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Algonquin Park, Muskoka, Parry Sound and the Almaguin Highlands
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EXPLORERS EDGE PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT: INITIATIVE GUIDELINES

Explorers' Edge Product Development initiative program is designed to build on existing and introduce new EE tourism products that enhance the regions diversity of tourism attraction and competitive advantage by support the development of tourism experiences in EE. Explorers' Edge encourages the formation of working partnerships to achieve this goal, and will assist by providing financial incentives to community groups whose projects meet this ideal.

MANDATE OF EXPLORERS' EDGE

It is the Explorers' Edge mandate to help regional tourism operators increase receipts by providing strategic leadership, by developing strong, collaborative partnerships and compelling packages, by developing workforce and skills training, and by developing innovative and effective marketing initiatives that produce measurable results.

ELIGIBILITY

1. LOCATION

The project must be located within the region served by Explorers' Edge. This includes Almaguin Highlands, Algonquin Park, Muskoka and Parry Sound.

2. APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants must be a First Nation, local service board, municipality, or an incorporated not-for-profit community organization that can demonstrate financial and administrative stability. Preference is given to candidates who indicate support for the project from other organizations, the various government levels, co-operatives, or the private sector. Ad hoc groups and not-for-profit organizations that are not incorporated must find a qualified applicant to act as the proponent of the project.

3. PROJECTS

Explorers' Edge Product Development Initiative may fund feasibility studies, research projects, promotion of innovation and new technology, seminars and workshops, marketing and promotion, environmental assessment reports, small-scale capital projects, community tourism, and other community-based economic development projects. Projects are **not** eligible if they access funding from Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport or have received previous Explorers' Edge Initiative funding. Priority is given to projects that have:

- a positive and lasting effect on Explorer' Edge community and economic development
- an element of job creation and/or retention
- support for youth entrepreneurship and retention
- enhancement of the volunteer sector
- a collaborative approach with community partners
- a sound project budget

AVAILABLE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The budget for the Explorers' Edge Initiative is limited, and access to its financial assistance is therefore competitive. All applicants are expected to generate additional financial support from their community and/or other funding agencies. Awards to approved projects are to a maximum of \$10,000, and cannot exceed 75% of the total project cost.

OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDS

All applicants are encouraged to seek funding from organizations that may have a specific interest in the kind of project proposed. Explorers' Edge staff may be able to assist in identifying appropriate agencies.

INITIATIVE GUIDELINES

NOTE: Applicants are REQUIRED to discuss their project with Explorers' Edge BEFORE starting the application process.

APPLICATION DEADLINES

The deadlines for consideration at scheduled review meetings are **June 30, August 31, and November 15**. Retroactive approvals will not be considered. Please contact Explorers' Edge well ahead of the deadline date, BEFORE submitting an application.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The Tourism Operator Committee (comprised of volunteer members from the community) will review the application. Applicants may be requested to make a presentation to the committee for clarity. A letter confirming acceptance or rejection of the application will be issued within one month following the deadline.

Explorers' Edge reserves the sole right to approve or deny funding of any project even though it may meet the stated eligibility criteria.

Retroactive approvals will not be considered. Costs incurred prior to Review Committee approval are not eligible for funding.

HOW TO APPLY

To apply for Explorers' Edge Product Development Initiative assistance, applicants must discuss their project with Explorers' Edge, complete the application form detailing the project and its budget, and include all requisite support material. Applications may be sent to Explorers' Edge by mail, by e-mail, or hand-delivered.

IF APPROVED

Explorers' Edge will prepare a letter of offer with terms and conditions. In some cases, disbursements may be released only upon the achievement of specified goals. Explorers' Edge Product Development Initiative contributions may be subject to a 10-50% holdback until applicant has completed the project, met all project requirements as laid out in the letter of offer, and/or until Explorers' Edge receives a final report and budget. Funds must be used within 5 months of receipt.

All applicants must submit a final report within two months of completion of the project, to include final project revenue and expense statements (with copies of invoices relating to the Explorers' Edge Product Development Initiative funding contribution), an evaluation of the project's outcomes and its specific economic impact, and copies or photographs of materials indicating the support of Explorers' Edge.

Explorers' Edge may request that a Explorers' Edge Director be assigned to monitor the project and/or sit on the committee/board of the project as a project liaison person during the duration of the project. This is in addition to the written reports that may be required as outlined in the letter of offer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORT

Explorers' Edge requires acknowledgement as a project partner through:

- (a) initial publicity of the project (press release or other announcements): Explorers' Edge to arrange the details for media exposure.
- (b) ongoing publicity: the logogram noting the involvement of Explorers' Edge must appear in a prominent location on publications, signage, and publicity relating to this project. (The logo may be downloaded from the website at www.explorersedge.ca, or sent upon request.)

Explorers' Edge graciously acknowledges the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS).