

2026-27 INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Deadlines: **March 25, 2026 – 5:00 PM ET**

July 22, 2026 – 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 the documents listed above prior to submitting an application.

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1. Introduction:

The Ontario Creates Industry Development Program (IDP) provides support to Ontario's established trade and event organizations to offer initiatives, events and activities ("the Project") that stimulate the growth of the following Ontario Creates' supported creative industry sectors¹:

- film/tv;
- interactive digital media;
- magazine publishing;
- book publishing.

The IDP provides 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.** A

¹ Music industry applicants are directed to the [Ontario Music Investment Fund](#)'s Music Industry Development program

Project includes all preparation, planning and delivery of an activity or an event with a defined timeline and outcome.

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 important details.

2. Eligible Applicants

To be eligible to apply to the IDP, applicants must:

- be a not-for-profit organization
- be incorporated in a Canadian jurisdiction
- be Ontario-based
 - Exceptions may be made for national organizations outside of Ontario, if the proposed project can demonstrate significant benefit to Ontario participants. If the applicant is a membership organization, at least 60% of its membership must be Ontario-based;
- be recognized as a trade or event organization
- be in operation for at least one full year
- serve the interests of one or more the following Ontario Creates' supported creative industry sectors, AND relate specifically to the following stakeholder groups within the sector:

Creative Industry Sector	Target stakeholder for IDP
Film/TV	film/tv producers
Interactive Digital Media	Companies that develop Video Games and/or XR content experiences as their primary activity
Magazine publishing	publishers
Book publishing	publishers

The IDP is designed to primarily support **established professionals** in the creative industries. Please review [**Ontario Creates Strategic Plan**](#) for more information about Ontario Creates mandate and current strategic goals

3. Eligible Projects and Activities

Program Streams

The IDP has two program streams: Business Development and Capacity Building. Ontario Creates may support projects that fit in both 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.

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 in this stream must provide targeted business opportunities relevant to the commercial interests of eligible Ontario organizations and should, where possible, 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.

Industry Priorities for 2026-2027

The following priorities have been identified as eligible projects/activities for 2026-2027:

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

Eligibility considerations

Projects must be targeted at Ontario Creates' clients in the film/tv, interactive digital media, magazine publishing, or book publishing industries and/or any combination of these sectors. See table on page 2 regarding specific stakeholder groups;

- Projects should take place in Ontario; however, activities may take place elsewhere provided the project will have significant benefit to Ontario companies;
- Projects **must have measurable targets and outcomes to determine success.** 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;
- 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>

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

4. Financing, Budget, Expenses and Timeline Requirements

Financing :

- The IDP will provide a non-repayable contribution of up to **75% of the approved budget.**
- Typical financing for this program ranges **between \$5,000 to \$35,000.** Requests for higher amounts must be discussed with Ontario Creates staff prior to application.
- Financing for the remaining 25% of the budget must come from the applicant(s) and/or third parties, including other government sources, and or/partners.
 - Confirmed funding from other sources should be supported by appropriate documentation (i.e. letter of commitment or contract from the funding source).
 - Unconfirmed funding should be supported with as much information as possible (i.e. any relevant/recent correspondence on funding status; a previous year's funding approval letter along with a projection of how much will be received this round and estimated date of notification from the funding body, etc.).
- 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 ($\$30,000 \times 0.75 \div 2 = \$11,250$).

Budget:

- Budgets must be submitted on the [EXCEL template](#) provided and must include all costs through to completion of the project. No alternate templates or formats will be accepted.
- If outside services are required, applicants must include quotes and a rationale for the selection of the service provider.

Eligible and Ineligible Expenses:

- All expenses included in the Budget must directly relate to the project.

Eligible Expenses	Examples
Administrative expenses ² to a maximum of 15% .	office space/rent, utilities, payroll service costs, couriers, office equipment, organizational overhead, management oversight and accounting;
Capital expenses to a maximum of 15% :	hardware, software, etc.
<i>Equipment and Materials:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• if purchased, amortization must be calculated using the straight-line method with a prescribed useful life of 24 months; if rented, actual rental cost <i>Software:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50% of the cost, or the amortization expense using the straight-line method with a prescribed useful life of 12 months	
Labour costs directly related to the execution of the activity	in-house and contract positions calculated at a fair market rate
All other expenses relevant and necessary for the completion of the project.	

Ineligible Expenses

- Expenses incurred outside of the approved activity period;
- Expenses incurred prior to the application being submitted;

² The definition of an administrative cost is at the discretion of Ontario Creates.

- 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.

Timeline:

- The applicant must begin incurring expenses no later than three (3) months after the program's application deadline date.
- All activities must be completed and all expenses must be incurred at the conclusion of the program period (within twelve (12) months from when the applicant begins incurring expenses, which should be no later than three (3) months after the program's application deadline).

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 and page limits. Applicants will not have the opportunity to add or replace information or documentation after the deadline. Please refer to the [Ontario Creates Program Policies](#) for information on additional application requirements, such as financial statements and certificates of insurance.

*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 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.

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 the following dimensions: 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 gap or challenge. • Project includes culturally appropriate initiatives to engage with equity-deserving communities.
Feasibility and Risks	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy of budget and strength of financing contributions. • Suitability and quality of project planning, delivery, and timelines. • Mitigation of other challenges and risks. • Supporting research to demonstrate needs, challenges, benefit of project.

		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 in turn produce measurable results for Ontario Creates' stakeholders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factors may include: number of business leads; 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. Benefit to the Ontario economy including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> return on Ontario Creates' investment creation or retention of jobs in the province spend in Ontario³. 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. Applicant's experience with similar projects. Capacity, skills, knowledge and expertise of the team. Diversity among senior leadership, staff and/or contract employees.

³ Ontario expenses are defined in the [Ontario Creates Program Policies](#).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of company policies and/or initiatives that support diversity, equity and inclusion.
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Ontario Creates may request changes to the budget or application prior to making a commitment.

7. Successful Applicants

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

- Successful applicants will receive funding as follows:
 - 60% on execution of the Ontario Creates agreement;
 - 40% following the approval of the recipient's final report and all deliverables outlined in the funding agreement.

8. For More Information

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These guidelines are for the 2026-27 deadline only. This document is subject to change for future deadlines. Applicants are advised to consult the Ontario Creates website for any updates, 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