrating likelihood of receiving unconfirmed financing);
- Articles of Incorporation for the applicant company (where applicable);
- Financial Statements for the two most recently completed fiscal years (please see [Program Policies](#) for more details);
- Documentation that confirms secured financing, such as bank statements, letters from funding bodies confirming funding.

6. Decision Criteria

This is a competitive program, and it is anticipated that the total funding request will exceed the available funds. Applicants are advised to ensure that they meet all eligibility requirements before submitting an application. Additionally, applicants should ensure that their application materials clearly convey the strengths of their

proposal in relation to the guidelines. The number of applicants who receive funding and the amount awarded will depend on the quantity and quality of the projects recommended by the jury for support and the individual needs of each project.

Ontario Creates applies a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion to the evaluation criteria for this program, and directs jury members to do the same. Applicants proposing projects/activities that support, reflect and strengthen diversity and gender parity in Ontario are expected to tangibly demonstrate a genuine and sustained commitment to these equity-deserving communities. Ontario Creates may identify particular underrepresented communities within a sector. The provincial definition of diversity includes, but is not limited to: ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion (creed), sex, sexual orientation and socio-economic status. After applicant and project eligibility have been confirmed, applications will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Criteria	Weighting	Considerations may include:
Relevance	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of the project to Ontario Creates stakeholders and the extent to which it meets a demonstrated need and/or addresses an industry challenge. • Project includes culturally appropriate initiatives to engage with equity-deserving communities.
Feasibility	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation clearly describes the proposed project, and includes a detailed feasible timeline, budget, and financing plan. • Application demonstrates thoughtful consultation, collaboration, and participation of equity-deserving communities.
Expected Results	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which the project will have a positive impact on the applicant's ability to serve its members and stakeholders and produce measurable results for Ontario companies.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors may include: number of Ontario participants; the impact on applicant’s members and stakeholders; commercial impact (projected number of business meetings, sales results, and increase in audience awareness); demonstration of benefit to the relevant industry in Ontario. • If applicable, expected results should identify outcomes of projects focused on inclusive activities and/or with equity-deserving communities.
Track Record	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track record of the applicant organization and experience delivering similar projects, including those focused on inclusivity or in collaboration with equity-deserving communities. • Information about the applicant organization, including diversity among senior leadership, staff, or contract employees, particularly underrepresented communities within the relevant sector. • Explanation of applicant organization’s policies and/or activities that support diversity, equity and inclusion

Ontario Creates may request changes to the budget or application prior to making a commitment.

Expected Results and Measurable Outcomes

Applicants are asked to describe the main benefit of the project to Ontario companies in the sectors they represent. Applicants should provide a list of all anticipated outcomes they will report on in their interim and final reports, should their funding request be successful. Measurable outcomes will be dependent on the nature of the project but may include:

Outcome	Business Development	Capacity Building
Number of Ontario attendees/participants at events/activities	☐	☐
Number of international participants/delegates	☐	☐
Increased revenues from international sales	☐	
Increased revenues for participating companies	☐	
Number of business meetings	☐	☐
Number of business connections/leads by participants	☐	☐
Sales success of activities/companies participating in the activities	☐	
Activities that stimulate knowledge transfer and business opportunities	☐	☐
Professional development opportunities created for Ontario participants		☐
Sustainability of project outcomes	☐	☐
Return on Ontario Creates investment (\$s)	☐	
Return on Ontario Creates investment (broader benefits to sector, increased profile, attendance at events, sector visibility, access to new markets)	☐	☐
Traditional media impact (metrics)	☐	☐
Online and social media impact	☐	☐
# of jobs created/or retained in the applicant organization		☐
# of jobs created/or retained by companies in the target sector/s	☐	
Degree to which project engages in inclusive activities and/or with equity-deserving communities.	☐	☐

7. Successful Applicants

Funding

60% paid on execution of Ontario Creates agreement and 40% at the completion of the activity and receipt of a final report.

Accessibility

Successful applicants who are Deaf or disabled may be eligible for supplementary funds for accessibility expenses required to complete their project deliverables.

Insurance

Recipient companies are required to carry Commercial General Liability Insurance. Please see [Program Policies](#) for more details.

Contract Template

On acceptance into the program, the recipient company is required to sign a standard Ontario government agreement covering the terms of their participation in the program including providing Ontario Creates with permission to use the project and delivery materials for promotional purposes. Please see [Program Policies](#) for more details.

Changes to the Project

Ontario Creates must be notified of any significant changes to the project as defined in the contract and if applicable, changes will require consent of Ontario Creates.

Reporting Criteria

Recipient companies are required to provide Ontario Creates with a satisfactory report evaluating the completed project. Specific report requirements will be outlined in the Ontario Creates agreement but generally are expected to include those mentioned in the Expected Results section of the application and the Program Results and Outcomes section of the reporting template, and the following:

- Short term actual measurable results against projected original targets;
- Strategy for capturing longer term results where possible;
- Sustainability of activity;
- Number and list of participants, with identification of Ontario participants;
- Assessment of effectiveness in meeting the project objectives and those of the Industry Development Program;
- Summary of participants' exit questionnaires where applicable to the project;
- A Final Cost Report and Financing Statement is required for all projects supported by Ontario Creates. Please see [Program Policies](#) for more details.

8. For More Information

Program inquiries should be directed to 416-642-6652 or programs2@ontariocreates.ca

To discuss an application:

For specific information regarding an application, please contact

Gillian Fizet, Program Consultant, Industry Development

Phone: 416-642-6627

Email: gfizet@ontariocreates.ca

These guidelines are for the 2025-26 deadline only. This document is subject to change for future deadlines. Applicants are advised to consult the Ontario Creates website for clarifications and alterations to these guidelines.

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