

## COVID-19 Stimulus Development Fund Program Details

As of December 8, 2020

### Summary

In response to COVID-19, the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) set up the COVID-19 Stimulus Development Fund as part of their ongoing efforts to help Indigenous tourism operators recover and build resiliency from the devastating impacts of the pandemic.

Recognizing the immediate need of the community, ITAC deferred its annual development grant money along with a large amount of savings from other programs to establish the [COVID-19 Stimulus Development Fund](#) at the beginning of the travel restrictions. Additionally, in June the Federal Government announced \$133 million to help Indigenous businesses suffering the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, of which \$16 million was to be allocated in support of Indigenous tourism businesses and delivered by ITAC.

In October, ITAC awarded the final phase of the COVID-19 Stimulus Development Fund grants. In Phase 6, 233 Indigenous tourism operators were allocated grants of up to \$25,000 per applicant, representing \$5.659M in non-repayable contributions. Since the inception of the fund in March, ITAC has awarded 678 non-repayable contributions of up to \$25,000 per applicant, totalling \$16.212 million. These grants, which have reached a mix of export-, market- and visitor-ready Indigenous tourism businesses in Canada, were made possible with the support of the Federal Government via Indigenous Services Canada and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.

**ITAC is currently in the process of distributing all funds to recipients. According to the contract with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), ITAC has until December 31, 2020 to distribute all the funds associated with the COVID-19 Stimulus Development Fund and is on track to meet this requirement. To date, ITAC has paid out 654 of 678 grants (\$16M of the \$16.2M) but the remaining funds are fully committed and ITAC is on track to pay out remaining funds by the end of December.**

### Quick links:

- Main hub for all COVID-19 Stimulus Development Fund Program details can be found [here](#)
- Stimulus Summary Press Release:  
<https://indigenoustourism.ca/corporate/indigenous-tourism-association-of-canada-successfully-delivers-industry-saving-funding-to-indigenous-tourism-businesses/>
- To view the application reviewing process and frequently asked questions, click [here](#)
- To view the application eligibility criteria - click [here](#)
- To view Phase Six successful applicants, click [here](#)
- To view Phase Five successful applicants, click [here](#)
- To view Phase Four successful applicants, click [here](#)
- To view Phase Two and Three successful applicants, click [here](#)
- To view the initial successful applicants in Phase One, click [here](#)

### Key Details:

- Since the middle of March 2020, ITAC has been advocating for Indigenous tourism businesses nationwide to receive funding that will support them in guarding against and recovering from the impacts of the COVID pandemic. As a national body, ITAC was awarded Federal funds with the mandate that they are distributed to qualified Indigenous tourism businesses, in the form of grants.
- In April and in a second call in August, ITAC put out a national call for applications for support and received more than 800 applications.
- **Results:** In the months since, ITAC has undergone six phases of awarding grants and have supported 678 eligible operators with non-repayable contributions of up to \$25,000 per applicant, totalling \$16.212 million.
  - At this time, all the funds from June federal funding allocation for Indigenous tourism businesses have been allocated and ITAC is continuing to advocate to support the Indigenous tourism industry, which may include further stimulus support.
- **Application Evaluation Process:** ITAC established an adjudication committee, with applications status blind from ITAC Board, ITAC CEO and Provincial Territorial partners to remove bias and to keep the process as fair as possible.
  - Two adjudicators reviewed each application to determine completeness, overall need and how funds will be used. Based on the eligibility requirements of the funding, this included looking for answers related to maintaining/ recovering jobs, diversifying revenue streams or strengthening the business for future tourism seasons as well as confirming Indigenous ownership, providing a budget and completing a COVID-19 recovery plan.
  - Adjudicators used a scoring matrix based on the eligibility criteria. The scores of the adjudicators were then averaged and funding amounts recommended based on the application's score (to a maximum of \$25,000). Final sign off was done by funding partners to meet the requirements of the contribution agreements.
- **Ineligibility:** Unfortunately, not all businesses that applied were deemed to be eligible for the grants due to reasons including, but not limited to:
  - not meeting the criteria of being an Indigenous tourism business: the business needs to be at least 51% owned and/or controlled by Indigenous People and provide a tourism experience to guests
  - not being open prior to October, 2019
  - missing documentation: not filling out the proper paperwork and not submitting all forms required to meet the eligibility (could include budget, COVID plan or declaration)
  - It is regrettable that ITAC could not provide every business that applied with financial support but when administering government funds, they must adhere to the strict criteria and policies outlined by the funding partners.
- **Communication:** Throughout the grant application and review process, the ITAC team made many attempts to reach out to businesses (ITAC members and non-members) to help guide them through the process and ensure that all of the eligibility criteria were met. Unfortunately, not all were reachable and some, in the end, did not qualify.
- **Funding streams:** Funds were made available through different funding mechanisms in support of the grants. Indigenous Services Canada with their funding program and the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) had different requirements of the funds:
  - RDAs required: a signed agreement and outlined a payment schedule with 50% of funds upon signature, 25% on completion of midterm, 25% on completion of final report
  - ISC funds (announced in June, signed off in August, received in Sept) allowed for a single payment to businesses

- **Local association involvement:** In each province, ITAC's local partner Indigenous tourism associations (e.g. Indigenous Tourism BC, Indigenous Tourism Quebec, Indigenous Tourism Alberta) were recruited to manage, facilitate and verify businesses in the application processes of the Indigenous tourism businesses in their region.
  - **Ontario:** Unfortunately, in Ontario, Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO) declined to participate and represent their businesses. Although every effort on ITAC's part was made to make contact with and coordinate with Ontario-based businesses, without people on the ground, their efforts were not always successful and there are a higher number of declined applications in this province as a result.
- **Funding delivery delays:** As is the case with most issues dealing with bureaucracy, while the immediate need of Indigenous business for financial relief from the effects of the pandemic is indisputable, the government stimulus that funded these grants has taken a significant amount of time to flow through the regulatory channels and appropriate financial institutions (**Timeline:** Funding was announced in June but the contract was only signed in August and then money started to become available from the funding partners only in the first week of September). Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) also had to review and approve each applicant in each phase of funding announced (approximately five business days for each of the six phases, totalling over 30 business days), which caused further delays outside of ITAC's control. ITAC is distributing the funds to the grant recipients as quickly as logistically possible but asks for patience as they navigate through the appropriate channels.
  - Approved businesses have been notified of the contribution agreement and requirements and followed up with. If they have not yet received funding they can connect with the coordinator responsible for the province by phone or email.
- **Administration Support:** ITAC received a modest administration budget to support the delivery of funds. This represents a total of 3% (approx \$500,000) of the overall contribution from Indigenous Services Canada. The administration budget was approved by ISC ahead of signature of the contribution agreement. This budget included funds for ITAC provincial and territorial partners who agreed to support the process with outreach, engagement and validating members for being Indigenous owned. Additionally, a portion of the funds were used to cover ITAC administration and operating costs including system management for the online platform and production of new materials specifically for the marketing, implementation and processing of the Stimulus Development Fund program.