

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (RED) PROGRAM

Main Street Ontario Guidelines

The Rural Economic Development Program

The Rural Economic Development (RED) Program is an economic development initiative that helps rural communities remove barriers to community development and economic growth, and develop the tools and flexibility they need to become strong rural communities. The objectives of the RED Program are to create diversified business climates in rural Ontario; the creation and retention of long-term jobs; a strategic and coordinated local and regional approach for economic development, the creation of alliances and partnerships; and the development of information, tools and resources to enhance rural economic development.

Since its inception in 2001, the RED Program has assisted numerous communities and sectors in rural Ontario to overcome barriers to economic development and growth. It can help yours.

Contact Information

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Main Street Ontario: The Right Approach for Your Community?

In 2009, the RED Program created an annual application for communities seeking to use the Main Street approach to downtown revitalization. Funding matched to 50% of eligible project costs up to a maximum of \$150,000 over 3 years per project is available to help communities hire a full-time downtown revitalization coordinator to develop the overall downtown revitalization project, implement and monitor the action plan. The ceiling amount of \$50,000 per year may be increased by up to \$15,000 in the first year for Northern Communities to assist with costs associated with securing market analysis expertise.

Main Street Ontario combines:

Technical Assistance including coaching and training using key downtown revitalization resources to support market analysis, action plan development and the identification of new business opportunities.

Cost-sharing Funding for project implementation such as hiring a full-time downtown revitalization coordinator, new marketing initiatives, business development strategies and signage improvement.

A Province-Wide Community Network that provides opportunities for sharing expertise, successes and solutions for common challenges.

If long-term revitalization—to counter a cycle of degeneration—is to succeed, it requires touching on all aspects that shape our downtowns. The Main Street approach is a community-led economic development approach that is time-consuming and requires leadership with local support .

Main Street Ontario places emphasis on all “Four-Points” of downtown revitalization: 1) Economic Development, 2) Marketing and Promotions, 3) Organizational Development, and 4) Physical Improvements. This approach has been used very successfully in other jurisdictions for stimulating economic development that leads to private and public sector reinvestment in traditional commercial districts.

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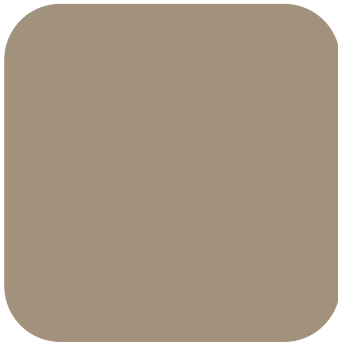
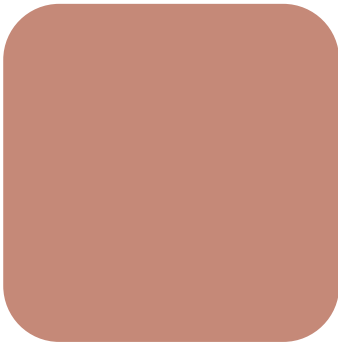
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WHO MAY APPLY

Main Street Ontario

Eligible applicants include strategic alliances between (any combination of) community organizations (including not-for-profit) and must include the lower or single-tier municipality as either a co-applicant or lead applicant. All applicants must share in the risks of the project, invest in the project, and have a vested interest in completing the project. Individuals or individual businesses are not eligible to apply as sole applicants.

This guide has been designed to assist those who wish to apply to the RED Program for a comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization. All existing RED Program parameters apply.

Main Street Ontario is recommended for:

- Communities with at least 50 commercial enterprises or 70 structures/storefronts in the downtown; and
- Communities under 100,000 in population.

Applicants are also required to include a Municipal Council resolution endorsing the RED Program Main Street Ontario funding application.

FUNDING

Projects are cost-shared with the provincial government investing up to 50 per cent of the project's eligible cost in most cases. In-kind contributions such as existing staff/office space are not eligible for cost sharing. Payments are based upon the receipt of paid eligible invoices along with proof of payments.

If RED Program funding is requested to develop downtown revitalization action plans and implementation activities that incorporate the areas of economic development, physical improvement, marketing and promotions and organizational development, use the following program guidelines:

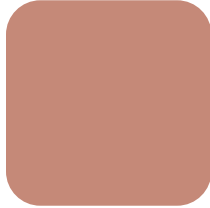
RED Program Funding will support the following 7 types of eligible costs:

- 1) project coordinator salary/wages/benefits;
- 2) training/conference expenses for the coordinator and chair (incl. travel);
- 3) meeting expenses;
- 4) office-related expenses specific to the project (rent, utilities, phone and Internet, office equipment and supplies);
- 5) the fees of a design professional to conduct a community design workshop and prepare conceptual drawings/illustrations of physical improvement priorities;
- 6) costs associated with data gathering for market analysis such as survey printing, distribution and data entry; and
- 7) initial implementation expenses (e.g. business recruitment strategy, small scale physical improvements or new events).

