

## 2025 Events & Experiences Fund Program Guide

### Tourism Cowichan

#### 1) Program Overview

The Events & Experiences Fund invests in the creation and enhancement of experiences, events, and festivals that attract visitors to the Cowichan Region and improves the region's competitive appeal as a preferred multi-night destination on Vancouver Island.

To qualify for funding, events and experiences must attract visitors from outside of the Cowichan Region to increase tourism visitation and spending by generating overnight stays within Cowichan. Priority will be given to events that take place in the off-peak season (Spring, Fall, Winter) to align with Tourism Cowichan's goals of seasonal dispersion. Tourism Cowichan encourages events and experiences that foster interest from new product sectors and new visitor demographics.

Tourism Cowichan recently became a Biosphere Committed Destination and is interested in supporting events and experiences that incorporate sustainable practices to align with one or more of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#). Tourism Cowichan also has a strong interest in supporting events and experiences that engage with local First Nations to highlight Indigenous culture and foster truth and reconciliation.

#### 2) Program Goals

The Events & Experiences Fund will leverage marketing funds collected from the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) to:

- Increase overnight visitation, length of stay, and repeat trips to the Cowichan Region;
- Increase the economic and social benefits that flow from tourism to residents of the Cowichan Region;
- Drive seasonal dispersion through the off-peak seasons (Fall, Winter, Spring);
- Position Cowichan as a preferred multi-night tourism destination;
- Ensure that tourism makes meaningful contributions to the social, cultural, and environmental well-being of the Cowichan Region; and
- Encourage collaboration and partnerships to enhance the visitor experience.

### 3) Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include tourism-related businesses, non-profit organizations, and Indigenous organizations in the Cowichan Region. Events and experiences must take place within the boundaries of the Cowichan Valley Regional District ([see full list of electoral areas and municipalities here](#)).

Eligible applicants must be a registered Tourism Cowichan stakeholder. There is no cost to become a registered stakeholder, and the process can be [completed here](#).

Applications are being accepted on a rolling intake for **events, festivals and experiences taking place in 2025 and up to March 31, 2026**. Note: All approved funding must be spent by December 31, 2025.

#### Definitions:

- **Event/Festival:** Qualifying events or festivals should be open to the public and can be ticketed or drop-in. Priority will be given to multi-day events and festivals.
- **Experience:** A tourism product that visitors can participate in while they are in Cowichan. This could include guided tours, self-guided experiences, or vacation packages. Experiences must incorporate a minimum of three (3) stakeholders (e.g. activity, dining and accommodation stakeholders collaborating together).

#### Please note:

- Priority will be given to applications that are received at least 4 months prior to the event dates. **Applications must be submitted a minimum of 8 weeks prior to the event dates.**
- Funding for well-established and mature events may be reduced to assist new and emerging events.
- Events and festivals that run an extended length or a full season, or primarily target Cowichan residents are ineligible. The program is designed to support one-time events or new experience offerings. Funding is not eligible for existing daily offerings or regular services.
- Repeat funding requests for the same year-over-year marketing expenses will not be considered.
- Fundraising events are not considered eligible.
- Events in operation for more than 5 years are generally considered ineligible, unless there are plans to introduce a new value-added component. This could

include, but is not limited to, increased length of event (e.g. extra day added), new experience offering, targeting a new market (geographic, demographic, psychographic), or enhanced collaboration (e.g. new event partner).

- Eligible applicants must possess and maintain valid licenses, permits, and all other regulatory requirements to operate where applicable.

