

Rural Business and Community Recovery Program Application Guide

1. About the Program

The SIDIT Rural Business and Community Recovery Program (RBCR) provides \$1.5 million to rural communities in the SIDIT service region to support the BC economy and provide the tools to help rebuild communities and support businesses as they recover from the impact of COVID-19.

In partnership with the Province of BC, SIDIT will provide funding to the economic development function in rural and First Nations communities with populations under 25,000, and business support organizations serving those communities, to become 'Host Organizations'. These Host Organizations will create 20 or more Business and/or Community Recovery Advisor (RBCR Advisor) positions to assist their community's economic recovery and growth. The new positions may be full-time, part-time, or seasonal.

2. Program Objectives

The Rural Business and Community Recovery Program is intended to address the capacity challenges on rural, remote and First Nations communities within the Southern Interior Region most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Economic recovery will be generated by:

- incremental job creation in the SIDIT service region
- support for rural communities to develop economic recovery plans and strategies to rebuild economic momentum, and
- support for rural businesses to accelerate business recovery and minimize business failures and job losses.

3. Who Can Apply

All applicants to become Host Organizations must be located within the Southern Interior service region and be serving communities with less than 25,000 residents. Eligible applicants include:

- Local, municipal, regional and First Nation governments,
- Non-profit business support organizations serving rural communities, such as:
 - Community Futures, Women's Enterprise Centre
 - Non-profit tech accelerators (eg KAST, Kamloops Innovation, Accelerate Okanagan)
 - Non-Profit Industry Associations and
 - Chambers of Commerce.

4. Funding Allocations

To ensure regional equity, every effort will be made to distribute funding equitably between the Thompson-Okanagan and Columbia-Kootenay-Boundary regions of the SIDIT service area, reflecting each area's rural population and access to other complementary resources. If, after the first intake, additional funding is still available, the balance of the funds will be allocated to projects considered for the highest community/regional impact in a future funding intake. Regarding the positions themselves:

- SIDIT may allocate up to 100% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$75,000 per Host Organization for each new Recovery Advisor position.
- Positions created may be full time, part time, seasonal or a project-based contract.
- Positions may only be funded for a maximum one-year term.
- Each application will be supported by a workplan for the proposed position.

5. Eligible Costs

Eligible costs that Host Organizations may claim under this funding include the following:

- Wages for new positions created under this program.
- Employment related costs – CPP, EI, vacation pay (if days not provided)
- Travel expenses directly related to the project activities.
- Training costs directly related to the workplan recovery activities. (Note: RRBCR Advisors working with businesses may be required to complete Growth Wheel™ training.)
- Administrative costs (max. 15% of eligible costs) for recruitment and hiring the new position.

All other costs associated with the position (rent, supplies, equipment) must be borne by the Host Organization, and may be provided on an in-kind basis by the Host organization or other partners.

6. Ineligible Costs

Costs which are not eligible for Host Organizations to claim include the following:

- Wages for existing staff or staff funded through other government programs
- Hourly consulting fees for casual consultants who are not dedicated Recovery Advisors
- Office space and/or equipment (i.e. rent, desk, computer, cell phone)
- Living expenses, car allowances or other benefits, such as WCB, extended health or bonuses.

7. Eligible Projects

The RBCR Program provides grant funding for incremental capacity to actively address the economic recovery of rural businesses and communities in the SIDIT service region. Projects that will accelerate business recovery and projects that will help communities strategize and plan for future economic initiatives are the priority. See Attachments 1 and 2 for sample duties of the Recovery Advisors.

Eligible projects include but are not limited to:

- Economic development activities such as
 - Specialized industry sector strategies for recovery (i.e., tourism, agriculture, social enterprise).
 - Community regional economic recovery plans post COVID-19.
 - Community development strategies to retain and attract residents and or/businesses.
 - Community or regional strategies to support economic diversification.
 - Strategies that support business collaboration through industry associations.
- Business support services, such as
 - Direct one on one community-based advisory services to businesses.
 - Business transformation support (i.e., online marketing and e-commerce; business development; new product development.
 - Business recovery support (i.e., strategies for managing cash flow, inventories, customer acquisition).

Projects which are in progress may be eligible if the Host Organization can demonstrate the benefit of an incremental resource.