Please note that market analysis services are ineligible expenses (except in Northern Ontario) as OMAFRA staff will generate the market intelligence reports after the community has gathered the relevant data.

The RED Program will fund a maximum of 50 percent of eligible project costs up to a maximum of \$150,000 per project over three years. Up to an additional \$15,000 is available to Northern Communities to assist with costs associated with securing market analysis expertise.

HOW TO APPLY



The application process for the Main Street Ontario Funding is as follows:

(1) Expression of Interest: applicants submit a brief description of their proposed project for initial assessment.

(2) Full Application: applicants provide a full description of their project for assessment and approval.



Project approval will be based on a fully developed application that must include:

- a clear demonstration of the need for the project (including the economic barriers it will assist in overcoming);
- a sound financial plan, including satisfactory assessment of the applicants' financial viability and demonstrated capacity to deliver a three-year project;
- the economic development potential of the project; and
- specific outcomes and performance measures.



PROJECT SELECTION AND DELIVERY

A Project Review Panel, consisting of community leaders from across Ontario, reviews applications and recommends projects to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Applications are assessed according to evaluation criteria for Main Street Ontario applicants.

Preference will be given to applicants who most strongly demonstrate: 1) the **need** for downtown revitalization; 2) the **capacity** to deliver a long-term project; and, 3) community **readiness** to deliver on the action plan.

The annual Main Street Ontario selection cycle is as follows:

- Early May: Expressions of Interest are submitted.
- Late June: Full Applications are submitted.
- Late September: RED Panel reviews Main Street Ontario applications.
- October: Main Street Ontario communities are announced.
- November to January: full-time coordinators hired by successful Main Street Ontario communities.
- February: Downtown revitalization coordinators participate in mandatory intensive Main Street Ontario training program.



SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS

Successful Main Street Ontario communities will be required to:

- 1) Receive ongoing downtown revitalization coaching from OMAFRA regional staff;
- 2) Send the coordinator and committee chair to OMAFRA downtown revitalization training and community of practice meetings;
- 3) Submit an annual report card to gauge progress in downtown revitalization efforts;
- 4) Create a comprehensive action-plan and initial implementation activities towards revitalizing the downtown commercial business district; and,
- 5) Harness local talent and develop skills for implementing a comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization.

All applicants for approved projects will be required to sign an Agreement (i.e., contract) with the Province of Ontario. Applicants are strongly advised to review a sample Agreement prior to approval and to seek legal counsel regarding the terms and conditions of the Agreement.

All parties signing Agreements with the Province of Ontario are required to have comprehensive general liability insurance with coverage for at least \$2 million per occurrence. This insurance must show the Province (Her Majesty the Queen in right of Ontario) as an additional insured on the policy and contain the endorsements specified by the Agreement and is required throughout the term of the Agreement.

A Certificate of Insurance from each of the applicants will be required to be submitted to the Ministry prior to the signing of an Agreement.

Municipalities and First Nations are required to submit a Municipal By-law or Band Council Resolution allowing the municipality or the band to enter into a Funding Agreement with the Province of Ontario. All companies and incorporated entities will also be required to provide proof of current status (i.e., certificate of status) and constituting documents (i.e., articles of incorporation or letters patent, etc.) which indicate the full and proper name of the organization as well as the proper signatories to the Agreement. In the event that your business or organization is not incorporated (i.e., sole proprietorship, unincorporated association, etc.), please be advised that the individual who signs the Agreement on behalf of the business or organization will be assuming personal liability for the project. Moreover, this individual would be subject to all the terms and conditions set forth in the Agreement.

SUBMISSIONS: ANNUAL DEADLINE

Expressions of Interest and full applications are currently being accepted and may be submitted either in hard copy (one unbound copy) or electronically by email to the RED Program.

Expressions of Interest are due May 5th, 2009. Full Applications are due June 23rd, 2009 at 5:00pm E.S.T.

Allow up to eight weeks for the review of your application prior to the approvals process, which may require additional time.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Application forms and supporting material submitted to the Province of Ontario will be subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Any information submitted in confidence should be clearly marked “CONFIDENTIAL” by the applicant.

WHERE TO GET AN APPLICATION OR HELP

Main Street Ontario Expression of Interest forms are available on our website at www.ontario.ca/rural. Once the Expression of Interest form is received and reviewed by OMAFRA, communities meeting eligibility criteria will be encouraged to submit a full application.

Potential Main Street Ontario applicants are strongly advised to consult their Regional Economic Development Consultant. A listing of offices and phone numbers are available on our website or call us at 1-888-588-4111.