## 4) Activities and Expenses

### 4.1 Eligible Activities

Program funding is intended to support expanded **out-of-region marketing activities** primarily in short-haul target markets (BC, Alberta, and Washington). The use of funds can be divided into a number of marketing activities:

- **Traditional Advertising** – Print (e.g. newspaper, magazine), Radio, Television
- **Digital Promotion** – Paid Social Media, Search Engine Marketing, Digital Display
- **Marketing Collateral** – Posters, Brochures, Rack Cards, Guides, Maps, Promotional Giveaways
- **Consumer-Focused Asset Development** – Photography, Video, Written Content, Event Website or Landing Page
- **Market Awareness** – Consumer Shows, Travel Media Relations
- **New Brand Development** – Design of new logos, re-branding of existing marketing materials

### 4.2 Ineligible Activities

- **General Administrative Costs** – Including staff salaries, wages and benefits, office expenses, rent, and other normal costs of business
- **Event Production Costs** – Including but not limited to: venue rentals, performer and speaker fees, signage, catering, decor, lighting, technology, volunteer gifts, event prizes, etc.
- **Application Submission Costs** – Any costs associated with developing and submitting applications for funding
- **In-Region Marketing Costs** – Including advertising, promotion, development, or distribution of any marketing materials within the Cowichan Region to target audience of local residents
- **Costs Associated with Developing Strategic Plans** – Includes new and existing events

- **Travel Costs** – Other than to consumer shows
- **Capital Costs** – Including equipment or software purchases, any capital costs associated with marketing activities (such as vehicle leasing, brochure display racks), rental or lease of equipment or facilities
- **Contra or In-Kind Contributions** – Including but not limited to: accommodation, transportation, meeting space, admissions and passes, etc.
- Projects or activities already completed or expenses incurred prior to funding approval
- Any marketing activities not directly related to the specific event/experience approved in the application (e.g. general business marketing)
- Other expenses deemed to be outside the scope of the program

## 5) Tourism Cowichan In-Kind Support

Tourism Cowichan will help events/experiences expand their advertising reach through its owned distribution channels as determined by Tourism Cowichan and as noted below:

- Social Media – Pre-event content posted to Tourism Cowichan social channels (combined following of 23,000+ followers)
- Website – Dedicated event listing on [tourismcowichan.com](http://tourismcowichan.com) (170,000+ visits annually)
- Consumer Newsletter – Event featured in consumer newsletter (12,000+ subscribers) *\*Dependent on timely submission of event content to meet the quarterly newsletter schedule.*
- **Optional:** Approved applicants are encouraged to meet with Tourism Cowichan’s marketing team to discuss event marketing strategies and advertising recommendations specific to your event/experience.

## 6) Funding

### 6.1 Terms of Funding

Applicants may apply to receive a **maximum funding contribution of \$10,000**. All funding received must be spent by the end of 2025 and not carried over into the following year. Funding is contingent upon:

- a) Submission of a completed Application Form and signed Funding Agreement;
- b) The total amount of funds available; and
- c) Adherence with the Funding Agreement.

## 6.2 Funding Payment

If your application is approved, funding will be distributed in 2 payments:

- 80% payment will be made upon receipt of the signed Funding Agreement, your logo, and proof of liability insurance.
- 20% will be paid upon submission of approved receipts and a final report.

Applicants **must provide copies of receipts** to support funding claims. If an applicant fails to provide copies of receipts within the required 45 days, the final payment of 20% of the funds will not be released and may result in future applications being rejected. Flexibility in this process may be acceptable in extraordinary situations. Tourism Cowichan will require the return of any unspent funds or funds spent on ineligible activities.

## 7) Application Procedures

### 7.1 Application Submission

Applications will be considered on a **rolling intake** until all funding for the year is awarded. Priority is given to applications received at least 4 months prior to the event dates. **Applications must be submitted a minimum of 8 weeks prior to the event dates.**

Applications will only be received electronically using the Application Form provided. Completed applications **must be submitted via email** to [kenzie@tourismcowichan.com](mailto:kenzie@tourismcowichan.com). All applicants will receive a notification of the receipt of their application.

### 7.2 Evaluation Process

Applications will be evaluated by a Funding Committee comprised of members of the Tourism Cowichan Board of Directors, Tourism Cowichan staff, and 4VI staff. The Funding Committee will have the final decision on any application. Applicants may be contacted by the Funding Committee to either clarify or consider changes to their application to better meet program requirements and criteria.

The decision of the Funding Committee is final and not subject to appeal. Applicants declined for funding this year are welcome to submit an application in any subsequent years this program remains available.

