



# Special Projects Program 2008/09 Guidelines

## Introduction and Background

The Special Projects Fund program was introduced in 2005 as a result of research conducted to develop a revised Fee for Service funding structure for Visitor Centres. Consultation with key partners and stakeholders including the BC Chamber of Commerce, Visitor Centre sponsor organizations and long-standing Visitor Centre managers resulted in the identification of a need for Visitor Centre specific funding that would allow Visitor Centres to pursue special projects that would otherwise not be possible due to financial constraints.

In 2005 and 2006 the program focused on projects that were designed to enhance the visitor experience and/or services at the Visitor Centre; or marketed the Visitor Centre and its services to the travelling public.

In 2005, we received 67 Special Project Fund applications of which 57 were approved and a total of \$340,631 funds were allocated. Projects ranged from exterior and interior renovations (painting, building expansion, wheelchair access, new furniture, washroom expansion), to landscaping, new brochure racking, computer upgrades, access to high speed internet, introduction of SNBC reservations and retail.

In 2006, 37 applications were approved out of 38 submissions and a total of \$238,735 funds were allocated. The majority of projects were interior and exterior renovations and technology/equipment upgrades.

In 2007, 52 applications were approved out of 54 submissions and a total of \$278,689 funds were allocated. The majority of projects were technology/equipment upgrades.

## 2008 Program Objective

This year the guidelines will focus on projects that encompass the enhancement of the Visitor Centre and/or the visitor experience with the ultimate goal of driving visitors to the Visitor Centre.

### Special Project Funding is available based on the following:

- Will be provided to Visitor Centre sponsor organizations in one-time grants of up to the maximum of \$10,000;
- Will not be awarded to the same project at the same Visitor Centre in future years; applicants must therefore clearly demonstrate how the proposed project will become self-sustaining or be maintained on an ongoing basis.
- Will be provided for **one** project per application not multiple projects.
- Projects meeting the stated objectives, financial recording requirements and sustainability plans (if applicable) will be funded on a first come first served basis.

### **Examples of Eligible Projects**

- Purchase of computer equipment, internet upgrade;
- Purchase of office equipment (i.e. colour printer);
- Renovations to improve the overall appearance of the Visitor Centre (i.e. new brochure racks, interior face-lift, flag poles, washroom upgrades, handicapped building access);
- FAM tour to other regions of the province;
- Customer Service and Sales training workshops.
- Marketing of Visitor Centre.

### **Ineligible Projects and Costs**

- General administrative costs (i.e. salaries, office expense, rent and other normal costs of business incurred by the applicant).
- Community development programs (i.e. building of a sani-station).
- Community marketing initiatives (i.e. tradeshow attendance, website development).
- Debt reduction, endowments, fundraising campaigns.
- Expenditures incurred prior to the project approval date.
- Community websites/production of interactive DVD/visitor assistance kiosk terminals.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Tourism BC is looking for projects that:

- Focus on the Visitor Centre not the Community;
- Would not otherwise happen;
- Are not additions to or continuation of projects already in progress;
- Will be self-sustaining in the future (if applicable);
- Have clear financial reporting mechanisms.

### **Evaluation Committee**

The Special Projects Fund Evaluation Committee will consist of: the Manager and the Co-ordinator of Visitor Services & Sales as well as up to two other members of Tourism BC.

### **Financial Records**

The Visitor Centre shall keep proper books and accounts of the financial management of this agreement in accordance with generally accepted business and accounting processes. The books of account and record shall include all invoices, receipts and vouchers related to all expenses incurred and revenues made in relation to this agreement, including funding for the project received from other sources. (Please note, fund matching is not a requirement for eligible projects)

During the course of this agreement, the Visitor Centre shall make the books of account and record available at all reasonable times for inspection and audit by representatives of Tourism BC to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of this agreement and verify expenditures and costs claimed by the Visitor Centre under this agreement.

Tourism BC will undertake a random audit of approximately 10% of funded Visitor Centres per financial year. If you are chosen for this audit, you will be required to produce documents mentioned above and will be supplied with a template to complete. All approved projects that result in a FAM tour will be subject to audit and verification.

Please note that the budget for the Special Projects Fund is limited. Tourism BC anticipates receiving many worthwhile applications to consider. Unfortunately, if demand for Special Projects Funding is greater than available funding, some deserving projects which satisfy the application requirements may not be funded.

### **Application and Award Process**

- Determine project, timelines and budget.
- Complete application form and return to Tourism BC
- The evaluation committee will meet, at the minimum, at the end of each month as long as funding is available to review all applications and determine grants.
- Tourism BC will inform successful and unsuccessful applicants by email.
- If successful, awards processed and cheques mailed within 30 days of notification.
- If unsuccessful, feedback is provided by Tourism BC and applicant may revise and resubmit application.
- Upon completion of project, applicant provides Tourism BC with a Final Report and relevant photographs as per the report template provided by Tourism BC.

### **Important Dates**

- The last month for submitting applications for 2008/09 funding is November 28, 2008 or when funds are exhausted. Visitor Centres will be notified as soon as 2008/09 project funding is exhausted.
- All projects must be completed and Final Reports submitted to Tourism BC by March 31, 2009.