8. Program Timelines

February 2021	Program announcement and outreach
February 22, 2021	RBCR funding intake is open
March 19, 2021	Deadline for prospective Host Organizations to submit applications
March 19-30, 2021	Application review and funding decisions
March 31, 2021	Funding announcement for first intake
April 1, 2021	Successful Host Organizations begin recruiting Recovery Advisors
May 1 – Dec 2021	Community / Business Recovery Advisors begin working for Host Organizations and quarterly RBCR check-ins begin
August 15, 2021	Initial Progress reporting
January 30, 2022	Interim Progress reporting
July 31, 2022	Interim/Final Progress reporting (depending on how long the Advisor is in place)
Dec 31, 2022	Final reporting and submit final claim

9. Assessment Criteria

To optimize business and community impact, applications will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- quality of workplan

- prospective Host Organization’s capacity to manage staff/oversee project
- number of new positions created
- regional impact (including number of businesses assisted)
- diversity and equity impact
- identified need/opportunity
- collaboration with other organizations, including local First Nations
- direct economic benefit to local governments and First Nations.

10. Recovery Advisor Work Plan

Prospective Host Organizations are required to provide SIDIT with an RBCR Recovery Advisor workplan when submitting an application. The workplan is intended to:

- Clearly articulate the duties to be performed and qualifications required by the host organization for the RBCR advisor position.
- Help host organizations undertake the recruitment and selection of applicants that are well aligned with the roles, responsibilities and key duties outlined in the project plan.
- Help prospective applicants understand the duties and responsibilities associated with the position.
- Develop project and performance metrics that form the basis of project reporting and performance reviews.

11. Project Communication and Reporting

Approved Host Organizations will be required to agree to the following communication and project reporting activities as a condition of grant approval.

- Provide confirmation of successful recruitment and qualifications
- Participate in regularly scheduled check in meetings with SIDIT and other Host Organizations and RBCR advisor(s)
- Provide an interim report and submit an interim claim
- Provide a final report and submit a final claim with associated expense receipts
- Participate in program review calls/meeting from time to time as requested by SIDIT or the Province
- Contact SIDIT at the earliest opportunity if RBCR advisor resigns or is terminated for any reason
- Share ongoing program learning, challenges and success stories.

12. Application Process

1. Applicants are encouraged to contact SIDIT to discuss the proposed project scope and potential alignment with the RBCR program.
2. Application forms are forwarded to applicants by the SIDIT Business & Economic Development Consultant. The applicant completes a funding application and submits the application to SIDIT. All applications should be completed electronically in PDF format and emailed to the Trust office at admin@sidit-bc.ca. All supporting information must be submitted electronically.
3. SIDIT staff undertake comprehensive due diligence of each funding application received, which may include contacting relevant agencies and organizations as part of the review process.
4. Applications meeting the eligibility and assessment criteria are forwarded to the CEO for delegated approval. Funding decision will be made no later than 30 days from application submission.
5. A funding agreement (enabling SIDIT to disburse funding for the project) will be provided to the applicant for signature once the applicant has been approved.

13. Deadline

Please review all program documents in detail as incomplete applications will not be considered. Completed application forms with all supplementary materials should be provided electronically to SIDIT by email no later than March 19, 2021. Send to: admin@sidit-bc.ca.

QUESTIONS?

Contact Mary Beadman

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ATTACHMENT 1

Sample Community Recovery Advisor Duties

Proposed deliverables for the Community Recovery Advisory positions will include but not be limited to the following core areas:

1. Economic development planning for communities:

- Economic development planning and strategies
- Business retention and expansion plans
- Downtown revitalization plans
- Workforce attraction strategies
- Community marketing/branding strategies

2. Community based research and analysis:

- Research and analysis that will support economic development planning and priority setting
- Conducting key economic sector analysis
- Collaborative research studies or evaluations
- Feasibility studies and market research

3. Sector development and economic diversification:

- Activities and efforts aimed at diversifying the economy
- Expanding current sectors
- Attracting new businesses or sectors to a community

4. Community marketing and promotion:

- Marketing activities that promote a specific economic opportunity
- Promotion strategies of community assets
- Content for investment packages (i.e. videos, printed material)

5. Business investment and attraction:

- Creating an investment ready strategy
- Developing investment attraction ambassador network

ATTACHMENT 2

Sample Business Recovery Advisor Duties

Proposed deliverables for the Business Recovery Advisors will include but not be limited to the following core areas:

1. Business outreach and advisory:

- Network with local businesses
- Identify specific business needs
- Refer businesses to available resources
- Assist business owners in applying for recover programs and services

2. Business recovery planning:

- Assist in business planning and strategy development
- Assist in cashflow forecasting
- Review of products and services
- Provide coaching

3. Business marketing and promotion:

- Assist in market research and analysis
- Review of current industry trends
- Assist business in revising target markets
- Provide advice on new promotional strategies

4. Finance and capital:

- Review of current financials
- Explore financial restructuring options
- Refer businesses to financing programs and services