The Funding Committee reserves the right to select and approve applications which best meet the objectives and requirements of the program and demonstrate the greatest potential to meet program goals.

**Applications will be evaluated using a rubric which is weighted as follows:**

- 1) Demonstrated potential to increase overnight visitation, length of stay, and repeat trips to the Cowichan Region to foster economic benefits (25%)
- 2) Incorporation of sustainable practices to contribute to the social, cultural, and environmental well-being of the region (20%)
- 3) Drive seasonal dispersion through the off-peak seasons (Fall, Winter, Spring) (20%)
- 4) Clarity and effectiveness of strategies to position the region as a preferred multi-night destination and foster interest from new product sectors and/or new visitor demographics (15%)
- 5) Originality and innovative aspects of the event/experience that enhances its unique appeal and addresses gaps (10%)
- 6) Evidence of partnership and collaboration to enhance the visitor experience (10%)

### **7.3 Funding Notifications and Funding Agreement (Contract)**

Tourism Cowichan will issue a funding notification by email once a decision has been reached. The notification will state one of the following:

- The request for funding has been approved in full.
- The request for funding has been partially approved (the amount of approved funding will be specified).
- The request for funding has been denied.

Funding notifications will be issued **within 3 weeks of the application submission.**

**Successful Applicants must:**

- a) Commit to a formal signed contract, known as a Funding Agreement, which outlines the obligations of Tourism Cowichan and the Applicant.
- b) Provide a high-resolution version of your organization's logo and accompanying guidelines to be used for any Tourism Cowichan promotional activity for your event/experience.

- c) Provide a copy of your liability insurance. Tourism Cowichan requires that all events purchase a minimum \$2,000,000 in liability insurance and list Tourism Cowichan Society as an additional insured.
- d) Agree to give recognition to Tourism Cowichan's funding support by displaying the Tourism Cowichan logo on the event website and all promotional materials where sponsors are recognized. Please see [Brand Guidelines](#) for proper logo use. **Note:** Tourism Cowichan must be provided with proofs of all promotional materials that include the logo for approval.
- e) Agree to place a text or button link to [tourismcowichan.com](http://tourismcowichan.com) on the event homepage and additional pages that direct users to accommodation information.
- f) Use the hashtag #ExploreCowichan and tag Tourism Cowichan on social media promotional posts to generate greater awareness. Social media handles are: [@CowichanTourism](#) (Instagram) and [@TourismCowichan](#) (Facebook)
- g) Agree to provide Tourism Cowichan with unlimited, perpetual usage and distribution rights to all photo and video assets acquired through the Events & Experiences Fund.

#### **7.4 Program Execution Changes**

Any significant changes to the event/experience as outlined in the application will need to be approved by the Funding Committee.

#### **7.5 Reporting**

Recipients **must provide copies of receipts** for expenses that equal the total amount of funds approved by Tourism Cowichan. Receipts must only be for products or services that fall within the eligible out-of-region marketing activities.

Recipients **must also complete a final report** relating to event attendance (including visitor origin), overnight stays generated, key performance indicators, and impact of the marketing funds. The report template will be provided by Tourism Cowichan.

The final report and copies of receipts **must be submitted no later than 45 days** after event completion in order to receive a final payment of funding.

Tourism Cowichan reserves the right to withhold the final payment if the deadline is not met, the report is incomplete, or expenses claimed do not adhere to the intent and criteria of the funding program.

## **7.6 Event Cancellation Policy**

If your event/experience is cancelled, for any reason, any funds not yet spent must be returned within 30 days of the cancellation announcement. Eligible marketing costs incurred prior to cancellation will still be processed upon submission of copies of receipts and completion of a final report.

## **Questions?**

If you have any questions about the Events & Experiences Fund, please contact:

Kenzie Knight  
Tourism Development Specialist  
[kenzie@tourismcowichan.com](mailto:kenzie@tourismcowichan.com)  
(250) 667-8558

For more information about Tourism Cowichan Society, please visit the [Stakeholder Information](#) page.