

Southwestern Ontario Development Fund

How to get support to expand your business or attract business to your community in southwestern Ontario.

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Overview

The Southwestern Ontario Development Fund provides support for projects and investments to existing businesses, municipalities and not-for-profit organizations for economic development in southwestern Ontario. The objective of the program is to provide financial support and services to help growing companies in eastern and southwestern Ontario make investments to:

- grow their businesses
- improve productivity
- invest in innovation and skills development
- pursue new markets
- generate broad positive regional economic impact
- create new good, sustainable jobs

A project is a distinct undertaking, separate from ongoing operations, that will result in benefits to the organization such as business growth or access to new markets.

The types of support available include:

- funding support
- complementary services and support

The geographic area

Southwestern Ontario includes the following 18 geographic areas:

- Brant
- Bruce
- Chatham-Kent
- Dufferin
- Elgin
- Essex
- Grey
- Haldimand
- Huron
- Lambton
- Middlesex
- Niagara
- Norfolk
- Oxford
- Perth
- Simcoe
- Waterloo
- Wellington

Who is eligible

The fund supports business and community economic development projects.

Business projects

To be eligible, businesses need to:

- have at least 3 years of operations/financial statements
- employ at least 10 people (or 5 if you are in rural Ontario)
- commit to creating at least 5 new jobs (or 30% increase for companies with fewer than 15 employees)
- invest at least \$500,000 in their project (or \$200,000 if you are in rural Ontario)
- be located in, or plan to locate in, a community in southwestern Ontario

Community economic development projects

To be eligible, projects need to:

- be led by municipalities, economic development organizations or sector organizations
- focus on economic and business development and job creation in the community or region by investing in infrastructure or implementing strategies to advance regional economic development priorities
- lead to measurable outcomes including private sector investment, growth and job creation
- invest more than \$100,000
- have private sector support
- be used for activities that are new to the organization

Who is not eligible

Ineligible projects include:

- ongoing operations including maintenance and capital replacement
- refinancing of existing business operations
- acquisitions and buyouts
- restructuring, or relocating to other jurisdictions within Ontario
- primary production
- retail
- construction (for example, residential development)
- personal services
- consulting
- electricity generation
- waste management/recycling
- information and communication services
- academic research
- stand-alone restaurants and hotels (unless transformative and considered a regional priority)

Types of support

Funding

Business projects

Funding amount

Up to 15% of eligible project costs.

Loans

Up to 15% funding to a maximum of \$5M, interest free during the project period (up to 4 years). If you achieve your investment and job targets, up to 30% of the loan (to a maximum of \$500,000) may be forgiven.

Grants

Grants are available only for specific circumstances, up to 15% to a maximum:

- Of \$500,000 if your company has fewer than 100 employees and is based in rural Ontario (population of your community is less than 100,000 or population density is less than 100 people per square kilometre)
- Of \$1,500,000 for strategic projects that are foreign direct investments or from companies competing against other jurisdictions (in limited circumstances)

Restrictions

You are not allowed to combine (or “stack”) Southwestern Ontario Development funding with other provincial programs.

Community economic development projects

Funding amount

Up to 50% of eligible project costs for a maximum grant of up to \$1.5 million.

Restrictions

You are not allowed to combine (or “stack”) Southwestern Ontario Development funding with other provincial programs.

Complementary services and support

Complementary Services and Supports are available when you submit a complete application to the Eastern Ontario Development Fund or Southwestern Ontario Development Fund through the Regional Development Program. These services are available for the duration of your project regardless of the funding outcome. Services will be coordinated by working with partner ministries until they are delivered, closed-out or finalized.

Business projects

Businesses may be eligible for other assistance related to advisory services, assistance with environmental compliance approvals, assistance in accessing skills and talent, and information related to available tax credits.

Community economic development projects

Applicants may be eligible for other assistance related to advisory services and navigation support for land-use planning and workforce development.

Application deadlines and decisions

There are four application intake periods per year for full applications. Applicants will be notified of decisions within approximately 60 business days of the application deadline.

Prior to an application, you are required to discuss your project with a regional advisor who can help you assess your fit with the program and provide advice on application preparation.

Application Period 18 2024

Application submission period:
November 5, 2024 – January 28, 2025

Application deadline:
January 28, 2025

Notification date:
April 24, 2025

*Registration on TPON and consulting with regional advisor regarding your application is advised two weeks in advance of the application deadline.

Application Period 17 2024

Application submission period:
July 2, 2024 – September 26, 2024

Application deadline:
September 26, 2024

Notification date:
December 20, 2024

*Registration on TPON and consulting with regional advisor regarding your application is advised two weeks in advance of the application deadline.

Application Period 16 2024

The application period ending May 30, 2024 is now closed. Applicants with complete applications will be notified of a decision by August 27th, 2024.

Application Period 15 2024

The application period ending February 8, 2024 is now closed. Applicants with complete applications will be notified of a decision by May 8, 2024.

Application Period 14 2023

The application period ending:
October 5, 2023, is now closed. Applicants with complete applications will be notified of a decision by January 18, 2024.

Application Period 13 2023

The application period ending June 15, 2023 is now closed. Applicants with complete applications will be notified of a decision by September 14, 2023.

Application Period 12 2023

The application period ending February 23, 2023 is now closed. Applicants with a complete application will be notified of a decision on May 25, 2023.

Application Period 11 2022

The application period ending on November 17, 2022, is now closed. Applicants with complete applications will be notified of a decision by February 16, 2023.

Application Period 10 2022

The application period ending on August 25, 2022, is now closed. Applicants with complete applications will be notified of a decision by November 23, 2022.

Application Period 9 2022

The application period ending April 21, 2021 is now closed. Applicants with complete applications will be notified of a decision by July 21, 2022.

How to apply

Step 1: Complete the online self assessment tool.

- [Business Stream](#)
- [Community Stream](#)

Step 2: Contact a [regional advisor](#) for help with your application.

Step 3: Register for [Transfer Payment Ontario](#).

- TPON is the Province of Ontario's online application system for grant funding. Before applying for a funding opportunity, all applicants must first register with TPON following a three-step process.
- When registering an organization on TPON, ensure you have the necessary information (e.g., legal business name) and official business documents (e.g., Canadian Revenue Agency Business Number) readily available. Please enter the data accurately to avoid unnecessary delays.
- Applicants with technical questions about TPON can contact the TPON Customer Service Line toll-free at 1-855-216-3090 or toll free TTY at 1-800-268-7095, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, or by email at tponcc@ontario.ca.

Step 4: Work with your regional advisor to complete the application form, and submit the application on TPON along with the required supplemental information. [Learn more](#) about details about submitting an application form on TPON.

For business projects, review the key documents including, [program guidelines](#) and a [sample application form](#).

For community economic development projects, review the key documents including [program guidelines](#) and a [sample application form](#).

Selection process

Successful projects need to:

- align with the fund's goals of investment attraction and job creation in the regions
- provide economic benefits (create jobs, contribute to the region or develop the sector)
- be achievable (i.e. applicants need to have the necessary financing, project management structure and experience to implement the project)

Who to contact

For advice on developing and strengthening your application, you are encouraged to contact your regional advisor or our Business Advisory Services at:

Business Advisory Services - Western Region Main Office

- westernregionbas@ontario.ca

Business Advisory Services - Central Region Main Office

- centralregionbas@ontario.ca